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The Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy (1943-1951)*

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Abbreviations

AAC	Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry
AC	Allied Commission
ACC	Allied Control Commission
AFHQ	Allied Force Headquarters
AMG	Allied Military Government
AMGOT	Allied Military Government on Occupied Territories
DELAEM	Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants
DP(s)	Displaced Person(s)
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
ICRC	International Committee of The Red Cross
IGCR	Intergovernmental Committee On Refugees
IRO	International Refugees Organization
JDC	American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (also AJDC or “Joint”)
JPEC	Joint Palestine Emigration Office
KKL	Keren Kayemet Le-Isreal (Jewish National Found)
OJRI	Organization of The Jewish Refugees In Italy
ORT	Organization of Rehabilitation through Training
PCIRO	Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization
RSI	Italian Social Republic
SHAEF	Supreme Headquarters Expeditionary Force
UCII	Union of the Italian Israelitic Communities
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRRA	United Nations Relief & Rehabilitation Administration
WJC	World Jewish Congress
WRB	War Refugee Board
WZO	World Zionist Congress

Introduction

ווא אהין זאל אין גיין,
ווער קאן ענטפערן מיר?
ווא אהין זאל אין גיין,
אז פארשלאסן ז'יעדע טיר?

«Tell me where shall I go,
Who can answer my plea?
Tell me where shall I go,
Every door is barred to me?»

Where shall I go?!, Yiddish song

The Refugee Status, a New Paradigm

Wars have always created refugees, but it is only in the twentieth century that population displacement became a mass phenomenon. Civilian movements acquired gradually a wider dimension, drastically changing the demographical structure of countries and influencing political relations between the states². World War II in particular, set in motion an unprecedented mass displacement of populations, which forced the international community to face not only a post-war political and economic crisis, but also vast demographical, social and cultural changes caused by the six-year conflict. According to one of the first surveys of the population movements which occurred in Europe between 1939 and 1945, 55 million Europeans were forced to leave their homes in this period³. At the end of the war, most of these uprooted men, women and children fell burden to the Allies, mainly in the occupied zones of Germany, Austria and Italy. These refugees included deportees to forced labour camps, survivors of the political and racial Nazi persecutions, prisoners of war, civilians who fled in the face of the armies' advancing and/or retreating in the Eastern-European front

¹ Mlotek Eleanor and Gottlieb Malke, *We Are Here: Songs of The Holocaust*, (New York: The Educational Department of the Workmen's Circle and Hippocrene Books, 1983), 16.

² Marrus Michael R., *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985).

³ Kulisher Evgenii, M., *Europe on the Move: War and Population Changes, 1917-47*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948), 305.

(even after the end of the war) as well as those who voluntarily served in *Wehrmacht* and Nazi collaborators⁴.

In order to cope with this humanitarian emergency, the Allies prepared an outline plan for the control, care, repatriation and resettlement of refugees. Those civilians who, because of the war, were outside the boundaries of their previous home countries and who required repatriation or resettlement were termed displaced persons – commonly referred to as DPs⁵.

The huge number of DPs in Europe demanded the formation of a shared normative for the treatment of the refugees. Nevertheless, for years following the Allied Army's arrival in Europe in 1943, the management of the War refugees' situation was constantly negotiated among military authorities, international institutions, national governments and voluntary organizations. The lengthy, thought-out process that began with the temporary measures adopted by the League of Nations was accelerated in the post-war period. Within a few years, the newly established United Nations created specialized agencies to deal with the refugee emergency. The first international institution to handle the refugee problem was the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which carried out from 1944 through mid-1947 the ambitious mission of steering post-war Europe towards "normalization." UNRRA ceased activities in mid-1947, when the United Nations charged the International Refugee Organization (IRO) with the specific mandate of solving the post-war refugee emergency in Europe through resettlement of the DPs in other countries⁶. IRO closed down in 1951, when the Geneva Convention formally adopted an internationally accepted definition of the status of refugee and the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) began its mission.

The principal solution to the refugee problem, adopted by both the Allies and by the international institutions in order to prevent the population movement interfered with military operations, was the immediate repatriation of refugees to their home countries.

⁴ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 296-345; Salvatici Silvia, "Le displaced persons, un nuovo soggetto collettivo", in Crainz Guido, Pupo Raul, Salvatici Silvia (eds. by), *Naufughi della pace. Il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise d'Europa*, (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2008), 91-109.

⁵ Proudfoot Malcolm J., *European Refugees: 1939-52. A Study In Forced Population Movement*, (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1956), 115.

⁶ For the official history of UNRRA see: Woodbridge George, *UNRRA: the history of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1950); for the official history of IRO, see: Holborn Louise W., *International Refugee Organization: A Specialized Agency of The United Nations. Its History and Work, 1946-1952*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); for an analysis of this two temporary UN agencies in the evolution of post-war humanitarianism see: Salvatici Silvia, *Nel nome degli altri. Storia dell'umanitarismo internazionale* (Bologna, Il Mulino: 2015), 177-215.

Based on the neologism “displaced person” coined by the Allies, the DPs were classified according to their pre-war nationality, and only those who were Allied nationals or those who were persecuted for religious, racial or political reasons, were recognized as eligible for help and protection. Refugees originating from enemy countries were to remain the burden of their national governments.

Unavoidably, the adherence to the definition of original pre-war nationality caused several problems in the management of the refugee crisis and was harshly opposed by those who refused repatriation for fear of being persecuted again in their home countries. Foremost in their opposition were the Jewish survivors, who at the end of the war were tragically few within the great number of refugees, making up only 5 to 8 percent of the total displaced population⁷. The source of the “Jewish problem” was the survivors’ demand to be recognized not according to their former nationality, but rather as Jews and survivors, and thus a separate group requiring special consideration. They wished for resettlement in a country outside of Europe, mainly in the US, South America, Australia, Canada, etc.; for others, the claim to be recognized as Jews was intensely linked to their longing to make *‘aliyah*, regardless of the strict limitations set by the British Mandate in the policy stated in the White Paper of 1939.

Notwithstanding their small percentage among the total number of post-war refugees, the Jewish displacement stirred debate at the international level, affecting above all the relations between Great Britain and United States. In fact, until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the solution to the Jewish displacement was constantly disputed between Great Britain – which continued to oppose *‘aliyah* - and the United States, who with the publication of the Harrison Report, declared their support for Jewish demands to be recognized as Jews and to immigrate to Palestine⁸. During the years 1945-1948, the fate of the Jews of the Diaspora and the actions of the Jewish Agency among the DPs became connected to the crucial events developing in the *Yishuv* and which led finally to Israel’s declaration of independence.

This complex issue did not remain limited to political debate among the Allies, but involved also other national as well as international actors and interfered with the ambitions of many nation-states in the Mediterranean area. Moreover, worldwide resonance to the severe situation of the Jewish survivors in Europe gave rise to the involvement of several

⁷ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 318.

⁸ About the different position of the British and the US governments on the Jew’s demand to be recognized as Jews and to migrate to Palestine, see: Kochavi Arieh J., *Post-Holocaust Politics. Britain, the United States and the Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), in particular pp. 13-153.

international Jewish voluntary organizations and relief committees, which took on a central role in assuring basic living conditions for the Jews displaced across Europe and in pushing the governments for a definitive resolution of the problem.

The refugee crisis affected Europe for years after the end of World War II. «With us, the meaning of the term “refugee” has changed», wrote Hannah Arendt -referring to the European refugees of the first half of the century - in an article published in 1943⁹. Indeed, the perception of “the refugee” as both a specific social category and as a normative problem of global dimension could be located in post-war Europe, since it «did not exist in its full modern form before this period»¹⁰. In this historical conjecture, the status of refugee – understood not just as a normative subject, but also as a social and cultural one - became the starting point for a new historical consciousness.

Between Refugee Studies and Post-Holocaust Studies

For several decades since the 1930's mass migration movements were analysed by specialized observers, appointed by national governments or international institutions, with the purpose of drawing up statistics in order to understand and control civilian movements¹¹. Though limited in some ways, several of these surveys – published even while displacement was still ongoing in Europe - stand out as landmark studies. In particular, the works by Eugene Kulisher, Jacques Vernant, George Woodbridge, Louise Holborn and Malcolm J. Proudfoot are still essential sources for understanding institutional programmes for the care and resettlement of refugees as well as the technologies for managing population movements in post-war Europe¹².

At least until the late 1980's, scholars tended to treat the refugee crisis of the twentieth century as a subordinate event in the transition from war to peace in Europe, thus failing to note the fact that the alleviation of the refugee problem was a stepping-stone towards the

⁹ The article appeared first in the US Jewish periodical “The Menorah Journal” in 1943, and it is reported in: Arendt Hannah, “We Refugees”, in Robinson Marc (ed. by), *All Together Elsewhere. Writers On Exile*, (Boston and London: Faber&Faber, 1994), 110-119.

¹⁰ Malkki H. Liisa, “Refugees and Exile: from «Refugee Studies» to the National Order of Things”, in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995), 498.

¹¹ For example, see the survey conducted by Sir John Hope Simpson between 1938 and 1939 on behalf of the Royal Institute of International Affairs, to be submitted to the Evian Conference in 1938. Simpson John Hope, *Refugees: Preliminary Report of a Survey*, (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1938); Id., *The Refugee Problem: Report of a Survey*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939).

¹² Kulischer, *Europe on the Move*; Woodbridge, *UNRRA*; Vernant Jacques, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1953); Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*; Proudfoot, *European Refugees*.

reconstruction of Europe. Instead, this line of investigation was undertaken first by Micheal R. Marrus in 1985, in his extensive informative monograph about population displacement in the twentieth century, and afterwards by Mark Wyman in his book on the post-war displacement¹³.

Notwithstanding these early changes in understanding war and population movements, only at the end of the Cold War was there a significant turning point in this field of studies. Its undiscussed impact affected also historiography, which began extensively investigating the most controversial issues relating to World War II¹⁴. An easier access to archival collections and «the growth of interest in “alternative” historiographical frameworks - such as those of international, transnational and global history» - led to re-thinking the post-WWII displacement in a renewed historical dimension¹⁵. This trend gave birth to the Refugee Studies¹⁶, which approaches the study of migration through the prism of historical, economic, political, socio-cultural and anthropological perspectives. Scholars began to look at the post-WWII displacement not only in relation to the dynamics of reconstruction of Europe after 1945, but also as the period in which «certain key techniques for managing mass displacements of people first became standardized and then globalized»¹⁷.

Currently, the historiographical debate focuses on the massive displacement of persons during and after World War II in connection with the evolution of humanitarianism and the development of the international definition of “refugee status” of that time. Moreover, these investigations - taking into account the consequences of the spatial concentration of people in the refugee camps - highlight dynamics of self-government, self-perception and self-understanding by the DPs themselves thus shedding light on their historical agency.

Scholars focused on particular groups of DPs, on displacement in a particular geographic areas or on a specific aspect of the refugee condition, approaching these topics through a multi-disciplinary perspective and from a transnational point of view. Among the most recent

¹³ Marrus, *Unwanted*; Wyman Mark, *DP: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, (Philadelphia: Balch Institute Press, 1989).

¹⁴ About the impact of the end of Cold War on historiography, see: Mazower Mark, “Reconstruction: The Historiographical Issues”, in Feldman David, Mazower Mark and Reinisch Jessica (eds. by), *Post-war Reconstruction in Europe: International Perspectives*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17-28.

¹⁵ Ballinger Pamela, “Impossible Returns, Enduring Legacies: Recent Historiography of Displacement and the Reconstruction of Europe After World War II”, in *Contemporary European History*, vol. 22, 1 (2013), 128.

¹⁶ About the birth and development of the Refugee Studies, see for example: Black Richard, “Fifty Years of Refugee Studies: From Theory to Policy”, in *The International Migration Review*, 1 (2001), 57-78.

¹⁷ This words are borrowed from Malkki, “Refugees and Exile”, 497.

studies, there are those of Silvia Salvatici, Anna Holian, Tarah Zahra, Pamela Ballinger, Jessica Reinisch, Daniel G. Cohen, Ben Shepard and Peter Gatrell¹⁸.

The case of the Jewish displacement after the War attracted several scholars, influenced both by the Refugee Studies and/or by the evolution of the Post-Holocaust Studies, which concentrate on the history of the Jewish people in the aftermath of the war.

The international conference held at Yad VaShem in 1985 entitled *Sherith Haplethab, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle* could be considered an important starting point for the research about the Jewish DPs in post-war Europe. The conference gathered in Jerusalem several international historians who were researching topics connected to the condition of the Jewish survivors displaced in post-war Europe. Among them were Yehuda Bauer, Yoav Gelber, Zeev Mankowitz, Dina Porat, Dalia Ofer, Leonard Dinnerstein, Judith Tydor-Baumel, Tuvia Friling and Yisrael Gutman. This group of historians viewed the Jewish DPs as the *She'erith Ha-Pleithab*, a biblical formula used by the Jewish DPs themselves and ambivalently translated as “the surviving remnant” and “the saved remnant”. This term linked the fate of the “remnants” of the Jewish Diaspora to that of the *Yishuv* and connected the consequences of the *Schoah* to the development of Jewish settlement in British Palestine. The conference addressed many questions regarding the paths of post-war Jewish migration across Europe and from Europe to Palestine, the *Yishuv*'s response to the refugee problem, the role of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine who served in the Allied Army, the self-consciousness of the Jewish DPs as *She'erith Ha-Pleithab*, the US involvement in the relief of the Jewish DPs, the impact of *She'erith Ha-Pleithab* on Israeli society, etc¹⁹.

¹⁸ The above-mentioned scholars are also the authors of several articles and contributions about post-war displacement, about their most recent publications see: Salvatici Silvia, *Senza casa e senza paese. Profughi europei nel secondo dopoguerra*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008); Holian Anna, *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism. Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011); Zahra Tara, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families after World War II*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011); Ballinger Pamela, *Memory and Identity at the Border of the Balkans*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003); Reinisch Jessica, “Displaced Persons and Public Health in Germany After 1945”, in Steinert John Dieter and Weber-Newth Inge (eds. by), *Beyond Camps and Forced Labour: Current International Research on Survivors of Nazi Persecution*, (Secolo Verlag: Osnabrück, 2008), 43-53; Cohen G. Daniel, *In War's Wake. Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Shepard Ben, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War*, (New York: Alfhred A. Knopf, 2011); Gatrell Peter, *Free World? The Campaign to Save the World's Refugees 1956-1963*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁹ Gutman Israel and Saf Avital (eds. by), *Sherith Haplethab, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle*, Proceedings of the Sixth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (Jerusalem, October 1985), (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990). A second international conference on the Jewish displacement was held only fifteen years later at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington D. C., see: Rosensaft Z. Menachem (ed. by), *Life reborn: Jewish Displaced Persons, 1945-1951*, Conference Proceedings (Washington, D.C. January 14-17, 2000, U.S.), (Washington D.C.: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2001).

During the last two decades, international historiography has devoted its attention to the history of the Jewish DPs, using several sources such as archival documentations, interviews, personal testimonies, etc. Nevertheless, the flourishing of this literature has addressed in particular the history of the Jewish DPs in Germany and – to a certain extent – in Austria, but not the experiences of the DPs in Italy.

Kochavi's research focused on Germany and Austria, in particular on the management of the Jewish DPs who refused repatriation in the face of the «post-Holocaust politics» of the British as well as of the US Allies. Kochavi presented a comprehensive analysis of British policy towards the Jewish DPs and revealed the crucial role the US played in undermining that policy²⁰.

The political actions taken by the Jewish DPs in the US zone of occupation in Germany in order to achieve '*aliyah*' were extensively explored by Zeev Mankowitz, who shed light on the ideological foundation of the *She'erith Ha-Pleita*. He highlighted the role of the Jewish leaders of the European ghettos in leading the Jewish survivors to envisage themselves as «the living bridge between destruction and rebirth», thus stressing that the *She'erith Ha-Pleita* acted «as subject rather than objects of history»²¹.

Other scholars have devoted their attention to the evolution of a particular refugee camp, thus offering a wide-ranging analysis of the social history of the Jewish DPs who temporarily lived in occupied Germany or Austria²². For example, Hagit Lavsky focused on Bergen Belsen and the British zone of occupation in Germany, shedding light on the life condition of the Jewish survivors and taking into account the related political, economic, social and cultural aspects. She offered an analysis both from the outside – exploring the situation of the Jewish DPs in post-war Germany, their management by the British Allies and the response of the *Yishuv* in relation to this emergency – as well as from the inside, emphasizing dynamics of self-government and the cultural, educational and political activities organized

²⁰ Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*. About the US policy towards the Jewish DPs, see also: Dinnerstein Leonard, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982).

²¹ Mankowitz Zeev, *Life Between Memory and Hope. The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3.

²² About the Jewish DPs in Germany, see: Königseder Angelika and Wetzel Juliane, *Waiting for Hope: Jewish displaced persons in post-World War II Germany*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001); Myers-Feinstein Margarete, *Holocaust Survivors in Postwar Germany, 1945-1957*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); on the Austrian case, see: Albrich Thomas, "Way Station of Exodus: Jewish Displaced Persons and Refugees in Post War Austria", in Berenbaum Michael and Peck J. Abraham (eds. by), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed, and the Reexamined*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 716-732; Albrich Thomas and Zweig W. Ronald, *Escape through Austria: Jewish Refugees and the Austrian Route to Palestine*, (London: Frank Cass, 2002).

by the DPs with the help of the emissaries of the *Yishuv*²³. Judith Tydor-Baumel has focused on the history of Buchenwald DP camps, where - in the spring of 1945 - a group of sixteen Jews organized a *kibbutz*, the first agricultural collective farm in post-war Germany designed to prepare the Jewish DPs for 'aliyah'²⁴.

Among the last contribution about the Jewish DPs in Germany, *Finding Home and Homeland* by Avinoam J. Patt stands out for its analysis of the overwhelming Zionist enthusiasm among the DPs. In particular, Patt pointed out the fact that the existence of large numbers of young Jews in the DP camps affiliated with Zionist youth movements and preparing for 'aliyah, was vital to the diplomatic decisions that led to the creation of the State of Israel soon after the war²⁵.

The advanced stage of the studies on the Jewish displacement in Germany has allowed an in-depth analysis of several aspects. Thus, historiography has discussed the issue of the relations and contacts between the Jewish survivors in the refugee camps and the surrounding German population²⁶. Other scholars have offered a gender perspective regarding the conditions of the women among the Jewish DPs. Among them are Margarete Myers-Feinstein and Judith Tydor-Baumel – whose viewpoints are closer to the Post-Holocaust approach – and Atina Grossman, whose work is somewhat influenced by the Refugee Studies trends²⁷.

Other studies have concentrated on the revival of Yiddish culture in the DP camps, such as the research conducted by Tamar Lewinsky concerning the use of the Yiddish language among the refugees and the flourishing of a new literature, and the study by Shirley Gilbert

²³ Lavy Hagit, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945-1950*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); about Bergen Belsen see also: Reilly Jo, *Belsen. The Liberation of a Concentration Camp*, (London and New York, Routledge, 1998) and Königseder and Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope*, 167-210.

²⁴ Tydor Baumel Judith, *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

²⁵ Avinoam Patt J., *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Detroit: Wayne State University, 2009).

²⁶ Brenner Michael, *After the Holocaust Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Post War Germany*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Geller J. Howard, *Jews in Post-Holocaust Germany, 1945-1953*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Grossmann Atina, *Jews, Germans, and Allies. Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007).

²⁷ Grossman Atina, "Victims, Villains and Survivors: Gender Perceptions and Self-Perceptions of Jewish Displaced Persons in Occupied Postwar Germany", in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 11, n. 1/2, Special Issue: Sexuality and German Fascism (Jan. - Apr., 2002), 291-318; Myers-Feinstein Margarete, "Jewish Women Survivors in the Displaced Persons Camps of Occupied Germany: Transmitters of the Past, Caretakers of the Present, and Builders of the Future", in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 24, (2006), 67-89; Tydor Baumel Judith, "DPs, Mothers and Pioneers: Women in the She'erit Hapleita", in *Jewish History*, vol. 11, 2 (1997), 99-110.

on Yiddish music and by Ella Florsheim on Yiddish theatre among the DPs in Germany²⁸. Another important contribution regarding the use of Yiddish language by most of the Jewish DPs is that of Laura Jackush, dealing with the foundation of Jewish Historical Commissions inside the DP camps. These commissions were in charge of collecting testimonies from Jewish survivors about their personal experiences during World War II, thus preserving the first core of documentation for future Holocaust Studies²⁹.

The Jewish DPs in Italy, State of Art

The history of the refugees who passed through Italy during and after World War II has only recently begun to receive deeper attention. In particular, research on the Jewish displacement in Italy has tended to concentrate on the underground migration movements of Jewish DPs that affected Italy between the end of the war and the establishment of the State of Israel. Since the late 1980's, the interest of Italian historiography has focused primarily on the political position taken by the Italian government towards the activities of the *Mossad le-'aliyah Bet*, which – between 1945 and 1948 - organized the illegal departure of 23,000 Jews from Italian shores to British Palestine³⁰. The first contributions on the topic came from two articles by Maria Grazia Enardu as well as Mario Toscano's monograph *La porta di Sion* published in 1990³¹. Toscano based his research on unpublished primary sources available in the main Italian institutional archives, thus stimulating Italian historians' interest on the analysis of the transit of Jewish refugees in post-war Italy³².

Indeed, for the following two decades, Italy – intended as a way station for the Jewish DPs en route to Palestine - continued to be the focus of Italian historiography, which began to

²⁸ Lewinsky Tamar, "Dangling roots? Yiddish Language and Culture in the German Diaspora", in Avinoam Patt J. and Berkowitz Michael (eds. by), *"We are here": New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), 308-334; Gilbert Shirley, "«We long for a home»: Songs and Survival among Jewish Displaced Persons", in Avinoam and Berkowitz, *"We are here"*, 257-287; Florsheim Ella, "Yiddish Theatre in the DP Camps", in *Yad Vashem Studies*, 40/2 (2012), 107-135.

²⁹ Jackush Laura, "A Folk Monument to Our Destruction and Heroism: Jewish Historical Commissions in the Displaced Persons Camps of Germany, Austria and Italy", in Avinoam and Berkowitz, *"We are here"* 31-73.

³⁰ Toscano Mario, *La porta di Sion: l'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina, 1945-1948*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1990), 7.

³¹ Enardu Maria Grazia, "L'immigrazione illegale ebraica verso la Palestina e la politica estera italiana, 1945-'48", in *Storia delle relazioni internazionali*, 1 (1986), 147-166; Id., "L'aliyah beth dall'Italia, 1945-'48", in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei nell'Italia unita 1870-1945*, Atti del convegno internazionale (Siena, 12-16 giugno 1989), (Roma: Ministero Beni Culturali e ambientali, 1993), 514-532; Toscano, *«Porta di Sion»*.

³² Prior to the studies of Enardu and Toscano, the only reference on the activities of the Mossad le-'aliyah Bet in Italy was Ada Sereni's autobiography: Sereni Ada, *I clandestini del mare. L'emigrazione ebraica in terra d'Israele dal 1945 al 1948*, (Milano: Mursia, 1973).

link the activities of the *Mossad le-‘aliyah Bet* to the *Brichab*. These studies highlight the fact that even after the end of the war Italy experienced several waves of Jewish migrations from Eastern Europe through the Alpine passes³³. Moreover, though tracing a general picture of the living conditions of the Jewish DPs in the refugee camps, these researchers remained strictly concerned with the analysis of the Italian Government response to the problem of the Jewish DPs. They stressed above all the favourable attitude of the Italian authorities towards the illegal migration of the Jewish DPs to Palestine and its twofold purpose of alleviating the refugee emergency in Italy as well as countering the stigma of Italy’s recent past by building for Italy a new position in the international political arena³⁴.

Recently, other scholars have turned their attention to the study of particular locations, tracing the history of certain refugee camps or assembly centers which hosted the Jewish DPs in Italy. These investigations are based on archival sources (mainly, those available in the Italian archives), personal memories and interviews conducted by the authors. For example, Cinzia Villani explored the case of the assembly center in “Via Unione, 5” in Milan; Sara Vinçon focused on Grugliasco Camp (near Turin); and Stefania Pirani investigated the *bachsharab* of Fano (near Ancona, on the Adriatic Coast)³⁵. In contrast, research regarding the refugee camps in the Southern regions of Italy are still totally based on personal memories³⁶.

³³ See: Villani Cinzia, “«We have crossed many borders». Arrivals, presence and perceptions of Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy (1945-1948)”, in Aschauer-Smolik Sabine and Steidl Mario (eds. by), *Tamid Kadima, Immer voern/Arts. Der jUdische Exodus aus Europa 1945-1948*, (Innsbruck, Vienna and Bozen, 2010), 261-277; Pfanzelter Eva, “Between Brenner and Bari: Jewish Refugees in Italy 1945 to 1948”, in Albricht and Zweig, *Escape through Austria*, 83-101; Zertal Idith, *From Catastrophe to Power: the Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998).

³⁴ About Italian approach to the emigration of the Jewish DPs and the related impact on the reshaping of the Italian government foreign policy, see moreover: Markovizky Jacob, “The Italian Government’s response to the Problem of the Jewish Refugees, 1945-48”, in *Journal of Israeli History: politics, society and culture*, vol. 19, n. 1 (1988), 23-39.

³⁵ Villani Cinzia, “Milano, via Unione 5: un centro di accoglienza per displaced persons ebrei nel secondo dopoguerra”, in *Studi Storici*, vol. 50, 2 (2009), 333-370; Vinçon Sara, *Vite in transito. Gli ebrei nel campo profughi di Grugliasco (1945-1949)*, (Torino: Silvio Zamorani, 2009); Pirani Stefania, *Storia dell’bachsharà di Fano dal 1945 al 1948 attraverso i documenti e le interviste ai testimoni*, (Bologna: Patron Editore, 2008).

³⁶ About an initial contributions on the four DP camps of Salento area (Apulia), see: Lelli Fabrizio, “Testimonianze dei profughi ebrei nei campi di transito del Salento”, in Paganoni Marco (ed. by), *Per ricostruire e ricostruirsi. Astorre Mayer e la rinascita ebraica tra Italia e Israele*, (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2010), 111-119; for a transcription of the marriages registered in Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp, see: Id., *Nardò 1944-1947. Matrimoni nel campo profughi, Quaderni dell’Archivio storico*, n. 2, (Nardò: Salento Books, 2013); for a collection of personal memories related to the experiences of the Jewish DPs in Apulia, see the website: www.profughierebreinapuglia.it/ (accessed November 2016); about a general overview on Apulia as a place of transit for many groups of post-war refugees see: Leuzzi Vito Antonio and Esposito Giulio (eds. by), *La Puglia dell’accoglienza. Profughi, rifugiati e rimpatriati nel Novecento*, (Bari: Progedit, 2006).

Notwithstanding the unquestionably relevance of the above-mentioned studies, and with the exception of several initial contributions, a general overview on the situation of the Jewish displacement in Italy is still incomplete³⁷.

Very little is known about the geography of the refugee camps, assembly centers, *kibbutzim* and *bachsharot* which hosted the Jewish DPs as well as about the international assistance the refugees received while displaced in Italy. Several of the above-mentioned studies dealt with the relief and rehabilitation programs provided by Jewish voluntary organizations to the DPs³⁸. Nevertheless, this research did not take into account several aspects, such as the process through which the Jewish organizations became involved in the international network of refugee agencies that assisted the post-war DPs or what was their role both in relation to the Jewish DPs' fate and to the evolution of the humanitarian approach towards the post-war refugees.

Moreover, in offering an extensive examination of the waves of Jewish migration from Eastern European countries to Italy, historiography highlighted the impact of these movements on the thorny post-war diplomatic debate about the "Jewish problem", rather than on the Jewish DPs themselves. Similarly, the investigation about the illegal departures of the Jewish DPs from Italy to British Palestine analysed mainly the attitude of the Italian Government as well as that of the British Mandate towards *'aliyah*, neglecting to examine the dynamics that led the Jewish DPs to migrate to Palestine.

Notwithstanding the fact that not all the Jewish DPs who passed through Italy were finally resettled in Palestine, it is evident that the *Yishuv* played an essential role in motivating the Jewish DPs to embrace Zionism and to opt for emigration to Palestine instead of repatriation. Nevertheless, several other factors influenced the Jewish DPs in this circumstance, but information about the path as well as the individuals, the organizations and the institutions that led them to prepare for *'aliyah* are still vague.

³⁷ See: Villa Andrea, *Dai Lager alla terra promessa. La difficile reintegrazione della "nuova Italia" e l'immigrazione verso il Medio Oriente (1945-1948)*, (Milano: Guerini & Associati, 2005), 133-262; Kokkonen Susanna, *The Jewish Refugees in Post-War Italy, 1945-51*, (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2011); Ravagnan Martina, "I campi Displaced Persons per profughi ebrei stranieri in Italia (1945-1950)", in *Storia e Futuro*, 30 (2012), <http://storiaefuturo.eu/i-campi-displaced-persons-per-profughi-ebrei-stranieri-in-italia-1945-1950/> (accessed November 2016).

³⁸ For contributions about the assistance provided by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee to the Jewish DPs, see: Francesconi Federica, "Lo spoglio di archivi americani per lo studio dei profughi e della ricostruzione: un primo bilancio", in Paganoni Marco (ed. by), *Per ricostruire e ricostruirsi. Astorre Mayer e la rinascita ebraica tra Italia e Israele*, (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2010), 121-139.

Though the history of Jewish DPs in Italy has received greater attention from historiography than that of other groups of refugees in post-war Italy, the general picture is still irregular and patchy.

Methodology and Sources of the Research

In the attempt to fill the historiographical lacuna on the Jewish displacement, the present research analyses the political, social and cultural dynamics related to the life of the Jewish DPs in refugee camps, assembly centers, *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim* in Italy. In particular, this dissertation focuses on the non-Italian Jewish DPs who passed through Italy after the War on their way to British Palestine.

Thus, with the purpose of revealing the unexplored consequences of the Jewish displacement in Italy, this investigation looks at the methodological approach both of the Refugee Studies and of the Post-Holocaust Studies. This will help to stress the transnational dimension of the post-war Jewish displacement as well as to highlight common features shared by DPs in general and peculiarities related to the Jewish case.

In order to trace the general picture of Jewish displacement in Italy, this study privileged the use of institutional sources instead of interviews or personal testimonies. This analytic choice was motivated mainly by the initial stage of the research about the Jewish displacement in Italy that required a basic updating and in-depth analysis. Thus, this dissertation gives priority to the use of primary sources in Italian, English and Hebrew available in archives in Italy, Israel and in part in the United Kingdom. .

The main documentation used for this dissertation was collected therefore from the Central Archives of the State and from the Archives of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities in Rome; from the Central Zionist Archives, the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People, the Yad Vashem Archives and the Archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in Jerusalem; and from the Wiener Library for the Holocaust and Genocide in London.

This combination of primary sources has opened new perspectives of investigation into the transit of the Jewish DPs in Italy, shedding light in particular on the still unexplored political, social and cultural dynamics that derived from this condition of displacement.

Structure and Goals of the Research

This dissertation is organized into four Parts with 9 Chapters. The material is not arranged according to chronological order; rather, given the extent and the numerous insights arising from the topic, the four Parts focus each on different but related themes to be intended as pieces of the same puzzle.

The first Part provides a brief overview of the consequences of World War II on the European Jewish Diaspora, with particular reference to the Jewish displacement and the integration of the management of the refugee crisis in a shared international agenda. Chapter 1 investigates the Jewish DPs in Italy from 1943, stressing the fact that Jewish displacement in Italy began to be managed almost two years before the end of World War II in 1945. Indeed, the Allies' arrival in Italy and the consequent liberation of the first concentration camp (at Ferramonti di Tarsia, Calabria) marked also the establishment of the first core of Jewish refugees, the so-called «old refugees». In order to handle this initial group of non-Italian Jews displaced in Italy, the Allies began to plan control and care and to arrange other refugee camps in the liberated southern regions.

As highlighted in Chapter 2, the various origins and backgrounds of the old refugees did not prevent them from becoming a cohesive group, whose bonds were further strengthened by the support of the Jewish soldiers from the *Yishuv* who volunteered in the Allied Army. The Jewish Palestinian soldiers played a central role both in the immediate rescue of the Jews in Italy and in directing the Jewish DPs towards affiliation with Zionism. The first Part closes with an overview of the solutions being implemented for resolution of the Jewish displacement: repatriation, resettlement and *'aliyah*.

Part two deals with the emergence of an institutional DP policy and at the same time the beginnings of DP politics. Thus, Chapter 3 sheds light on the creation of a network of international refugee agencies (i.e. UNRRA and IRO, set up *ad hoc* in order to handle the refugee crisis) and Jewish voluntary organizations (in particular the JDC and the DELASEM), which worked on behalf of the DPs in Italy according to the humanitarian principles of that time. This chapter offers also important numerical data about the Jewish DPs' presence in the Italian Peninsula as well as a location map of the main refugee camps and assembly centers which housed the Jewish DPs with the beginning of the international humanitarian missions.

Chapter 4 focuses on new waves of refugees who reached Italy through the *Brichah*. In fact, the end of the War marked the arrival of *She'erith Ha-Pleita*, who were instrumental in the

establishment of the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI). OJRI – which essentially served as a self-representative institution for the Jewish DPs in Italy – encouraged that process of self-understanding and further strengthened that sense of collective identity among the Jewish DPs in Italy. Finally, Chapter 5 – after a general analysis of the diplomatic debate related to *'aliyah*– points out the reactions of the Jewish DPs in Italy to the restrictions of the British White Paper regarding Jewish migration to Palestine.

Part three is an in-depth analysis of the rehabilitation activities provided the Jewish DPs in Italy by the above-mentioned humanitarian network in cooperation with the representative organizations of the refugees. It aims at highlighting both the wide-range rehabilitation programs promoted in the DP camps and the dynamics of self-government that further strengthened unity among the Jewish DPs and the sense of belonging to *Eretz Israel*.

Chapter 6 concentrates on health security in refugee camps, *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim* which housed the Jewish DPs throughout Italy. Particular attention is devoted to the JDC medical program which guaranteed good health conditions among the Jewish DPs through the employment and the training of specialized personnel, the establishment of convalescent homes, special clinics and TBC sanatoria.

Chapter 7 focuses on the «*bachsharah* movement», which represented the main peculiarity of the Jewish displacement in Italy. This chapter offers a map as well as an analysis of the origin and goals of the various *bachsharot* set up in Italy with the explicit purpose of preparing the DPs ideologically and practically for *'aliyah*. Moreover, this chapter explores the success of the *bachsharot* and the vocational training programs in Italy, emphasizing both the role of the Jewish Palestinian soldiers and the support of the JDC in this field.

Chapter 8 focuses on the moral «revitalization» of the DPs through cultural and educational activities. It sheds light on the important collaboration between the Educational Departments of OJRI and the JDC, which led to the establishment of schools and kindergartens in the refugee camps and the *bachsharot* as well as financial help for students pursuing an academic education. Furthermore, the chapter documents the flourishing of other cultural and recreational activities, which included concerts, music, theatre, journals, literary contests, cultural congresses and art exhibitions, sport, etc. This «creative program» was instrumental in reshaping the Jewish DPs' identity through a bottom-up training program that guaranteed the refugees a Jewish/Zionist education in view of the expected resettlement in Palestine.

In the fourth and last Part, Chapter 9 explores the relationship between Italian Jewry – in particular, its representative institutions, UCII (Union of the Italian Israelitic Communities) – and the Jewish DPs. In the aftermath of the war, both were driven in a parallel path by the activism of the Jewish soldiers from the *Yishuv* towards reconstruction and reorganization. Italian Jewry played a major role in supporting the Jewish DPs' entry into Italy and their transit to Palestine, acting often as a mediator with the Italian Government. Nevertheless, the differing attitude of the two groups towards Zionist affiliation and '*aliyah*' appeared as a point of contention between Italian Jewry's institutions and the DPs.

The history of the Jewish displaced persons in transit through Italy merges into a combination of political, economic, social and cultural dynamics. As pointed out in by this investigation, this entanglement generated an intricate and fascinating plot, whose details are part of an unexplored chapter of the post-war history. By dint of its migratory feature; the nation-states, the governments and the intergovernmental institutions it involved; and by its development at a transnational level - the history of the Jewish displacement in Italy will open new historical perspectives of analysis in varied fields of study.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to thank the institutions which supported this research: the Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research (Jerusalem) and the Wiener Library for the Study of Holocaust and Genocide (London) through the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI). In addition, since I am currently a Saul Kagan Fellow in Advanced Shoah Studies, I would like to express my gratitude to the Claims Conference for Material Against Germany.

Part One

**«IT IS A PROBLEM ESSENTIALLY OF THE HOMELESSNESS
OF A PEOPLE». THE JEWISH DISPLACED PERSONS IN ITALY
SINCE 1943**

Chapter 1

The Jewish Displacement after World War II

The Italian Case

DPs: a «Stormed-Tossed Mass of Humanity» in Post-War Europe

World War II has been defined as «primarily a civilian experience»¹. The military operations were concentrated at the beginning and at the end of the war, whereas the six-year conflict was essentially a period of occupation, deportation, repression, exploitation and extermination of civilians.

Between 1939 and 1945, 36.5 million Europeans died because of the war². The overall death toll was unbelievable, but even more shocking was the number of civilians murdered: about 16 million died in the territory of the Soviet Union, 5 million in the territory of pre-war Poland, 1.4 million in Yugoslavia, 430,000 in France, 270,000 in Hungary, 204,000 in Netherlands, 204,000 in Rumania. Among these – especially among the Eastern-European countries – were some 5.7 million Jews and 221,000 gypsies³.

Moreover, among the staggering consequence of the war, there were about 30 million people who were uprooted, transplanted, expelled, deported and dispersed between 1939 and 1945⁴. The outbreak of World War II triggered in Europe a mass flight of populations that led to the greatest wave of refugees until that time: millions of people were uprooted from their towns, villages, countryside and cities. Europe had never seen so many refugees: some of them left their homeland before the arrival of the advancing armies; others were forced to move elsewhere, deported to forced labour and to concentration camps.

With the Allied invasion and the gradual retreat of the Axis armies, the phenomenon reoccurred in the West, as refugees returned to the liberated areas. The protracted fighting in 1944 and 1945 and the Allies' bombing campaigns produced colossal damages. Furthermore, the Red Army advancing from the East destroyed, raped and massacred

¹ Jutd Tony, *Postwar: A History of Europe Since 1945*, (London: W. Heinemann, 2005), 13. In this extensive volume, Jutd significantly addressed the refugee problem in the general context of post-war Europe (in particular, see: 27-40)

² Ibid., 13.

³ Ibid., 17-18.

⁴ Kulisher, *Europe on the Move*, 305; Vernant, *Refugee*, 30.

millions of people and imposed prohibitions over the return of populations to the Soviet Union territories, thus forcing thousands of new refugees to flee westward. Western Europe absorbed millions of new refugees from the East: those who had run away from the fury of the advancing Red Army and those who were prevented from returning to the USSR⁵. This aggravated even more the situation of the displacement and increased the number of homeless orphans as well as that of deaths, with a large unbalance between men and women⁶. In Europe, the largest group of refugees were those deported to forced labour, followed by prisoners of war (POW), political opponents and those persecuted for ethnic and religious reasons⁷.

During the war, approximately 9 million Jews came under German control, of whom only a small number survived or succeeded in gaining admission to the free world countries before the war broke out. Of Polish Jewry, the largest Jewish community in pre-War Europe numbering about 3.3 million, only about 82,500 (2.5 %) survived; in Germany, only 50,000 of 221,000 Jews were still alive at the War's end⁸. In the concentration camps in Nazi-controlled Europe in 1945, the Allies found alive only a few hundred thousand Jews, many of whom died tragically of sickness and malnutrition immediately after liberation, while still in the camps.

Of the huge and vibrant Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe there remained only fragments, scattered throughout the ruins of the countries liberated by the Allied Armies. Thus, in spring 1945, the Jews were remarkably few within the great number of refugees, making up only 5 to 8 percent of the total displaced population⁹. Though the Jews remained constantly a small percentage of the post-war refugees, many of them became part of that second wave of displacement, which occurred in Europe after the Allies' victory. Many refugees – for different reasons - failed in their attempt to come back home, being exile once again. Indeed, the war has been ended, but anti-Semitic episodes and pogroms occurred even after the war¹⁰.

⁵ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 297.

⁶ For a focus on the displaced children in post-war Europe, see Zahra, *Lost Children*.

⁷ Judd, *Postwar*, 23. Among the most recent studies on the refugees' crisis caused by World War II see: Marrus, *Unwanted*, 122-346; Wyman, *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons*; Salvatici, *Senza casa e senza paese*; Holian, *Between National Socialism*; Cohen, *In War's Wake*.

⁸ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 318. Among the most recent studies published on Polish Jewry during World War II, see: Gross Jan T., *The Holocaust in Occupied Poland: New Findings and New Interpretations*, (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

⁹ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 318.

¹⁰ About anti-semitism after the end of World War II, see: Gross Jan T., *Fear. Anti-Semitism In Poland After Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation*, (New York: Random House, 2006), 81-166; Bankier David, *The*

The military authorities were called to handle urgently with this exceptional humanitarian crisis, which further threatened the precarious post-war Europe. Civilian movements – both legal and illegal - after the end of the military operations, was seen by the Allies as the main threat to the post-war reconstruction and the re-establishment of the social security in Europe.

Already in June 1944, the Displaced Persons Branch of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) – headed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower - prepared an outline plan for the control, care, repatriation and resettlement of refugees. According to the plan's provisions – put forth in a practical handbook distributed throughout the Allied military zones of occupation - «this storm-tossed mass of humanity»¹¹ was to be divided between «refugees» and «displaced persons». Civilians uprooted within their own countries because of the conflict and wishing to come back home belonged to the former category, whereas people who by cause of the War were outside the boundaries of their previous countries and who required repatriation or resettlement were termed displaced persons – commonly referred to as DPs¹².

The nationality line was the primary organization principle, it was central both for the immediate management of the DPs as well as for planning their repatriation.

Nationality was the criterion followed by the Allies in gathering these men, women and children in the British and US zones of occupation in Germany, Austria and Italy. They were temporary accommodated in assembly centers set up *ad hoc* or in the former concentration camps transformed by the Allies to refugee camps. The use of the “camps” facilitate the assembly and the screening of the DPs. Additionally, it was instrumental in providing the DPs with basic services, such as housing, food and medical care. In particular, the concentration of the DPs according to their nationality made it easier to control movement and to organize repatriation, identified by the Allies as the quickest manner to alleviate the refugee crisis¹³.

The military authorities guaranteed international assistance following the nationality line: only those who were allied nationals were recognized as displaced persons eligible for help and

Jews Are Coming Back: The Return of the Jews to their Countries of Origin After WW2, (New York: Yad Vashem-Berghahn Books, 2005).

¹¹ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 300.

¹² Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 115.

¹³ About the use of the camps as a spatial form of care and control, see: Malkki, “Refugees and Exile”; for a broader discussion about the genealogy of the “camp”, see: Rahola Federico, *Zone definitivamente temporanee. I luoghi dell'umanità in eccesso*, (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2003).

protection as well as those who were persecuted for religious, racial or political reasons. This criterion, from the one hand imposed the assignment of a collective responsibility for the position took on by the single states during the conflict; and, on the other hand, kept out all those civilians originating from the so-called «enemy countries» as well as those persecuted in the territories then annexed to the Soviet Union or governed by communist regimes¹⁴. As demonstrated by the historiographical debate of the Refugee Studies, the importance assigned to nationality to the category of DP, besides being inconsistent, led to several consequences:

«The displaced persons was an invention of the war years, a categorical novelty intended to distinguish between those who deserved Allied assistance and those who did not. It employed nationality as the primarily criterion of entitlement, though in a manner that incorporated, and thus sactioned, the denationalizations of the post-war settlement»¹⁵.

The Jewish displacement – which is the focus of this research - could be probably considered as one of the most evident case that sheds light on that contradictions and consequences caused by the nationality line in managing the DPs.

Indeed, even though the Jews constituted a relatively reduced number of refugees, the Jewish displacement posed a special problem for the Allies. The question revolved mainly around the Jews' demand to be recognized not according to their former nationality, but as Jews and survivors, thus as a separate group requiring special consideration. Nevertheless, the Allies' planning for the post-war displacement according to nationality paid little attention to the reasons why people had been displaced. Persecutions were not considered as cause of displacement, but at the end of the war the Allies were compelled to re-debate this issue. In the case of the Jews, the recognition by the US Allies of the “persecute” as a new category among the DPs, led to the gathering of the Jewish DPs in separate assembly centers. The same did not occurred in the British zones of occupation¹⁶.

Moreover, many Jewish displaced persons strongly opposed to the repatriation imposed by the SHAEF policy as the quickest solution to the refugee crisis. They claimed for resettlement, longing to leave Europe: many of them hoped to reach any parent in the US,

¹⁴ The nationality line used by the Allies in order to classify the refugees of the World War II was harshly criticized by those who found themselves deprived of international assistance, see Cohen G. Daniel, “Naissance d'une nation: les personnes déplacées de l'après-guerre, 1945-1951”, in *Genèses*, 38 (2000), 56-78.

¹⁵ Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 42.

¹⁶ The recognition of a special status for the Jews will be discussed in the second part of this dissertation. About the topic see: Brenner Michael, “Displaced Persons”, in Cavaglioni Alberto (ed. by), *Dizionario dell'Olocausto*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), 212-220; for an analysis of displaced persons and the question of persecution see: Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 56-76.

South America, Australia, Canada, etc.; others wished to sail for Palestine, motivated by a more or less solid affiliation to Zionism.

Nevertheless, from the start, the management of the Jews who survived the Nazi persecution «resisted any notion of Jewish particularity», as stated Michael R. Marrus in his pioneering study about the European refugees in the twentieth century¹⁷. Between the end of the war in 1945 and the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the acknowledgment of a Jewish claim to special consideration was constantly negotiated between Great Britain and the United States. The Allies were unable to find a univocal solution to the Jewish displacement: on the one hand Great Britain - at that time Mandatory Power on Palestine – tried to avoid that the situation of the Jews in Europe interfered with its policy in Palestine; whereas, on the other hand, the United States – with the newly elected president Truman – declared their support to the Jewish requests both of being recognized as Jews and of immigrating to Palestine¹⁸.

This complex issue did not addressed only the Jewish DPs and military authorities in the aftermath of the war. It involved also national governments, international institutions and the refugee agencies. Indeed, the precarious conditions of the Jews in Europe at the end of the war had a worldwide resonance and the public opinion as well as the private organizations had a fundamental role in assuring respectful living conditions to the Jews displaced across Europe as well as in pushing the the Allies, the international institutions and the national governments for a definitive resolution of the problem.

The Jewish problem affected Europe for years, and the establishment of the State of Israel did not coincided with the end of the Jewish displacement itself. Notwithstanding their undoubtedly reduced number, many Jews (as many other refugees of the War) continued to live as refugees even after 1948. Some of them longed to reach countries other than Israel or particular personal situations – often linked to their old age or bad health conditions - prevented their resettlement.

People uprooted by the war, continued to cross boundaries for years, driven to rebuild anew their lives. The histories of these men, women and children searching for a new home went in parallel with that of the history of the reconstruction of the countries they had crossed, the diplomatic relations among the states, the dynamics of sharing the responsibilities for the

¹⁷ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 331

¹⁸ About the different position of the British and the US governments on the Jew's demand to be recognized as Jews and to migrate to Palestine, see: Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, in particular pp. 13-153.

legacy of the war, the international discourse about humanitarianism and the definition of the refugee status.

The Refugee Problem in the International Shared Agenda, an Overview

The management of the refugee problem began to be discussed at an international level in correspondence with the Balkan Wars (1912-13), the Russian Revolution (1917) and World War I and the results of the related peace treaties. It was in that moment that mass movement began to be perceived as threatening to destabilize the European order and to be progressively discussed by the League of Nations in the following years. Nevertheless, after the first action undertaken by the League of Nations on behalf of the refugees¹⁹, it required another thirty years until the Geneva Convention in 1951 would normatively define the refugee status on the international level²⁰. During those long years, the refugee status had neither a universal nor an individual validity. It was conferred to certain groups of people on the basis of national origins as well as specific events that caused their displacement²¹.

Immediately after National Socialism's rise to power in Germany in 1933, the League of Nations founded temporary commissions in order to handle the problem related to the refugees escaping the German-controlled territories²². The endless procession of refugees

¹⁹ Forced population upheavals, the creation of new States and changed boundaries of existing ones, the pressure of the humanitarian organizations, the newly founded League of Nations recognized the urgency to monitor these movements through a specialized office. In June 1921, the League of Nations established the High Commissioner for Refugees, set up in order to respond to the massive population movement provoked by the Russian Civil War. The High Commissioner for Refugees responded through the creation of the so-called Nansen Passport, an international identity certificate. After establishing the first international body concerned with refugees – the High Commissioner on Refugees, headed by Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930) – the League of Nations approved a series of conventions, which progressively redefined the status of refugee and implemented the measures of protection and assistance previously adopted. About the Nansen Passport and the related policy, see: Marrus, *Unwanted*, 51-121.

²⁰ About actions undertaken on behalf of the refugees by the League of Nations between the two World Wars see: Skran Claudena M., *Refugees in Inter-War Europe: The Emergency of a Regime*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

²¹ With reference to the twentieth century as characterized by mass population movement see: Marrus, *Unwanted*; Sassen Saskia, *Migranti, Coloni, Rifugiati*, (Milano: Feltrinelli: 1999); Kushner Tony and Knox Katharine, *Refugees in an Age of Genocide. Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century*, (London&Portland: Frank Cass, 1999).

²² In October 1933, the League of Nations founded the High Commissioner for Refugees Coming from Germany. This Commission was in charge of negotiating and directing an international plan to solve the problems due to the influx of German refugees (and, from 1938, also Austrian refugees) into neighbouring countries. In December 1938, this Commission as well as the Nansen International Office, which had replaced the High Commission after Nansen's death in 1930 were disbanded. The estimated 600,000 refugees under the mandate of the two above-mentioned international bodies became the responsibility of the newly established Office of the High Commissioner for All Refugees under the League of Nations Protection. The Office operated from September 1938 through 1946 and its main function was the management of the Humanitarian Fund, which was previously under the administration of the Nansen Office. This Commission did not give direct assistance to refugees; instead, it assisted governments and private organizations involved in rescuing refugees through programs of emigration and settlement. See Vernant, *Refugee*, 25-26.

from Germany and Austria and the anti-Semitic policy of the Third Reich, led to public pressure on the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, to call for an international conference to discuss and negotiate the migration policies on behalf of the refugees' resettlement. The Conference was held in Evian (Northern France) from 6 to 15 July 1938 with the participation of delegates of 32 States²³. With the upcoming discussions at the Evian Conference in mind, the Royal Institute of International Affairs appointed Sir John Hope Simpson to conduct a survey on the civilian movements in Europe²⁴. The results was published in a 1938 report entitled *The Refugee Problem*, and became the first of a series of these kind of surveys conducted by specialized observers under the auspices of national governments²⁵.

In his preliminary findings, written before the Evian Conference on the refugee question and the role of future international assistance, Sir Simpson expressed his hesitation at offering a comprehensive definition of the term "refugee"²⁶. In his introduction, Simpson drew attention to the inadequacy of the «purely legal» definition in use until that time to identify some national groups. Simpson suggested evaluating several new aspects in the analysis of the displacement, both in terms of its origin from the crisis of the nation-states and its long-term consequences²⁷. According to Sir Simpson, a refugee - finding himself in another country and deprived of legal protection, mutual support, access to employment and freedom of movement - was «defenceless» and this condition stemmed from «his inability to demand the protection of any State»²⁸. Therefore, in delineating his/her «essential quality», Sir Simpson described the refugee as a person forced to move to a country other than his own because of political events that could endanger his/her life, consequently preventing him/her from returning home²⁹. Beyond the result of this pioneering analysis conducted by Simpson on the situation of the refugees in some European areas, the Evian Conference itself essentially did not put forth tangible proposals for solving the problem³⁰. It rather served as

²³ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 165-166, 170-172, and 214-216.

²⁴ The Royal Institute for International Affairs is an independent policy organization founded in 1920 and located in London. It engages governments, the private sector, the civil society and its members in open debate and confidential discussion on the most significant developments in international affairs.

²⁵ Simpson, *Report of a Survey*.

²⁶ Simpson, *Preliminary Report*.

²⁷ Simpson, *Preliminary Report*, 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁰ The study conducted by Sir John Hope Simpson was the first investigation to be commissioned to specialized migration observers. See also the investigation of Jacques Vernant and Louise Holborn, specialized in public law and international relations as well as those of the two policy makers Eugene M. Kulischer e Malcolm J.

a stage upon which delegates simply pronounced statements in order to legitimize the restrictive policies on migration existing in their own countries. Nevertheless, according to the resolution reached on the 14th of July 1938, the Conference established an Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) to be based in London³¹.

Since IGCR operated during wartime, its effective actions were deeply limited and it relied on diplomats to obtain agreements with receiving countries' governments to permanently resettle the refugees. According to the report of the League Assembly, 400,000 refugees had left the Reich between 1933 and 1939, of whom 360,000-370,000 were Jews³².

Kristallnacht in November 1938 demonstrated the implacable and persistent atrocity of the Nazis toward the Jews, thus worsening the refugee crisis in the following years³³. The Nazi policy of persecution and, later, extermination of the Jews in Germany and in German-occupied countries shocked public opinion and accelerated the mobilization of private Jewish organizations, that made all efforts in order to provide assistance to European Jewry. Pressure of the American Jewish Congress and public opinion in general, led the United States and the United Kingdom to propose a consultation in order to discuss possible solutions to the refugees' problems. Delegates of the US and the UK met in Bermuda from April 19 to 30, 1943 to debate this urgent question. Private organizations were not allowed to take part or even to observe the meeting. The Bermuda Conference was seen by the Jewish world as «a second Evian». Even before the Conference assembled, a very pessimistic view prevailed. The fact that it took place in an isolated island and that no delegates of the Jewish and non-Jewish organizations were admitted provoked apprehensions: «it was evident from the very beginning that the conference was arranged in such a way as to escape the control

Proudfoot: Vernant, *Refugee*; Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*; Kulischer, *Europe on the Move*; Proudfoot, *European Refugees*.

³¹ The IGCR first met in London on 3 August 1938 and was active until June 1947. Its mandate included not only persons who have already left their country of origin and who have not yet established themselves permanently elsewhere, but also persons who have not yet left their country of origin (Germany, including Austria), but who must emigrate because of their political opinions, religious beliefs or racial origin. With the purpose to carry out its mandate, the IGCR was charged with negotiating with the Reich in order to limit the expulsions and to allow the refugees to bring out with them financial and personal assets; as well as with developing programs of resettlement through bilateral agreement with the member governments of the IGCR. About the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, see Marrus, *Unwanted*, 171; Vernant, *Refugee*, 26; Sjöberg Tommie, *The Powers and the Persecuted. The Refugee Problem and the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR) 1938-1947*, (Lund: Lund University Press, 1991).

³² Kulischer, *Europe on the Move*, 191; Simpson, *Report of a Survey*, 139-142 and 148-149; Sherman Ari J., *Island Refuge. Britain and Refugees from the Third Reich 1933-39*, (Berkley&Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 269-272;

³³ *Kristallnacht* - literally, "Night of Crystal" and also known as the "Night of Broken Glass" - refers to the wave of violent anti-Jewish pogrom which took place on November 9 and 10, 1938 throughout Germany, annexed Austria, and in areas of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia recently occupied by the Nazi.

of public opinion», it was reported in a pamphlet – eloquently titled *From Evian to Bermuda* – published by a group of Jewish organizations after the Bermuda Conference³⁴.

Nevertheless, as the meeting came to be called, Chaim Weizmann – president of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) – submitted a document on behalf of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Weizmann essentially proposed the recognition of Palestine as the only practicable solution to the problem of the Jewish refugees and proposed as well demanded for the abolition of the British White Paper policy of 1939³⁵.

«The statement that the world is divided into countries in which the Jews cannot live and countries which they must not enter has proved only too true. [...] Palestine should for the following reasons be given principal consideration: (a) as Jews coming to the Jewish National Home they would be welcomed in every possible way by their fellow Jews there. [...] So far as the refugees are concerned, they would feel themselves not exiles, but persons returning home. It would constitute the first step in their psychological rehabilitation. [...] (b) From the practical point of view, Palestine by reason of proximity to the Balkan countries has important advantages [...] and greatly simplifying the transportation problem. (c) Once in Palestine the gradual absorption and integration of these refugees into the economic life of the country could in due course be effected»³⁶.

«It is a problem essentially of the homelessness of a people», continued Weizman, stressing the incompatibility of the 1939 White Paper with the Balfour Declaration: «It cannot stand the test of the time or of justice, and it should be abandoned forthwith»³⁷.

At the same time, also the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs submitted its memorandum to the Bermuda Conference. This Joint Committee was the result of a mass meeting which took place in New York at the Madison Square Garden on the 1st of March 1943. In order to coordinate activities to save Jews from the Nazi extermination, the American Jewish Congress proposed the establishment of a Joint

³⁴ The Wiener Library (hereafter WL), M 430/S262, The Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews (ed. by), *From Evian to Bermuda: Prepared for the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe* (New York, July 1943), 3-6.

³⁵ After the failure both of the proposed partition of Palestine in 1937 by the British Royal Commission headed by William Robert Peel and the St. James Conference in 1939, the British Government decided to act unilaterally with regard to the Arab revolts in Palestine at that time. In 1939 the White Paper was published. It explicated the British policy until the end of the Mandate: it limited the Aliyah for the following five years to seventy-five thousand units, fifteen thousand per year. For a general overview, see: Gelvin L. James, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 151-164.

³⁶ WL, M 446/19, Jewish Agency for Palestine (ed. by), *Memorandum submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference by the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, April 1943, 2-3.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, which was founded two weeks later by the major US Jewish organizations³⁸:

On April 14, 1943, the Joint Committee submitted a memorandum to the Bermuda Conference with the purpose to give resonance to the Jewish organizations' involvement in the rescue of Jews from Nazi occupied Europe. Moreover, in the document the Joint Committee stated that it would become the duty of the United Nations to turn to a planned program of determined action, looking toward the release of a substantial number of Jews from Europe, the creation of sanctuaries for them in Allied and neutral countries, and the feeding under appropriate guarantees of those who are compelled to remain within Nazi-occupied countries.

Even the Joint Committee supported the assumption that England should be persuaded to open the doors of Palestine for Jewish immigration, but it also stressed the fact that only an international shared effort would relieve the Jews' situation in Europe. It called the national governments for reviewing their immigration policy in order to serve as haven of refuge for the Jews escaping Nazi persecution. Moreover, the Joint Committee addressed its final request to the United Nations that were urged «to establish an appropriate intergovernmental agency, to which full authority and power should be given to implement the program of rescue»³⁹.

The Bermuda Conference was perceived by the Jewish institutions as a stratagem to calm down the public opinion shocked by the passive attitude of the British government toward the mass extermination of the European Jews. It was seen as the umpteenth disastrous attempt to find a solution to the Jewish refugees' problem, whose main limit was the refusal to recognize Palestine among the solution:

«The majority of the Jewish people has always believed that Palestine is the easiest solution of the Jewish problem. In fact, it is the only solution. That is why every refugee conference, be it Evian, Bermuda or any other, is doomed to failure if it excluded

³⁸ The organization which took part in the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs were: the American Jewish Congress, the B'nai B'rith, the American Emergency Committee for Zionist Affairs, ee, the American Committee of Zionist Emergency Affairs, the American Section of Agudat Israel, the American Jewish Committee, the Jewish Labor Committee, the Synagogue Council of America, the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and the United Palestine Appeal. Moreover, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the General Jewish Council participated as observers.

³⁹ WL, M 318/S71, Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs (ed. by), *Program for the rescue of Jews from Nazi occupied Europe : submitted to the Bermuda Refugee Conference*, April 14, 1943, 2-4.

Palestine. Today, after seven years of fruitless search for an empty country, this point of view is accepted by every honest thinking man»⁴⁰.

Nevertheless, shortly afterwards, this possibility began to be discussed between Great Britain and the United States. Meanwhile, the unsuccessful meeting proposed no practical steps for rescuing the Jews but did suggest widening the IGCR membership and preparing a program by the United Nations for dealing with the post-war Jewish refugee problem⁴¹.

At the end of World War II, the Allied Army could not face the displaced persons alone. The urgency to solve the post-war crisis drove to a well-defined cooperation among military authorities, institutional and private agencies through a system of mandates and agreements. This network aimed at providing assistance programmes to the DPs, combining for the first time immediate relief and physical, moral, social and cultural rehabilitation.

During the period of transition from the League of Nations to the birth of the United Nations, a specialized rescue programs was prepared by the Allies, with provisions to manage the expected mass of refugees at the end of World War II. It was beyond the means of the already existing refugee agencies and the voluntary organizations to address a problem of this scale: an international relief plan was the only possible solution⁴².

On the 9th of November 1943, 44 Allied nations established the United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). It was the culminating point of the work of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-war Requirements, set up at the meeting of the Allied Governments held at St. James' Palace in London, on September 1941. Under the chairman of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, UNRRA was charged with handling the urgent economic and social questions expected to arise in Europe after the Nazi surrender.

As will be detailed afterwards, UNRRA purpose of statement's keywords were "relief", "rehabilitation" and "reconstruction". The range of service which UNRRA was called to provide relief supplies -i.e. essential consumer goods to meet immediate needs, such as food, fuel, clothing, shelter, medical supplies – as well as relief service, such as health and welfare. According to Resolution n. 1, the UNRRA mandate included:

⁴⁰ WL, M 430/S262, The Committee for a Jewish Army of Stateless and Palestinian Jews (ed. by), *From Evian to Bermuda : Prepared for the Emergency Conference to Save the Jewish People of Europe* (New York, July 1943), 7-8.

⁴¹ Vernant, *Refugee*, 27-28.

⁴² For an analysis of the development of an international plan for the rescue of post-war Europe that led to the establishment of UNRRA, see: Shephard Ben, "«Becoming Planning Minded»: The Theory and Practice of Relief 1940-1945", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 43, 3 (2008), 405-419; moreover, for an examination for the British planning for humanitarian assistance after World War II, see: Steinert Johannes-Dieter, "British Humanitarian Assistance: Wartime Planning and Postwar Realities", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 43, n. 3, (2008), 421-435.

«assistance in caring for, and maintaining records of, persons found in any areas under the control of any of the United Nations who by reasons of war have been displaced from their homes, and, in agreement with the appropriate governments, military authorities or other agencies, in securing their repatriation or return»⁴³.

Furthermore, UNRRA would guarantee rehabilitation provisions aiming at enable the recipient country to produce and transport relief supplies as well as the rehabilitation of public utilities so far as they can be repaired or restored to meet immediate needs.

When the UNRRA concluded its mission in Europe in the mid-1947, the refugee problem was far from being resolved. The United Nations decided to entrust the question to the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which dealt exclusively with resettlement of the refugees in Europe and was active until 1951⁴⁴.

The staggering increase in the number of refugees across Europe called for a collective responsibility for the problem by the international community. The necessity to assist these helpless people became part of an international shared agenda, which involved governmental institutions as well as private organizations at a transnational level. It was during those years that humanitarianism developed in its “modern” shape, whose keywords became internationalization, secularization and professionalization⁴⁵.

In the specific case of the Jewish DPs, several British as well as US Jewish organizations undoubtedly provided much needed assistance to the Jews. The British Jewish community of England actively supported aid for the Jewish DPs⁴⁶. Its British Central Fund founded and financed the civilian assistance teams of the Jewish Relief Unit (JRU), which served the Jews of the British zone. Whereas, the main US Jewish organizations which were instrumental in the rehabilitation of the Jewish survivors were the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT). JDC – known also as AJDC or simply “Joint” – is a humanitarian organization founded in 1914 as the result of the merger of three Jewish organizations with the pupose to create a single fund for the support of the persecuted Jews⁴⁷. Instead, ORT was a Jewish

⁴³ Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, vol.3, 43 and 51.

⁴⁴ Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*.

⁴⁵ For an analysis of the European displacement as a landmark for the developent of the humanitarian approach, see: Cohen G. Daniel, “European Displacement and the Birth of Modern Humanitarianism in the Aftermath of World War Two”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 3 (2008), 437-449; see moreover: Salvatici, *Nel nome degli altri*, 185-192; Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 58-78.

⁴⁶ Steinert, “British Humanitarian Assistance”.

⁴⁷ For the history of the JDC, see: Bauer Yehuda, *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929-1939*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974); Id., *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945*, (Detroit: Wayne State University

specialized organization which provided work program in order to support the Jewish resettlement⁴⁸.

World War II could be considered a turning point, it coincided with the moment in which the refugee status began to be «institutionally or discursively approached as an international humanitarian problem»⁴⁹. With its international rescue program, the establishment of UNRRA (and then of IRO) marked the transition from military to the international as well as from the private to the public realm in relief and rehabilitation. It contributed to make the machinery of international relief part of a system of institutions, through which the voluntary societies began to work under the UN agencies supervision, after obtaining proper authorizations.

The administration of the displaced persons after World War II provided a testing ground for the rise of new humanitarian practices and ideologies. In this historical conjecture, the voluntary organizations gave an essential contribution in supporting the relief and rehabilitation of the refugees and acquired new roles often linked to the strengthening of national bonds among certain groups of refugees.

«Refugees grow by leaps and bounds»: the DPs Sub-Commission in Italy

Historiography usually sets V-day in Europe as the starting point for any survey on the post-war period and the related refugee problem. Indeed, spring 1945 marked officially the end of the Reich, but the Allied Army had faced the refugees well before that date.

In July 1943, with Operation Husky - or what it is commonly known as “the invasion of Sicily” – the Allies first set step in the so-called European Theatre, and began liberating the southern regions of Italy from Fascism.

The Allies’ arrival brought military as well as socio-political consequences. In 1943, the liberated regions of south Italy came under the governance of AMGOT - Allied Military Government on Occupied Territories, whereas the northern regions were occupied by the

Press, 1981); Id., *Out of the Ashes, The impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989); Handlin Oscar, *A continuing task. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (1914-1964)*, (New York: Random House, 1965).

⁴⁸ For the history of ORT, see: Shapiro Leon, *The History of ORT. A Jewish Movement for Social Change*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1980); Rader Jack, *By the Skill of Their Hands: The Story of Ort*, (Geneva: World Ort Union Centre International, 1970); Kavanaugh Sarah, *ORT, the Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008); Person Katarzyna and Bracha Rachel (eds. by), *ORT and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors*, (London: World ORT, 2012).

⁴⁹ Malkki, “Refugee and Exile”, 499.

Nazi Army. In July 1943, the Gran Council of Fascism and the Monarchy voted a motion of no-confidence in Mussolini, who was subsequently arrested. King Vittorio Emanuele II appointed Marshall Pietro Badoglio as head of a provisional government while finding refuge himself in Brindisi (Apulia) in order to save his Kingdom and to seek Allied support. He declared the continuation of his Monarchy and the establishment of the Kingdom of Southern Italy with Brindisi as capital city, while Mussolini escaped prison and founded his puppet Italian Social Republic (RSI) in Salò (Lombardy)⁵⁰.

Thus began a period of transition in Italian national history, defined variously by Italian historiographers as «war of resistance», «civil war», «class conflict», «national war», etc. In redefining its national identity, at that time Italy was split in two: on the one hand Mussolini – supported by Hitler – attempted to maintain his dictatorship, deporting political opponents as well as national and religious minorities; on the other hand resistance movements in Italy were gaining the upper hand while the Allies advanced⁵¹.

On the 8th of September 1943, the Italian Government signed an armistice agreement, declaring the unconditioned capitulation of Italy and its status of cobelligerent country. Italian liberated territories came gradually under control of AMGOT, and in order to ensure the fulfilment of the terms of the armistice – the Foreign Ministers of the United Kingdom, the USA and the USSR proposed during the Moscow Conference (18 October - 11 November, 1943) the establishment of an Allied Control Commission (ACC). Besides supervising the execution of the terms of the armistice agreement, the ACC aimed at organizing military government operations in direct support of combat troops, providing immediate help to civilians in order to prevent disease and unrest, preparing the governmental administration and economy for return to civilian control and serving as spokesmen of the Allies to the Italian Government⁵².

Under the ACC, liberated Italy was gradually divided into three main Control Areas: (1) Southern Italy, including Sicily, Calabria, part of Apulia, Basilicata and Campania with Headquarter in Naples; (2) Central Italy, including Sardinia, part of Apulia, Molise, Lazio, Umbria, Tuscany, Abruzzi and Marche with Headquarter in Rome; and, (3) Northern Italy

⁵⁰ Ginsborg Paul, *A History Of Contemporary Italy: Society And Politics, 1943-1988*, (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 11-17.

⁵¹ See Claudio Pavone's masterpiece on Resistance in Italy: Pavone Claudio, *A Civil War: A History of the Italian Resistance*, (London and New York: Verso, 2014); Battaglia Roberto, *Storia della Resistenza italiana: 8 settembre 1943-25 aprile 1945*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1964); Peli Santo, *Storia della Resistenza in Italia*, (Torino: Einaudi: 2006).

⁵² Ellwood W. David, *L'alleato nemico. La politica dell'occupazione anglo-americana in Italia 1943-1946*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1977), 43-47.

with Emilia Romagna, Liguria, Piedmont, Lombard, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Trentino-Alto Adige with Headquarter in Milan⁵³.

The ACC administered the Italian territories by means of a network of sub-committees and offices located in the British controlled areas, until September 1947, when the British Armies left the country⁵⁴. The ACC was a military unit composed almost exclusively of British and US officials, but responsibilities were not equally shared, since the British headed 16 of the 25 ACC sub-commissions.

According to the historian David W. Ellwood – who analysed thoroughly the Allies' policy in Italy between 1943 and 1947 – the Allies' landing in Sicily marked a turning point in the development of the war. From that moment, the Allies started to focus on the connection between their military mission and their political interests in Europe as well as in the Mediterranean area⁵⁵. Through its prominent presence in the ACC, Great Britain strove to secure its control over Italy, thus ensuring direct access to the Mediterranean. Moreover, the exclusion of USSR and the reduced power of the US in the ACC could ensure a more effective defence of the British interests in the Mediterranean against external threats⁵⁶.

In order to facilitate military operations, caring for civilians became more necessary and the regulation of mass population movements became one of the main purpose of the ACC. Several days after the Allies' landing in Sicily in July 1943, a memorandum received by AMGOT reported: «there appears to be a statistic refugee problem in a number of towns»⁵⁷ and on the 5th of July 1943, a confidential note from the Special Committee on Migration revealed that «the most substantial problem of displaced persons in Italy consist[ed] of the internal movements». This was the result of evacuations by the government of citizens from coastal areas and from southern Italy towards the centre and the north, of population movements from rural districts to the cities caused by the bombing as well as counter movements from the cities to the rural areas⁵⁸.

⁵³ See APPENDIX 1. Please, note that Italian regions are reported with the actual boundaries. See Archivio Centrale di Stato [Central Archives of the State] (hereafter, ACS), *A.C.C. P.W. & U. Sub. Com., Control Areas and Regions*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 5B, Displaced Persons Sub-Commission, October 1943 – February 1944.

⁵⁴ On occupied Italy, see Ellwood, *L'alleanza*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 29-47.

⁵⁷ ACS, *Amgot Fantox*, 24 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

⁵⁸ ACS, *Displaced Population and Groups in Italy*, 5 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

The internal mass migration of populations interfered greatly with the Allies' need for transportation and free movement of troops and logistics, and the army therefore looked upon the internal movement of the displaced persons in Italy as a major threat to the conduct of military operations. In order to manage this precarious situation the Special Committee on Migration suggested the immediate identification of the uprooted people and the adoption of urgent measures in order to avoid interference with the Allies' transportation needs or possible disorder resulting from crowding on the roads. The main obstacles to the quick fulfilment of these objectives were on the one hand the difficulties of collaborating with local authorities and on the other hand the lack of a reliable communication system, totally undermined by the war.

The large number of reports and memoranda prepared by the Special Committee on Migration before the signing of the armistice in September 1943 reveal the alarming need of the Allies to find an effective solution to the management of the DPs in Italy.

On the 20th of July 1943, the Special Committee on Migration distributed a secret outline regarding the adoption of policies to be uniformly followed by the military authorities while in control of the territory and subsequently by designated civilian representatives. The document was divided into three sections that delineated, in order, the categories of DPs, the policies with respect to their treatment and the general administration of the DPs' problem itself⁵⁹. The new provisions of the Special Committee on Migration, defined as displaced persons: allied prisoners of war, allied and neutral civilian internees, allied nationals who had been impressed into forced labour, the displaced Italian nationals and political prisoners⁶⁰. Additionally, the Committee provided general guidelines for the treatment of each group of DPs. The first step was their identification by nationality, followed by examination of their political loyalty and finally, their repatriation or return home whenever war conditions permitted it. Moreover, in order to easily handle the DPs' question, the

⁵⁹ ACS, *Proposed Recommendations to Military Authorities with Respect to Displaced Groups in Italy*, 20 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

⁶⁰ The provision gave a detailed description of the categories of displaced persons. It included (1) Allied prisoners of war confined in camps or under military control in labour battalions; (2) Allied and neutral civilian internees confined solely because of nationality or minor infringements of regulations with respect to the conduct of aliens, in camps or in restricted residence in designed villages; (3) Allied Nationals having the status of forced labourers; (4) Displaced Italian nationals: evacuees from coast or other military areas, civilian refugees from military action or persons displaced on racial grounds; (5) political prisoners, including natives and foreigners confined in prisons or concentration camps for racial, religious or political reasons; (6) other Axis nationals who would have the status of prisoners of war when captured. See: ACS, *Proposed Recommendations to Military Authorities with Respect to Displaced Groups in Italy*, 20 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

Committee suggested the creation within the Civil Affairs Unit of the Military Command of two separate sections, one to be charged with the registration and administration of the Displaced Allied Nationals, and the other to handle the Displaced Italian Nationals.

By the end of July, the Special Committee on Migration distributed another document, this time marked as «confidential», outlining «the problem of the displaced persons in Italy»⁶¹. It was a study conducted by the Committee itself, that by focusing in particular on internally displaced Italians, highlighted issues that should be taken into account in administering the DPs' situation. The investigation stressed the importance of being aware of the number of the displaced persons, whence they came, where they have gone and the reasons for their displacement as well as the desire of these persons to return to their former domiciles and the advisability of granting such desires. Identifying the displaced persons, collecting information concerning national organizations dealing with them and monitoring the attitude of other groups towards the DPs were— according to the Special Committee on Migration - to be considered as fundamental steps in order to take care for them and to delineate an organic policy for their transportation and employment⁶².

In this early stage of the Italian campaign, the Allies identified two categories of DPs: the Italian civilian nationals uprooted because of the war and the refugees evacuated from North Africa before the occupation. Italians refugees were expected «to be returned in due course to their domiciles but in the meanwhile must be cared for locally», whereas those coming from North Africa were divided between Italians and other nationals. The former, with or without relatives and home, were to be the charge of the Italian Government; the latter were to be treated as refugees and be in the charge of the AMGOT⁶³.

The advance of the Allied Army in continental Italy and the signing of the armistice contributed to intensify the refugee problem in the gradually liberated regions. Indeed, those were the regions where most of the Fascist concentration camps were located and where the Italian authorities had interned, beginning in 1940, the opponents to the Fascist Regime, as well as the «enemy aliens» residing in the Italian Kingdom. The former inmates of those concentration camps increased the number of the refugees in liberated Italy. Moreover, this figure swelled soon with the arrival of other Italian and Allied nationals released from

⁶¹ ACS, *Italy: the Problem of the Displaced Persons*, 27 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ ACS, *Amgot Fantox*, 24 July 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

concentration camps and others new arrivals coming from North Africa via Sicily and from the Balkans via Puglia.

According to a report of the DPs Sub-Commission on November 11, 1943 there were 4.759 displaced persons in the liberated Italian regions. As detailed in the tables below, the report offered an estimation of the civilians displaced in three areas of southern Italy, i.e. Apulia, Calabria and Sicily⁶⁴:

CIVILIANS DISPLACED IN BARI AREA, APULIA				
NATIONALITY	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL
Yugoslavs	2,672	289	92	3,053
Greeks	54	14	---	68
Poles	48	53	---	51
Russians	5	8	---	13
Czechs	5	2		7
French	10	32		42
Chinese	7			7
Tot.	2,801	398	92	3,241

CIVILIANS DISPLACED NEAR COSENZA, CALABRIA					
NATIONALITY	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN UNDER 16	PERSONS OVER 60	TOTAL
Yugoslavs	398	99	34	22	553
Czechs	315	76	39	24	454
Austrians	171	43	9	27	250
Germans	103	11	14	5	133
Chinese	36				36
Others (Ethiopians?)					12
Tot.	739	229	96	78	1,438

⁶⁴ ACS, *Internees and Displaced Persons Sub-Commission, 11 November 1943*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

CIVILIANS DISPLACED IN PALERMO AREA, SICILY			
NATIONALITY	MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
Yugoslavs	64	2	66
Greeks	9		9
Czechs	2		2
Poles	3		3
Tot.	78		Tot. 80

It appears that, among the largest group of refugees at that time in Italy, there were the Yugoslavs, who were around 77% of the total figure. The great number of Yugoslav refugees was due to the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia during the Second World War. In April 1941, Germany, Hungary and Italy occupied Yugoslavia, supported by the Ustaša, the right-wing nationalist Croatian party, and other irredentist minorities. In reaction to the active resistance movement in the Yugoslav territories under Italian occupation (in the provinces of Udine, Gorizia, Trieste, Pula and Fiume), the Italian government passed in September 1941 the «measures for the protection of the public order». These measures entailed the deportation of members of national minorities and opponents to Fascism⁶⁵. Most of these deportees were interned in concentration camps at Ferramonti di Tarsia and Pisticci (Basilicata), and in particular in Apulia, at Manfredonia, Tremiti Islands and Alberobello. The deportation of Yugoslavs and their incarceration in Italian concentration camps lasted until the Allies' arrival, but Yugoslavians continued to reach Italy as refugees by sea. During the last months of 1943, overcrowded boats with around 4.000 passengers landed every week on the shores of Apulia, which became a safe haven for the refugees fleeing the war.

The Allies managed to gather them temporarily in the AMGOT Camp in Taranto, as part of the agreements undertaken by Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, during the Tehran Conference (November 28 and December 1, 1943). At this conference, the Allies decided to support the resistance of Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia. As a result, the Yugoslav refugees were made up of two groups: those who supported the Yugoslav National Liberation Army led by Tito, who joined the Overseas Brigade and were interred in DP Camps in Bari, Gravina, Carbonara, Manfredonia, Monopoli, Barletta, Trani, Mesagne, Terlizzi, Grumo Appula e

⁶⁵ Cattaruzza Marina, Dogo Marco and Pupo Raoul (eds. by), *Esodi: trasferimenti forzati di popolazione nel Novecento europeo*, (Napoli: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 2000); Orlić Mila, "Poteri popolari e migrazioni forzate in Istria", in Crainz Guido, Pupo Raul and Salvatici Silvia (eds. by), *Naufreggi della pace. Il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise d'Europa*, (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2008), 25-42.

Castro; and those who sided with King Peter, who were interred in the former POW Camps in Tutturano in Brindisi province, and in Arnesano in Lecce province⁶⁶. This group of monarchists were finally transferred to Egypt where they would take part in military preparations in support of King Peter's Army.

Among the concentration camps liberated by the Allies, there was also that of Ferramonti di Tarsia (near Cosenza, Calabria) which was transformed by the military authorities in a refugee camp, in September 1943. Its inmates were mainly non-Italian Jews, above all of Yugoslav, Czech, German and Austrian origins. As detailed in the following pages, they would represent the first core of Jewish DPs in Italy.

«In order that an orderly and human program for the care of these individuals may be formulated», the ACC entrusted the task to two separate sub-commissions. the DPs Sub-Commission, established in October 1943, provided assistance to foreign refugees and stateless persons, while the Italian Sub-Commission established in December 1943 was in charge of assisting Italian refugees, in cooperation with the Italian authorities.

The growing number of non-Italian DPs on Italian soil brought on the involvement of representatives of the Governments of the United Nations in order to assist their own nationals. These international representatives established their own offices in Italy, functioning under the DPs Sub-Commission, ensuring that persons other than American and British Empire nationals, who had been displaced or interned, received adequate care in accordance with the instructions issued by SHAEF⁶⁷.

The DPs Sub-Commission provided for the DPs accommodation, food, clothing, welfare and health services and employment (where possible). Moreover, it served as a channel of communication between the Allies and the approved institutions dealing with the DPs, and supervised the work of the foreign government representatives and the Italian authorities⁶⁸. Few months after the Allies' arrival in Italy, it emerged the fact that Italy would played a crucial role in the post-war refugee crisis. On January 15, 1944, Colonel R. Kirkwood and Director of the DPs Sub-Commission wrote «the problem of receiving, transporting, housing

⁶⁶ Di Sante Costantino, "I campi profughi in Italia (1943-1947)", in Crainz Guido, Pupo Raul and Salvatici Silvia (eds. by), *Naufreggi della pace: il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise d'Europa*, (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2008), 143-156; Leuzzi Vito Antonio, *Occupazione alleata, ex internati ebrei e slavi in Puglia dopo l'8 settembre 1943*, in Leuzzi Vito Antonio and Esposito Giulio (eds. by), *La Puglia dell'accoglienza*, 87-88.

⁶⁷ ACS, *Provisional Directive Governing the Functions of Internees and Displaced Persons Sub-Commission*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 9A, A.M.G. OT, Refugees, July 1943 – October 1943.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

and maintaining displaced persons and refugees grows by leaps and bounds»⁶⁹. It is important to stress the fact that “this problem” did not affected only the military authorities or the national governments to which the refugees belonged with. It involved the international community, pending a definitive solution for several years after the end of the war.

Italy did not experience the same humanitarian emergency as Germany from the quantitative point of view. Nevertheless, its geographical position and its liberation before the end of the war contributed to make the peninsula a temporary haven for several groups of refugees as well as a sorting point for those wishing to emigrate elsewhere. Moreover, after the 1943 armistice, the management of the refugees in Italy became a fundamental question in shaping the Italian post-war political order. On the one hand, handling with the “national refugees” helped Italy in restoring its identity, recovering domestic economy and rethinking its welfare system, whereas, on the other hand, facing with “international refugees” represented for Italy an opportunity to redefine and release its political position in post-war Europe⁷⁰.

The Jewish DPs in 1943 Italy, a Pre-War Legacy

«There was no special refugee problem in Italy until the eve of the Second World War», wrote Jacques Vernant in the investigation commissioned by the High Commissioner for the Refugees⁷¹. Actually, in comparison with other European countries, Italy received only small groups of refugees prior to Hitler’s rise to power, after which a gradually significant numbers found temporary shelter in Italy.

The refugee emergency in Italy cannot be regarded as merely the consequence of what happened immediately after the end of World War II. The displacement of part of the refugee camp population had begun at least a decade before, when an abundant influx of migrants began to fled Nazi Germany for Italy. Many of them were Jews who found a temporary shelter in Italy. Great part of them managed to live, work or study in Italy until they were exiled for the second time or interned in concentration camps by the Fascist government.

The policy of exclusion from the social, political and cultural life carried by the National Socialist Party against the Jews, urged them to strive for finding refuge elsewhere.

⁶⁹ ACS, *Organization and Personnel for Handling Refugees and Displaced Persons, 15 January 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 5B, A.M.G. OT, Displaced Persons Sub-Commission, October 1943 – February 1943.

⁷⁰ For an anlysis of the management of the refugee problem and its influence in post-war Italy, see: Salvatici Silvia, “Between National and International Mandates: Displaced Persons and Refugees in Post-War Italy”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 49, 3 (2014), 514–536.

⁷¹ Vernant, *Refugee*, 182.

Nevertheless, migration was almost impossible. It was a period of global economic crisis, and many countries imposed special restrictions on the entrance of immigrants, by means of severe restrictions, endless and discouraging bureaucratic procedures or quota systems that limited the number of immigrants allowed entering the country in accordance to the supposed absorption capacity of that country. These regulations were further strengthened during the Thirties, and those who left Germany decided their destinations on the basis of practical considerations: the possibility of gaining entry to the target country, the residency permit regulations and the possibility to start life anew and support themselves through their own work.

The Italian attitude towards the refugees during the Thirties and the Forties could be defined quite “ambiguous”. In order to understand the composition of the Jewish refugees in Italy at war’s end, it is important to note that despite the Fascist dictatorship, Italy played a major role in the reception of the German Jews until the end of the Thirties. During those years, the Fascist Regime continued to pursue the Italian liberal tradition of welcoming refugees and immigrants while paving the way for their discrimination and persecution⁷².

Until the promulgation of the racial laws in 1938, Italy granted them refuge, identifying them according to their nationality rather than their religious persuasion⁷³. They were treated as German citizens and, at their arrival to the Italian border, the Italian police affixed a regular entry stamp on their passport⁷⁴. Thus - before the introduction of the Italian racial law - the Jews from Germany were treated as the other foreigners in Italy and as part of the German expatriate community⁷⁵.

During the Thirties, two further elements motivated the German Jews, as well as other nationalities, to move to Italy: the ability to transfer money and the possibility to work and study. In fact, for those who decided to flee Germany, a major concern was how to transfer personal assets for their maintenance abroad. At that time, the conversion and transfer of

⁷² Leenders Marij, “From Inclusion to Exclusion: Refugees and Immigrants in Italy Between 1861 and 1943”, in *Immigrants & Minorities: Historical Studies in Ethnicity, Migration and Diaspora*, vol. 14, 2 (1995), 115-138.

⁷³ Herzer Ivo (ed. by), *The Italian Refugee. Rescue of Jews During the Holocaust*, (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1989); Voigt Klaus, “Gli emigranti in Italia dai paesi sotto la dominazione nazista: tollerati e perseguitati (1933-1940)”, in *Storia contemporanea*, 16 (1985), 45-87.

⁷⁴ However, entrance into Italy was denied to those who were listed in the registro di frontiera (border register), which, after 1936, included names supplied by the German Gestapo. See: Voigt Klaus, *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945*, (Scandicci: La Nuova Italia, 1993), 36.

⁷⁵ They were required to declare their presence in Italy to the local police within three days of their arrival. The Italian authorities granted the German Jews a type of residency permit that listed the refugee’s personal data, last residency, expected duration and the purpose of his visit in Italy, local domicile, list of properties in Italy and his profession. See: Voigt, *Rifugio*, 37.

currency in Europe was regulated by bi-lateral agreements between states, which established terms and conditions from time to time⁷⁶. These measures inevitably affected also Germans abroad, with the exception of Italy and other countries⁷⁷.

With regard to permission to work, foreigners in Italy could enjoy the right to work. The requirement for a special work permit did not exist in Italy and was not used as a deterrent for non-Italian citizens. Until 1938, autonomous and private firms were free to hire whom they wished, with no regulation by the authorities, whereas government firms required specific permits⁷⁸.

The Italian government's acceptance of the Jewish exiles was not swayed by any special commitment to the League of Nations and its measures for the rescue of the European refugees. This attitude was confirmed by Mussolini's refusal to take part in the Evian Conference, proposed by the US president F. D. Roosevelt in July 1938⁷⁹.

That period in fact corresponded to the exacerbation of the Fascist policy towards Jews: with the Anschluss, Italy closed its borders to Jews from Austria permitting entrance only to those who were able to demonstrate they were crossing Italy to reach other destinations. These limitations were adopted by Mussolini solely for political interests, with the intention of strengthening ties with Hitler. Indeed, the occasion of Hitler's visit to Italy in March 1938 brought about a drastic change, including the census of the foreign Jews and the subsequent promulgation of the racial laws in autumn. These events marked a turning point in the Italian policy towards the Jewish migrants: the above-mentioned ambiguity of the Fascist Regime turned into open hostility. Persecutions started with Hitler's arrival in Italy during spring of 1938, when thousands of Jews were arrested for «safety measures» and others were placed under surveillance⁸⁰.

The “pro-Nazi shift” of the Fascist government that within a matter of several months proceeded to pass the racial laws, besides affecting Italian Jews, alarmed also the foreign Jews

⁷⁶ With the creation of the Reichsstelle für Devisenbewirtschaftung – the Reich Office for Foreign Exchange Control at the end of 1933 –, Germany began controlling all payments abroad: the transfer of money for whatever reasons and the importing of goods were limited to the minimum necessary. About the Nazi policy regarding exports of capital and currency see: Barkai Avraham, *From Boycott to Annihilation: the Economic Struggle of German Jews, 1933-1943* (Hanover, N. H.: Brandeis University Press by University Press of New England, 1989).

⁷⁷ A bi-lateral agreement between Mussolini and Hitler allowed the transfers of assets from Germany to Italy, although in the course of the time these regulations became more restrictive. Voigt, *Rifugio*, 29-36.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 42-44 and 150-186.

⁷⁹ Skran, *Refugees*, 209.

⁸⁰ Voigt, *Rifugio*, 118-138.

in Italy⁸¹. The Racial Laws of September 1938, announced the prohibition of marriage between Jews and Italian non-Jews, the exclusion of Jews from public office and the limitation of Jews practicing the free professions. The racial laws redefined the concept of citizenship along racial lines and political loyalty, thus preparing the ground for the immediate expulsion of all foreign Jews from Italy and a gradual exclusion of the Italian Jews from Italian society. The Laws were preceded by a census of the foreign Jews on Italian soil, decreed in August 1938 via two notes by the Ministry of the Interior to local prefects. The census counted 2.803 German Jews, 279 Polish, 402 Austrian and 640 Jews from other nations who declared themselves as being in transit through Italy to other destinations⁸².

One year later in 1940, those non-Italian Jews on the Italian soil who did not succeed in moving to other countries or in making *'aliyah*, were classified as «enemy aliens» and consequently considered threatening to the national security. On June 8, 1940 - two days before Italy joined the war - the Italian Ministry of the Interior issued proclamations for the establishment of concentration camps and internment facilities and, on September 4, Mussolini decreed that all enemy aliens must be gathered in special concentration camps. These camps were generally public buildings (such as schools, barracks, cinemas, ex-monasteries, etc.) situated in central and southern Italy, with the exception of the concentration camp in Ferramonti di Tarsia (CS) which was the only one to be built *ad hoc*⁸³. Between 1940 and 1943, the Ministry of the Interior operated approximately 50 concentration camps for civilians, of which 20 were opened after 1942 in order to intern civilians deported from the Italian occupied territories in Yugoslavia⁸⁴.

The historian Klaus Voigt in his research into migration from Germany to Italy between 1933 and 1945 had defined the Italian regulations regarding foreigners' treatment as «mild». He stated several reasons for this situation. First, Italy had an interest to set an

⁸¹ Baxa Paul, "Capturing the Fascist Moment: Hitler's Visit to Italy in 1938 and Radicalization of Fascist Italy", in *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 42, 2 (Spring 2007), 228.

⁸² The racial laws in Italy were promulgated by a R.D.L. (Royal Legislative Decree) n. 1381 of the 7th of September 1938, published on Gazzetta Ufficiale on 12th September 1938. See Sarfatti Michele, *The Jews in Mussolini's Italy: from Equality to Persecution*, (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), 95-177. For an analysis of the economic consequences of the Racial Laws in Italy, see also: Pavan Ilaria, *Tra indifferenza e oblio. Le conseguenze economiche delle leggi razziali in Italia 1938-1970*, (Firenze: Le Monier, 2004), see in particular pages: 69-182.

⁸³ For a map of the Fascist concentration camps in Italy, see Capogreco Carlo Spartaco, *I campi del duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)*, (Torino: Einaudi, 2004), 175-276, and for the history of the concentration camp at Ferramonti di Tarsia, see Capogreco Carlo Spartaco, *Ferramonti. La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo d'internamento fascista (1940-1945)*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 1987).

⁸⁴ About the Fascist policy in the Italian zones of occupation between 1940 and 1943 see, Rodogno Davide, *Il nuovo ordine mediterraneo: le politiche di occupazione dell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)*, (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2002).

example to other countries on receiving immigrants, as she herself was a source of many such emigrants and did not wish to set a precedent for restrictions on Italian emigrants in overseas countries. This liberal attitude of the Italian government - which lasted until the promulgation of racial laws in 1938 - was also strongly connected to the typical approach of the liberal monarchies of those years, characterized by the authorities' reluctance to abandon the bureaucratic routine, and a certain freedom by the local prefects, cronyism as well as corruption. Moreover, the Italian economy benefited strongly by the increasing tourist industry. The Fascist Regime therefore continued to facilitate the foreigners' entrance into Italy as well as their departure from Italian ports by avoiding placing useless obstacles in their way.⁸⁵

Towards a New Pattern of Jewish Welfare Organizations

Although the Italian government accepted the presence of the Jewish refugees in Italy, it did not provide them any special assistance. The Fascist government left the rescue of the Jewish refugees to the Union of the Italian Israelite Communities (UCII)⁸⁶. This was confirmed in 1934, when the Italian Foreign Ministry directly forwarded to UCII a memorandum from the High Commission for the Refugees Coming from Germany, exhorting UCII to collaboration with the institution of the League of Nations⁸⁷.

In order to aid the Jewish exiles, Italian Jewry, with the support of the Jewish Agency, founded in 1921 the Italian Committee for the Migrants' Assistance from Trieste, whose main functions were making contracts with shipping companies to transport the Jews to Palestine. This Committee – though changing its name and features over the time – represented for non-Italian Jews the institution which granted them assistance and support⁸⁸.

Because of the growing number of refugees from Nazi Germany, in February 1934 UCII called for a national fund-raising on behalf of the Jewish exiles from Germany. On that occasion, the Union collected 506.740,95 lira and created as well the Executive Committee

⁸⁵ Voigt, *Rifugio*, 12 and 40.

⁸⁶ UCII was established in 1930 as representative institution of the Italian Jewry. For an interpretation of the establishment of UCII in connection with Fascist policy, see: Schwarz Guri, *Appunti per una storia degli ebrei in Italia dopo le persecuzioni (1945-1956)*, in *Studi Storici*, vol. 41, 3 (2000), 763-764.

⁸⁷ Voigt, *Rifugio*, 246.

⁸⁸ For an overview of the Italian Jewish organizations that assisted the non-Italian Jewish refugees in Italy see: Leone Massimo, *Le organizzazioni di soccorso ebraiche in età fascista (1938-1945)*, (Roma: Carucci, 1983); About the history of DELASEM, see: Sorani Settimio, *L'assistenza ai profughi ebrei in Italia (1933-1941). Contributo alla storia della DELASEM*, (Roma: Carucci, 1983); See moreover: Voigt, *Il rifugio*; Minerbi Sergio, *Un ebreo fra D'Annunzio e il sionismo: Raffaele Cantoni*, (Roma: Bonacci Editore, 1992).

on behalf of the German Jews⁸⁹. Notwithstanding the great commitment to assist the exiles, «the problem of the Jewish refugees from Germany was not yet understood or, at least, enough estimated in its tragic dimension and in its painful human aspects», wrote Settimio Sorani, an outstanding Italian Jew who played a prominent role in assisting the Jewish refugees in Italy⁹⁰.

In 1936, Raffaele Cantoni⁹¹ (President of UCII between 1946 and 1951) suggested the possibility of asking for the help of HICEM⁹², HIAS⁹³ and JDC in rescuing the Jewish refugees in Italy⁹⁴. These three private Jewish humanitarian organizations - operating in Europe since the early Twentieth century – intensified their activities during the 1930's and 1940's in supporting Jews who escaped anti-Semitic persecution. These organizations also played a major role in Italy, granting assistance to Italian as well as non-Italian Jews, signing agreements with the Italian Jewry institutions before World War II and afterwards with the Allies and the United Nations' institutions.

Although they encountered many bureaucratic obstacles, these organizations formed a strong fabric of the humanitarian network operating on behalf of the refugees during those years and often influenced the refugee policy adopted by the international and/or local institutions.

The promulgation of the Racial Laws affected the Italian Jewish Community as well as the non-Italian Jews, requiring more relief measures for both. This led UCII to extend the Executive Committee on behalf of the German Jews, which on November 20, 1938 took the name of the Liaison Committee for the Jews in Italy (COMASEBIT). The COMASEBIT worked as an independent branch of UCII. Federico Jarach⁹⁵, at the same time President of

⁸⁹ Sorani, *L'assistenza*, 29-30.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 36.

⁹¹ Raffaele Cantoni (1896-1971) was an Italian antifascist Jew, who since the thirties cooperated for the assistance to the Jewish refugees in Italy. He was in charge of important role in the Jewish Italian organization on behalf of the refugees and from 1946 he was appointed President of UCII. For a biography of Raffaele Cantoni, see Minerbi, *Un ebreo*.

⁹² HICEM was established in 1927 in order to help European Jews emigrate. It resulted from the merger of three Jewish migration associations: HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) based in New York, ICA (Jewish Colonization Association) a British charitable society based in Paris, and Emigdirect, based in Berlin. See: http://www.yadvashem.org/odot_pdf/Microsoft%20Word%20-%206368.pdf (accessed November 2016).

⁹³ HIAS was founded in 1881 to assist Jews fleeing pogroms in Russia and Eastern Europe; in particular, it dealt with Jewish immigration to the US.

⁹⁴ Sorani, *L'assistenza*, 38.

⁹⁵ Federico Jarach (1874-1951) was an Italian Jew, who between 1923 and 1925 worked with the a right wing party at Milano Municipality and in 1926 he enlisted in the National Fascist Party. In 1931 he was appointed President of the Milan Jewish Community and in 1937 he was elected as President of UCII until 1939, when he resigned from his position after Comasebit dissolution. For a biography of F. Jarach, see Pavan Ilaria, *Il comandante. La vita di Federico Jarach e la memoria di un'epoca 1874-1951*, (Milano: Proedi, 2001).

UCII, was appointed as President of COMASEBIT, while Renzo Luisada⁹⁶ was in charge of its executive direction. Nevertheless, relations between UCII and COMASEBIT proved very problematic because of the overlap of roles between the two organizations as well as because of the difficulties that affected Italian Jewry in that period⁹⁷. After only ten months, in August 1939 the Italian Government ordered COMASEBIT dissolved. UCII did not even request the Interior Ministry to revoke the decision, and agreed to it without opposition⁹⁸. As a result, Federico Jarach resigned as chairman of the UCII, interpreting the government decision as a personal offense. Dante Almansi took Jarach's place as chairman of the UCII⁹⁹.

Nevertheless, the presence of 2,468 refugees on Italian soil, made urgent the resumption of aid operations. From September of 1939, UCII decided to entrust assistance to the rabbinate and the Italian Government accepted this proposal. However, several months later, the inadequacy of this kind of organization pushed the UCII to assume direct control of the rescue activities, whose management was entrusted on October 9, 1939 to Vittorio Valobra¹⁰⁰. UCII declared itself responsible for the assistance to the Jewish refugees and the Italian Interior Ministry accepted the situation, by virtue of the easiness in controlling UCII's activities. On the 1st of December 1939 the Delegation for the Assistance of Jewish Emigrants – known simply as DELASEM – began its activity, operating until the German occupation of Italy in 1943, after which it continued to rescue Jews clandestinely¹⁰¹. Before the British Government issued the White Paper in May 1939, Delasem assisted 2.548 foreign Jews in Italy and helped around 6.000 in transit to Eretz Israel¹⁰². Between the promulgation of the anti-Semitic laws in 1938 and Italy's joining the war in 1940, approximately 11.000 Jewish refugees left Italy, while at the same time 5.000-6.000 Jews reached Italy after escaping Nazi controlled territories and 4.000 to 6.000 Jews embarked clandestinely for Palestine from Italian ports¹⁰³.

⁹⁶ Renzo Luisada (1905-1987) was an Italian Jew, Secretary of the Executive Committee on behalf of the German Jews from 1937.

⁹⁷ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 375-393; Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 80-87.

⁹⁸ Voigt, *Il rifugio*, 385.

⁹⁹ Dante Almansi (1877-1949) was an Italian Jew, antifascist and active on behalf of the Jewish refugees' assistance.

¹⁰⁰ Vittorio Lelio Valobra (1900-1976) was an Italian Jewish lawyer and an outstanding personality of the Jewish Community in Genoa. In 1938, he was vice-President of UCII and Director of Delasem. Voigt, *Il Rifugio*, 384-387.

¹⁰¹ Sorani, *L'assistenza*; Voigt, *Il Rifugio*, 375-393; Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 87-93.

¹⁰² Voigt, *Il Rifugio*, 391-392.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 349.

In 1943, the Nazi invasion of Italy and the establishment of the Italian Social Republic (RSI) by Mussolini drastically affected the situation of the Jews in central and northern Italy. While those Jews who were interned in the concentration camps in south Italy found salvation with the Allies' arrival, in the zones of Italy not yet liberated 6,806 Jews were deported to concentration camps¹⁰⁴.

An urgent help from the outside was extremely needed, not only for the relief of the non-Italian Jews but also for the tragically damaged Italian Jewish Community. As detailed in the following chapters, with the Allies arrival in Europe the mission of the refugee agencies as well as of the voluntary organizations began to be regulated by agreements and authorizations allowed by the SHAEF. Indeed, it was only after the end of the war that a new network of Jewish organizations and individuals began to operate for the relief of the Jews in Italy and, among them, the JDC as well as the representatives from the *Yishuv* would acquired a prominent role for several years.

Conclusions

The Jewish migrations affected Italy since the end of the First World War. Discriminations, persecutions, expulsions led many foreign Jews to search for a refuge in Italy, with the purpose to settle in the country or finally emigrate elsewhere. Some of them looked at Italy as the last stop before their final migration to Palestine, on the far shore of the Mediterranean Sea.

September 1943 marked a turning point for the Jews in Italy: the Allies' arrival saved from deportation those Jews - mainly non-Italians - who were interned in concentration camps in southern Italy; whereas, in the non-liberated areas the Jews – mainly Italians - were violently arrested, murdered, abused and deported to extermination camps by the Nazis and the Fascists. Thus, on the one hand, 1943 marked the beginning of the Jewish displacement in Italy; on the other hand, the culmination of years of oppression and discrimination against the Jews through their annihilation.

Until that time, Italy represented a «precarious refuge» - to use Voigt's words – for many foreign Jews and the Italian Jewry made an extraordinary effort in order to assist them. However, the tragic events of the War called for an urgent support from the outside in order to rehabilitate the Jewish refugees as well as the Italian Jewish Community. The first

¹⁰⁴ Picciotto Fargion Liliana, *Il libro della memoria: gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945)*, (Milano: Mursia, 2002), 27.

“external” aid arrived directly from the *Yishuv*, through the Jewish soldiers who voluntarily served in the Allied Army. As detailed in the following chapters, since 1943 they prepared the ground for the rehabilitation of the Jews in Italy and were instrumental in orienting them towards *‘aliyah*. Furthermore, their work was essential in restoring the Italian Jewish organizations – firstly, UCII and DELASEM – as well as in organizing a rescue program for the DPs before the beginning of the missions of the international refugee agencies and the Jewish organizations.

With the advancing of the Allied Army in liberating Europe, other Jews managed to reach Italy from Eastern Europe joining that initial core of Jewish DPs in Italy, who were indeed a pre-war legacy. From the southern regions, the refugee problem expanded throughout the gradually liberated areas of Italy, increasingly involving other individuals, institutions and organizations and progressively raising new problems and questions.

Chapter 2

The «Old Refugees»

Towards the Organization of a Displaced Community in Italy

The «Jewish Problem» in Italy Prior to the Liberation of Rome

On the 30th of January 1944, the Deputy Director of the Internees and Displaced Persons Sub-Commission of ACC, Lieutenant Colonel V. M. Hammer, submitted a report concerning the condition of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia raising several critical problems the Sub-Commission had met with¹. The report was based on information previously received by Region 1 (Sicily), Region 2 (part of Apulia and Basilicata) Chief Liaison Officer of the ACC and the Jewish Chaplain of N. 2 District.

Colonel Hammer reported that the Sub-Commission he was directing was assisting approximately 3,000 Jews in liberated Italy. They were native Italians who had been either released from internment or displaced from their homes by reason of military operations. There were also refugees from Germany, Poland, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia who reached Italy before and during the war, as well as refugees arrived more recently from the Dalmatian Islands. The refugees have been cared for in former internment camps at Ferramonti di Tarsia and Palermo, in No.1 and No.2 post-war camps established at Bari and Naples and in the Transit Camps in Lecce provinces².

Colonel Hammer admitted the difficulty of estimating the total number of Jews in liberated Italy: the number resident in or passing through camps was known, but many, whose number could only be imagined, were scattered throughout the country. In many towns and villages there were groups who escaped from internment camps at the Allies' arrival, and others were in remote districts where they took refuge before the armistice³.

Taking account of all the above, the estimated number of Jewish refugees in January 1944 in regions No.1 (Sicily), No.2 (part of Apulia and Basilicata), No.7 (part of Calabria),

¹ ACS, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, 30 January 1944*, Reel n. 104F, Jews in Italy, December 1943 – March 1944.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

No.3 (Campania), and No.6 (Sardinia)⁴ was 5,000 to 6,000, about half of whom were accommodated in established camps as follow:

JEWISH REFUGEES IN LIBERATED ITALY, JANUARY 1944	
ASSEMBLY CENTRE	NUMBER OF DPs
Ferramonti Camp – Region N.7	1,300
N.1 P.W. Transit Camp, Bari – Region N.2	650
N.2 P.W. Transit Camp, Naples – Region N.3	100
Transit Camps In Lecce Provinces – Region N.2	300
Salerno – Region N.3	50
Lagonegro – Region N.2	40
Villages Near And Around Castelluccio Inferiore – Region N.2	200
In And Around Bari	500
In And Around Naples	500-600
In And Around Taranto	500-600

Source: ACS⁵.

At this early stage of the military operations in the European Theatre, three Italian regions appeared to house the greatest number of Jewish refugees: Calabria (in particular, Ferramonti di Tarsia), Apulia and Campania.

Ferramonti di Tarsia Camp was liberated by the Allied Army on the 14th of September 1943. It held the greatest number of Jewish refugees, at least until the beginning of 1944, when most of its inmates were repatriated or resettled or were transferred to the just-opened DP camps in Apulia. According to a report by Gertrude Clarke – Special Representative of the American Red Cross – by the end of November 1943, there were approximatively 2,000 Jews in Ferramonti Camp, which was placed under the supervision of the DPs Sub-Commission⁶. It was the largest barbed-wire internment camp for non-Italian and stateless persons, with about hundred single story wooden buildings. From its opening, the Jews

⁴ About Sardinia, in a note at the end of the report it is written: «practically, [there are] no civilian Jews in Sardinia. There were only 15 [in the] last census [on] 3 July 1943 and since these have left island», see: Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (hereafter, AJDC), *Letter from Gertrude Clarke to Mr. Philip R. Ryan, November 30, 1943*, File: 720: Italy: Refugees, General, 1943 – 1945, Reference Code NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1933 - 1944 - NY AR193344 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR193344 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 | Series: Italy: Subject Matter - NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2.

among the Ferramonti internees were never less than 75%, reaching a peak in August 1943 with 2,016 Jews.

From 1944 until 1947, Apulia became the area hosting the greatest number of non-Italian Jewish displaced persons. In Bari and its surroundings, the DPs Sub-Commission opened several assembly centers, transit camps and DP camps. Taranto and Brindisi became two crucial transit camps, above all because of their geographical location and their ports. Moreover, in Salento - in the southern edge of the Italian heel - the Allies established four DP camps: at Santa Maria al Bagno, Santa Maria di Leuca, Santa Cesarea Terme and Tricase Porto, all of them in Lecce province. In the above-mentioned localities on the Ionic and Adriatic coasts, the Allies identified clusters of houses and villas used as summer holiday resorts by their wealthy owners, deeming them adequate to temporarily accommodate the war refugees. The properties were requisitioned by AMGOT, and between the end of 1943 and spring 1947 housed almost exclusively Jewish DPs⁷. Afterwards, in late 1944, these four DP camps in Salento became the first refugee camps to be managed by the UNRRA.

Lastly, Campania also became a strategic area both for the advancing military operations and for the establishment of additional DP camps. In particular, from the Jewish DPs' point of view, the liberation of Naples in autumn 1943 was crucial. The Jewish Community in Naples was indeed the first one to be liberated by the Allies in Italy, well before the liberation of Rome in June 1944. Thus, both for the Jews in liberated Italy and for the Jewish institutions, organizations and individuals that worked on behalf of the Jewish DPs, it represented a significant event.

The report dealing with the condition of the Jews in Italy - drafted by the Office Director of the ACC Internees and Displaced Persons Sub-Commission in January 1944 – claimed: «no Jewish problem as understood in other European countries, exists in Italy», and informed:

«Jews, individually and as Communities, have been emphatic that they have no interest and no wish to take part in either local or national political life. On the contrary, most expresses a strong desire to be allowed to enter Palestine where they expect to be free from political influences and persecution»⁸.

⁷ Renzo Chiara, “Aprite le porte. I profughi ebrei nei campi di transito del Salento, 1944-1947” (MA Dissertation, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, February 2013).

⁸ ACS, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia*, 30 January 1944, Reel n. 104F, Jews in Italy, December 1943 – March 1944.

Indeed, from the numerical point of view, the «Jewish problem» in Italy was minor compared to the situation in Germany or Austria. Nevertheless, its most challenging features were soon recognized and highlighted in the first official report of the DPs Sub-Commission on the condition of the Jews in liberated Italy.

The «Old Refugees», a Profile

On their arrival, the Allies found in South Italy Jewish refugees from various European countries, mainly interned at Ferramonti di Tarsia. These refugees were known as «old refugees», referring to the Jewish displaced persons who arrived in Italy before the end of the war. The demography of Ferramonti Camp is interesting and allows us to better understand the varied composition of the Jewish refugees in post-war Italy.

Jews arrived at Ferramonti concentration camp in various periods between 1940 and 1943, each group had a different background. The first Jews arrived in Ferramonti during the second half of 1940, when Mussolini decreed the internment of «enemy aliens» in the Italian Kingdom. Most of the internees were Jews of German, Austrian and Czech origins who arrived in Italy during the 1930's. Some of them had already started a new life in Italy while others were still waiting for emigration to another country. In September 1940, Ferramonti Concentration Camp registered 700 internees: in addition to the Jews arrested in Italy, other groups of Jews - arrested while en route for Palestine - were moved to Ferramonti. The first group of 300 Jewish refugees arrived from Bengasi, from where Israel Marcus and Ernest Goldstein – two Zionist leaders – had organized an illegal departure for Palestine. For this purpose, a Bulgarian steamboat was equipped to sail to Palestine. It would have taken on board the group of 300 Jewish refugees who reached Bengasi from Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The boat, however, never arrived in Bengasi and when Italy joined the war in June 1940, the Jews were arrested and interned in Libya until the end of summer, and then transferred to Ferramonti di Tarsia concentration camp⁹.

Nevertheless, they were not the only group of Jews arrested and then interned on their way to British Palestine. The 495 survivors of the *Pentcho* shipwreck interned at Ferramonti between February 12 and March 27, 1942 were the largest and most varied group, deeply influencing the political orientation of the Jews in Ferramonti. *Pentcho* was the name of a Bulgarian steamboat equipped to sail for Palestine by the Betar (Revisionist Zionism) leader,

⁹ Capogreco, *Ferramonti*, 56-62.

Alexander Citrom. With hundreds of Jews from Central and Eastern Europe on board, it left from Bratislava at the end of April 1940 and after months of difficult navigation on the Danube River, the ship reached the Black Sea in October 1940. Unfortunately, the *Pentcho* was shipwrecked near the little Greek island of Kamila-Nisi because of a mechanical failure. All the passengers succeeded in reaching the shores of uninhabited Kamila-Nisi while a small group of them took to the sea by lifeboat in order to seek help. An Allied naval convoy found the lifeboat and debarked the little group of Jews in Alexandria (Egypt) while sending out an SOS to rescue the survivors on the Greek island. On the 18th of October 1940, an Italian Army ship reached Kamila-Nisi: the shipwreck people were deported to a makeshift camp in Rodhes and then interned in another little Greek island. The Jewish refugees remained there until early 1942, when the Italian government decided to transfer them in Italy. They arrived at Bari port in two convoys – the first in February and the second in March 1942 – and, from there, they were moved to Ferramonti. Thus, by the end of March, Ferramonti had 1.668 internees¹⁰.

Moreover, in spring 1942 approximately 120 Jews of Greek origin coming from Italian concentration camps in Libya, arrived in Ferramonti, thus raising the number of Greek Jews in Ferramonti to 300¹¹. In the meantime, because of the Italian occupation of part of Yugoslavia in 1941, also several Yugoslavs were interned in Italy. Among these refugees were also several Jews who increased the new Jewish presence in Ferramonti.

Notwithstanding the restrictions of the internment camp, the Director Paolo Salvatore favoured the inmates towards form of self-government. Indeed, the Jews detained in Ferramonti Camp were supported – morally and economically – by the Italian Jewry, above all the DELASEM and its representatives. Within three years, they were able to organize many facilities, such as canteens, a synagogue, schools for childrens, etc. Though the obstacles due to overcrowding, the difficult health condition and the different needs of the inmates, the Jews in Ferramonti manage to live as a community. After the liberation, when the camp was transformed by the Allies in a refugee camp, the Jewish DPs in Ferramonti could count on their experience of communitarian life in this transition.

¹⁰ Ibid., 99-108.

¹¹ Ibid., 114.

The Palestinian Soldiers of the Allied Army among the Jewish DPs

The status of cobelligerent country created many practical problems for the network of rescue agencies that worked on behalf of the refugees, both Jews and non-Jews alike. Moreover, the year 1943 represented for Italian Jewry the beginning of the darkest period since the promulgation of the Racial Laws in 1938. DELASEM personnel were affected also by this wave of anti-Semitism: most of its leading figures were forced to find refuge abroad and operate clandestinely. Until the liberation of Rome in June 1944, only the Naples branch of DELASEM was active and offered limited assistance to Jewish refugees.

According to a letter signed by Guido Cantoni – Secretary of DELASEM – addressed to the American Red Cross War Relief in Italy, on the 11th of November 1943, there were 7,000 Jews in Italy who need «all kind of material and moral assistance»¹². Guido Cantoni complained about the lack of funds available for refugee relief and called for international mobilization to provide aid, and in particular for JDC support. He highlighted the problem in fulfilling the usual tasks of DELASEM as well as the limitations of the Allies' refugee policy:

«Allied Military Government has assured us that it will supply with money those Jews who are citizens of Allied Nations [with the cooperation of] the American Red Cross. But both the Allied Military Government and the American Red Cross, at least for this moment, are not in the position to be of complete help to those Jews who are citizens of enemy Nations, as Germans, Austrians, Rumanians and so on, including the Italians; in few words about the half of the above named interned Jews, that is 4000 poor chaps, must be aided by our Organization»¹³.

When DELASEM was declared illegal in 1943 and a large number of its officials were arrested or obliged to escape Italy, «the greatest help to the refugees, scattered all over Southern Italy, has been given [...] by the Palestine Companies placed in this country, which interested the AMG in the problem», denounced the Secretary of DELASEM in 1944. Guido Cantoni was referring to the Jewish Palestinian soldiers serving in the Allied Army. These soldiers established the first contact between the Jewish Diaspora and Eretz Israel and thereafter played a prominent role in creating refugee organizations for aiding the Jewish DPs in Italy and in stressing the emigration to Palestine as the preferred solution to the Jewish displacement¹⁴.

¹² AJDC, *Letter from Guido Cantoni (DELASEM) to the American Red Cross War Relief in Italy, November, 11 1943*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The presence of the Jewish soldiers in Italy occurred against the background of an ongoing debate among the *Yishuv*'s leaders regarding a possible Palestinian intervention to rescue European Jewry. In 1939, soon after the Nazi occupation of Poland, Chaim Weizman – President of the WZO and Chairman of the Jewish Agency – had declared the *Yishuv*'s support of the war effort to British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. Consequently, the Jewish Agency and the National Council (in Hebrew, *Wa'ad Leumi*) appealed to the Jews in the *Yishuv* to volunteer for service in the British Army. The collective call to service received a great response in *Eretz Israel*: from a total Jewish population of 550,000, approximately 30,000 men and women answered the appeal and volunteered to enlist in the British Army¹⁵. Fearing demands from the Jewish Agency for political concessions, Great Britain showed itself reluctant to the idea. Nevertheless, in 1941 Great Britain began to enlist and absorb Jewish Palestinian volunteers in its military units serving in the Middle East. The British formed the Palestine Regiment, which operated locally¹⁶. Afterwards, in 1942, Great Britain began establishing small auxiliary units of Jewish Palestinian technicians (such as plumbers, carpenters, etc.) which were deployed from time to time as necessary among the British military fighting divisions. These independent units – in Hebrew, *Plugot* – were made up of 250-300 *hayalim* (Hebrew for “soldiers”)¹⁷, and were placed under command of a British major. In 1942 several *Plugot* joined the Allied Army in Libya and in 1943 in Italy, thus inaugurating the *Yishuv*'s participation in the liberation of the European Jews¹⁸.

A small number of Jewish soldiers arrived in Sicily from North Africa, as part of the Allied Army¹⁹. The first such unit was 20th Company – Map Depot, a small unit of cartographers. The first *Plugah*, a section of 148th Company – Water Tanker Truck from Palestine, landed in Italy on the 10th of September 1943, two days after the signing of the armistice between Italy and the Allies. They were followed one week later by 650th Company – Road Transport. Both *Plugot* landed in Campania as the Allied Army was advancing and liberating Italy. Between the end of September and the beginning of October 1943, other Palestinian units joined the *Plugot* in already liberated Italy: 462nd Company (which lost a great part of its soldiers at sea because of a Nazi air raid) and 460th Company – Road Transport. 739th Company – Surveyor

¹⁵ For a study about the Jewish Soldiers from Palestine who joined the British Army during World War II, see: Gelber Yoav, *Toldot Ha-Hitnadvut*, (Jerusalem: Yad Yizhaq Ben-Zevi, 1984).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 635.

¹⁷ Throughout this dissertation, the term “hayalim” is used in order to refer to the Jewish soldiers from the *Yishuv*, both those of the *Plugot* and those who eventually merged into the Jewish Brigade.

¹⁸ Gelber, *Toldot Ha-Hitnadvut*, 200.

¹⁹ About the arrival of the Palestinian Jewish Units in Libya, see: Roumani Maurice M., *The Jews of Libya: Coexistence, Persecution, Resettlement*, (Brighton, Portland: Sussex Accademy Press, 2008), 41-45.

and the 1st Camouflage Company (which had a fundamental role in El Alamein military campaign) landed at Taranto along with other small units²⁰.

A leading figure among the soldiers who volunteered in the British Army was Rabbi Efraim E. Urbach, Chaplain in the British Army, who served first in Africa and then in Italy between 1942 and 1944²¹. Rabbi Urbach - a well-respected Jerusalem intellectual - had earlier joined the *Haganah* and in 1941 enlisted in the British Army. Encouraged by Moshe Shertok²² and Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog²³, Urbach was appointed Chaplain in the British Army in July 1942. As Chaplain, Rabbi Urbach advanced with the Eighth Army commanded by Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, into Libya, Tunisia, Sicily and Italy²⁴. In his official position, Rabbi Urbach also presented the Jewish refugees predicament to the Allied command, pointing out constantly the «plight of the Jewish refugees» who «are naturally anxious to know what plans there are concerning their future»²⁵. Already in October 1943, in a memorandum to the PW Sub-Commission he stated:

«It will be realised that there are a large number of different nationalities of refugees and it is essential that careful consideration be given to the question as a whole for the purpose of deciding a policy of disposal»²⁶.

The Jewish Chaplains often served as mediator between the Jewish DPs' needs and the Allied Army. Moreover, they would become even more instrumental in stressing that sense of community among the Jewish DPs in Italy²⁷. Indeed, the *plugot* played a major role both in the immediate rescue of Jewish displaced persons and in delineating a long-term program for their rehabilitation and resettlement. Among the ranks of the Jewish volunteers from

²⁰ Tagliacozzo Michele, "Attività dei soldati di Eretz Israel in Italia (1943-1946). Il corpo ausiliario dei soldati palestinesi nell'armata di liberazione inglese", in *La rassegna mensile di Israel*, 2, 69 (May-August 2003), 577-579.

²¹ Efraim Elimelech Urbach was born in Poland in 1912. Though belonging to a Hassidic family, he received general education and at the age of 18 he enrolled at the Breslau Rabbinic Seminary. In 1933, because of the rise of the Nazi to power, Urbach moved to Italy where he completed his doctorate in 1935. He returned to Breslau to teach at the Rabbinic Seminary until 1938, just days before *Kristallnacht*, when Urbach left Germany for Palestine. He entered the country by means of a certificate stating that he was a research fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (only 2,000 people obtained such certificates).

²² Moshe Shertok (or Moshe Sharrett) was an Israeli politician, member of the Mapai Party and the Palmach. From 1954 to 1955, he was also Prime Minister of Israel.

²³ Rabbi Yitzhak Herzog was Chief Rabbi of the British Mandate of Palestine and of Israel after 1948.

²⁴ Urbach Efraim Elimelech, *Rešimot Be-Yemey Ha-Milḥamah: Yomano Šel Rav Eretz-Yisra'eli Be-Ṭava Ha-Briti, 1942-1944*, (Midraš Ha-Biṭaḥon: Tel Aviv, 2008), 210. In Ferramonti di Tarsia was the first detention camp converted by the Allies into a DP camp, see: Capogreco, *Ferramonti*.

²⁵ ACS, *Jewish Refugees*, 8 October 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 599B Disposal Jewish Refugees, October 1943 – February 1944.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ For an analysis of the role played by the American Jewish Chaplains among the Jewish survivors in Europe in the aftermath of World War II, see: Grobman Alex, *Rekindling the Flame. American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944-1948*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1994).

Palestine who served in the Allied Army, there were members both of the Kibbutz movements²⁸ and of the *Haganah*, the para-military organization of the *Yishuv*. Their political affiliation should be taken into account in any deeper analysis of their activities among the Jewish DPs in Italy.

Indeed, the ideological, social, cultural and political background of the *hayalim* would determinate the direction and the practical fulfilment of their mission in Europe during those years. The *pe'ilut* (Hebrew for “activity, action”), a term used by the Jewish soldiers to refer to their own relief activity on behalf of the Jews in Europe, prepared the ground for a more comprehensive and well-organized assistance provided by the private and institutional agencies which worked on behalf of the refugees after the end of the war. The *pe'ilut* was also fundamental in steering the Jewish DPs towards ‘*aliyah* already in the early stage of the liberation, as well as in launching programs that prepared the refugees ideologically and practically for a new beginning in *Eretz Israel*.

Moreover, it is relevant to underline the fact that the Hebrew term *shaliach* (plural, *shlichim*) - which translates as “emissary” or “delegate” - was adopted to designate the representatives of the political parties and political movement of the *Yishuv*, as well as the Palestinian Jews volunteers serving in the British Army and other figures from Eretz Israel, such as the Rabbis within the Allied Army. It appears that the collective and unanimous use of this term emphasized that the *shlichim* shared an unequivocal mission: to rescue those who survived, to educate and prepare them for ‘*aliyah* and to «direct their thinking so that at the critical moment their actions would be guided by the Zionist credo»²⁹. Nevertheless, in the involvement of representatives from the *Yishuv* in Italy, two stages can be distinguished. The former, from 1943 until early 1946, when the delegates of the Jewish Agency were mainly the *hayalim*; and, the latter, from 1946 until 1948, which marked the involvement of the delegates of the political parties, the so-called *shlichim*. This marked a sort of transition from the military to the civilian operations³⁰.

²⁸ In particular, most of the *hayalim* were members of the *Ha-Kibbutz Ha-Meuchad*, which was the most widespread secular movement chosen by the new immigrants (*olim*) in Israel during the first years of the establishment of the State. About the kibbutz movement, see: Near Henry, *The Kibbutz Movement. A History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

²⁹ Gelber Yoav, “The Meeting Between the Jewish Soldiers from Palestine Serving in the British Army and the She’erit Hapletah”, in Gutman Israel and Saf Avital (eds. by), *Sherith Hapletah, 1944-1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle*, Proceedings of the Sixth Yad Vashem International Historical Conference (Jerusalem, October 1985), (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 61.

³⁰ Markowitzky Yakov, *Nišaney Ha-Tehiyah: Ha-Merkaz La-Golah Ve-Ha-Peilot, Ha-Yishuv Be-Italyah 1944-1948*, (Tel Aviv: Merkaz La-Golah, 1997), 17.

According to many historians, the period between the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943 represented a turning point in the attitude of the *Yishuv* towards the European Diaspora and the Holocaust. Nonetheless, in 1943 – when the international debate about World War II was at its height – the *Yishuv*'s leadership revised their opinion and opted to take part in the Allied military operation in North Africa and in Europe³¹.

Looking at the political debate in the *Yishuv* during 1943-1944 regarding joining the Allied Army, one can discern that ideological commitment as well as political and more pragmatic motivations stood behind volunteering for service in the British Army. Information about the ghettoization, deportation, starvation and extermination of European Jews had finally reach Eretz Israel, leading to a collective appeal for the immediate intervention of the *Yishuv* itself³². At this stage, both the *Yishuv*'s public opinion and the Zionist Executive Committee expressed their desire to develop a plan for rescuing the European Jews³³.

According to Yoav Gelber, this shift occurred when the Zionist leadership became aware of the role the survivors would play in the Zionist struggle after the war, gradually reconsidering the principle of selective '*aliyah*'³⁴. Because of these considerations, hundreds of *Yishuv* leaders and emissaries reached Europe between 1943 and 1944, but in particular after the end of the war.

The gradual change in the approach of the *Yishuv*'s leadership towards the Diaspora was most evident in the great drive to bring as many Jews as possible to Palestine, notwithstanding the limitations imposed by the 1939 White Paper. The new attitude brought a renewal of the activity of the *Mossad le-'Aliyah Bet* (in short "Mossad", Hebrew for "The Organization for the Illegal 'Aliyah"), founded in spring 1939 as an independent and underground branch of the Jewish Agency³⁵. The *Mossad* began operating in Europe just

³¹ Initially, the soldiers' aspiration to leave Palestine to join the fighting in Europe was criticized, in particular by the Zionist leftist parties, such as *Si'ah Bet* and *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir*. About the attitude of the *Yishuv* towards the Holocaust survivors, see for example: Ofer Dalia, *Escaping the Holocaust. Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939-1944*, (New York&Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990) and Zertal Idith, *From Catastrophe to Power*.

³² According to many historians, the *Yishuv* was ready to undertake actions on behalf of the European Jews, but the Zionist Executive Committee found it difficult to find a feasible rescue program. See, Porat Dina, *Hanhagah ha-Milkud: ha-Yishuv Nokah ha-sho'ab* (1942-1945), (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1987), 2-101.

³³ According to Dalia Ofer - who analysed the records referred to discussion among the members of the Jewish Agency, the Mapai Central Committee, the Histadruth Executive and the Zionist Executive – it emerges that: «Guilt and outrage were compounded by shame – shame for the mankind and for the Jews – and a desire to identify those responsible for preventing, by their indifference, help from reaching those in need; responsible for the tragic sense of impotence that gripped the Jewish people if the free world». See: Ofer, *Escaping*, 201.

³⁴ Gelber, "The Meeting", 62-63.

³⁵ The activity of the *Mossad le-'Aliyah Bet* from Italy will be analysed in the next chapter. In general, about the illegal immigration to Palestine, see: Toscano, *La porta di Sion*; Zertal, *From Catastrophe*; Ofer, *Escaping*; Alamish Aviva, *The Exodus Affaire: Holocaust Survivors and the Struggle for Palestine*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1998).

before the war broke out, organizing illegal migration of groups of Jews attempting to flee Nazi persecutions in a period in which massive Jewish *'aliyah* was still under discussion³⁶. As the war progressed and the Nazi plan to exterminate the Jews was starkly revealed, the Jewish Agency agreed almost unanimously on the active participation of the Palestinian volunteers in the military operation in the European Theatre.

By October 1943, there were approximately 1,000 Palestinian soldiers in Italy and their number would grow to 10,000 in the following year with the arrival of the Jewish Brigade³⁷. One year later, some of the *Plugot* merged into the Jewish Brigade, the Jewish military unit finally authorized by an agreement signed by Churchill and Roosevelt in September 1944 at the request of the Jewish Agency³⁸.

In examining this mission, two main points should be noted. Firstly, the soldiers of the *Plugot* and then of the Jewish Brigade constituted unquestionably the first link between the Jews from the *Yishuv* and the survivors of European Jewry. Secondly, Italy was the stage where these encounters first occurred, as early as 1943. This urges historiography to initiate investigation regarding the Jewish DPs and the *Yishuv's* attitude and responsibility towards the Diaspora, highlighting the actions undertook by the *hayalim* among the Jewish DPs in Italy at this early stage.

Thus, the value of the mission they performed between 1943 and 1945 in Italy among the non-Italian Jewish DPs in the refugee camps and the Italian Jews in their destroyed communities should be recognized as well as discussed in a historical perspective. It was directly connected with the political atmosphere of the *Yishuv* of those years as well as with the urgency posed by the post-war refugee emergency in Europe.

From the *Merkaz ha-Plitim* to the *Merkaz la-Golah*: Activities and Goals

The outstanding role of the Jewish soldiers in aiding the Jews in Italy has been well highlighted in particular by Israeli historiography, which stressed the leading feature of their activities³⁹. Nevertheless, the existing studies on the topic are scarce and tend to focus

³⁶ For an analysis of the debate over the *'aliyah* bet in the *Yishuv* in the Thirties, see Ofer, *Escaping*, 3-41.

³⁷ Gelber, "The Meeting", 65; Id., *Toldot*, 284.

³⁸ About the history of the Jewish Brigade, see Beckman Morris, *The Jewish Brigade: an Army with Two Masters, 1944-1945*, (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1998); see moreover: Bauer Yehuda, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah*, (New York: Random House, 1970), 62-64.

³⁹ For example, see: Gelber, *Toldot*; Porat Dina, "Šela' Be-Šaloš Yehudey" Be-İtaliyah. Mifgaš Šel Yehudey Italiyah 'im Nišoley Ha-Šo'ah Ve-'im Hayalim Ve-Šliḥim Ha-Yišuv, Be-Šanim 1944-1946", in *Yalqoṭ Morešet*, 50 (1991), 91-110.

exclusively on the period from the liberation of Rome (June 1944) - or even from the end of World War II – onwards. Moreover, the existing research on the topic do not stressed enough the importance of the preliminary activities of the *hayalim* before the beginning of the missions of the refugee agencies in Italy in preparing the ground for the assistance to the Jewish DPs.

A preliminary stage can be identified in the analysis of the actions undertaken by the Jewish volunteers enlisted in the British Army in favor of their co-religionists in Italy. This stage preceded the establishment of the Jewish Brigade and its arrival in Italy in the second half of 1944. Dealing with that year, historiography refers to «spontaneous» and «sporadic» actions by the Jewish soldiers, which only after January 1944 became more organized. The precarious condition of the Jews in Italy made it urgent to build a more organized structure of actions undertaken by individuals or by small groups of soldiers. This led to the founding of the *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* (the Centre for Refugees), which historians place in February 1944.

The *Merkeẓ* may have begun operating even before February 1944 but the lack of sources relating to the second half of 1943 precludes setting an exact date. In fact, in the correspondence as well as in some reports addressed to the Jewish Agency signed by Zvi Leiman, reference was made to the *Merkeẓ* already before February 1, 1944⁴⁰. Moreover, although it cannot be excluded that the relief activities undertaken by soldiers of the *Plugot* were initiated independently by individual or small groups of Palestinian soldiers, the correspondence between the members of the *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* and the *Yishuv* leads to the conclusion that (at least from a certain point onwards) these actions were also coordinated by the Jewish Agency.

The structure and nature of the information contained in the aforementioned reports of the *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* leads one to reconsider and re-evaluate the role played in this phase of the war by the *hayalim* in the Allied Army in Italy. These sources challenge the idea of an initial

⁴⁰ From the archival point of view, the information and the documents related to the *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* as well as the *Merkeẓ la-Golah* are scattered in many locations. This analysis took into account the primary sources about the above-mentioned organizations available at the Central Zionist Archives (hereafter, CZA) and at the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People (hereafter, CAHJP). In particular, see the following collections: CZA, Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me-Italiyah (1943-1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48); CZA, Folder: S25/22512 Tik R'uben Šiloah. Doḥot Mi-'et R'uben Šiloah 'al ha-Mašav be-'Italiyah ve-Yuguslaviyah, 'im šuvu Me-'Italiyah (1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48); CAHJP, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

lack of guidelines (with respect to the civilian rescue operation) from the *Yishuv* towards its soldiers in Italy⁴¹. It also emerges from the reports that from the early beginning, the activities of the soldiers from the *Yishuv* were directed not only to Italian Jews but to all Jews in Italy⁴². This conjecture is confirmed by several points. First, the name of the organization itself founded by the soldiers emphasizes that they addressed their attention to the *plitim*, i.e. the refugees. Second, in the Italian regions liberated by the Allies at the time, there were only a few dozen Italian Jewish refugees; whereas the numbers of non-Italian Jews in the region was large, having increased in the course of almost a decade of migration. Third, until the liberation of Rome in June 1944, the number of local Italian Jews in the southern regions under Allied control was small, mainly because of the absence of large local Jewish communities, except for that in Naples⁴³.

The *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* was established in the barrack of a club for the Jewish soldiers in Bari. It included also several facilities for the DPs, such as a canteen, a clinic, a synagogue, a dormitory, a school for children, and a meeting-room for the youth movements⁴⁴.

The *Merkeẓ* established its headquarters in Bari, in Palazzo De Risi at via Garruba 63, a building that had previously belonged to a local fascist group. This decision of locating in Bari arose certainly from logistical reasons, such as the fact that many *Plugot* were already stationed in Bari. However, this choice proved its practical as well as strategic advantages for the development of the *Merkeẓ* activities. In fact, during the years 1944-1946, the Bari area became a place of arrival and sorting for hundreds of refugees a day, including many Jews who managed to arrive by sea from the Balkans.

The *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* was directed by Zvi Leiman, who together with the other the *hayalim* opened other facilities for the relief of the Jews they encountered in the gradually liberated regions. Following the establishment of the Jewish Brigade, on the 29th of October 1944, the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* changed its name to *Merkeẓ la-Golah Be-Italia* (the Center for the Diaspora in Italy, also known as the *Merkeẓ la-Golah*)⁴⁵. The restructuring of the *Merkeẓ* was agreed in

⁴¹ Markowitzky, *Nišaney*, 16.

⁴² Dina Porat in her pioneering analysis on the role of the Palestinian soldiers in Italy stated at the beginning the Jewish soldiers addressed their actions to the Italian Jews, see Porat Dina, "One Side of the Jewish Triangle in Italy: the Encounter of Italian Jews with Holocaust Survivors and Hebrew Soldiers and Zionist Representatives in Italy, 1944-1946", in *Italia Judaica. Gli ebrei nell'Italia unita 1870-1945*, Atti del convegno internazionale (Siena, 12-16 giugno 1989), (Roma: Ministero Beni Culturali e ambientali, 1993), 487-513.

⁴³ In fact, the Jewish Community of Bari was established only in 1944.

⁴⁴ CAHJP, *La-Merqaz Ha-'Iny'aney Ha-Plitim Be-Yehidot Ha-'Yivriyot, Ba'ri, 23.1.1944*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

⁴⁵ Markowitzky, *Nišaney*, 16;

Rome upon at a conference of the representatives of the Jewish organizations, who met in order to plan a more organized structure of the *Merkaẓ* in view of the forthcoming expected Nazi surrender⁴⁶. Zvi Leiman, was replaced by Yechiel Duvdevani and other leading roles were carried out by Yitzhaq Ben Dor and Yitzhaq Levi, both of them members of the first *Plugot* to arrive in Italy⁴⁷.

The first available written report of the *Mekaz ha-Plitim* - dated March 28, 1944 and signed by the Director Zvi Leiman - referred to the period from January to March 1944⁴⁸. The periodic reports of the *Merkaẓ* kept mostly the same structure, favoring a partition by topic that allows a clear identification of the organization's goals. Between January and September 1944, reports, memoranda and correspondence signed by the members of the board of the *Merkaẓ ha-Plitim* always opened with an analysis «in the field of 'aliyah»⁴⁹. Thus, it appears that the main goal of the *hayalim* was to channel the Jewish emigration to Palestine. The first step consisted in the identification and registration of all the Jews in progressively liberated Italy, especially those who already had an immigration certificate for Palestine and those who wanted to make 'aliyah. In this regard, by the end of 1943, the soldiers had already established in Ferramonti and Bari two designated offices, which in December 1943 were merged into the Joint Palestine Emigration Committee (JPEC)⁵⁰. This kind of committees were a sort of overseas office of the Jewish Agency, which after World War I served as Zionist consulate in the Diaspora countries and was charged with the organization, regulation, and implementation of Jewish immigration to Palestine. In particular, the JPEC registered all Palestine-emigrants and aimed at making all the preparatory arrangements for their emigration. Its goal of promoting 'aliyah was explicate in the memorandum the

⁴⁶ Patishi Hanokh, *Ma ĥeret Ba-madim: Ha- "Haganah" Ha-Ereṣ- Yišru'eli Be- šava' Ha-Briṭim 1939-1946*, (Tel Aviv: Misrad Ha-Bitahon, 2006), 170.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ CZA, *Duah Me-Pe 'ulat Merkaẓ ha-Plitim Be-Bari Me-15 Be-Y'annu'ar 1944 'ad 15 Be-Marš 1944, March 28, 1944*, Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me- 'Italiyah (1943-1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48).

⁴⁹ See: CZA Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me- 'Italiyah (1943-1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48); CZA, Folder: S25/22512 Tik R'uben Šiloah. Doḥot Mi- 'et R'uben Šiloah 'al ha-Mašav be-'Italiyah ve-Yuguslaviyah, 'im šuvu Me-'Italiyah (1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48); CAHJP, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

⁵⁰ ACS, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, 30 January 1944, Reel n. 104F, Jews in Italy, December 1943 – March 1944*; CAHJP, *Joint Palestine Emigration Committee for Italy, Ferramonti, December 14, 1943*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

Committee from Italy sent to the Jewish Agency in order to obtain support from the *Yishuv*'s authority:

«[The Joint Palestine Emigration Committee] is the only authority regularly elected and legitimated by the whole of Palestine-Emigrants registered for emigration, in the liberated part of Italy. We beg you to kindly approve the activity we are going to develop in the interest of Palestine-Emigration from Italy and which could not be materially sustained but by your approval. [...] We are sure you will give your attention in order to facilitate and hurry up our proposal for immigration»⁵¹.

The memorandum was accompanied by the list of the names of JPEC's eight-member Board, elected by the Jewish DPs in Ferramonti and Bari. It is fundamental to note that all of these Board members were already affiliated and active in Zionist movements in their countries of origin, and that most of them served in important roles in Zionist institutions there. In fact, President of the JPEC was Elias Grünschlager, an Austrian Jew accommodated in Bari, who had been President of the Jewish Community of Gratz as well as of the Zionist Organization of Gratz (Austria) and delegate to the 20th Zionist Congress (1937). The Vice-President was Josef Milhofer, a Yugoslavian Jew now in Ferramonti, who had been Secretary of the Zionist Association in Yugoslavia and among the leaders of the Association of Jewish Youth of Yugoslavia. The Secretaries were Branko Grossmann and Dragutin Fried (both from Zagreb) who had been members of the Committee of the Zionist Organization in Zagreb and of the League for the Working Palestine. Other members of the JPEC were Josef Maestro (Cashier), a Yugoslavian Jew, already a member of the Keren Kayemet le-Isreal (KKL, i.e. the Jewish National Fund) and of the Zionist Organization in Yugoslavia; Usher Dominitz, who had been a member of the Zionist Organization in Karlovy Vary (at that time, in Czechoslovakia); Herbert Landau, a Jew from Fiume who filled a leading role in the Ferramonti Camp's DPs community; and David A. Levi-Dale, Secretary of the Union of the Jewish Communities in Yugoslavia, Vice-president of the Zionist Organization in Belgrade and editor of several Jewish newspapers⁵².

Several Jewish refugees at that time in Italy already possessed a certificate for entry into Palestine. According to above-quoted report concerning the condition of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, submitted to ACC by the Deputy Director of the Internees and Displaced Persons sub-Commission, the number of Jewish DPs in Ferramonti, Bari and the

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² CAHJP, *Members of the Joint Palestine Emigration Committee for Italy, December 14, 1943*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

surroundings who wished to make *Aliyah* as of 2 January 1944 was 1,300⁵³. The Committee officially requested at the beginning of January 1944 recognition by the competent Allied authority in order to facilitate the refugees' '*aliyah*'⁵⁴.

It appears that the soldiers of the *Plugot* and then the *Merkaẓ ha-Plitim/la-Golah*, established early-on a collaborative relationship with the Jewish refugees in Italy, while constantly updating the Jewish Agency on their activities. On the one hand, the fact that a large number of the Jewish refugees in liberated Italy were for a long time inmates together in the same concentration camp facilitated cooperation among them. The Jews interned in Ferramonti had created committees to represent them long before the arrival of the Jewish Palestinian soldiers. Furthermore, they had already elected their spokespersons, with whom the soldiers from Palestine were then able to interface. On the other hand, the contact with the *Yishuv* appears to have become closer since the arrival of the *Plugot* in Italy.

The relations with the *Yishuv* intensified with the founding of the *Merkaẓ* in Bari and was made easier by the arrival in Italy of the «representatives of the committees of Eretz Israel»⁵⁵. Although the *Merkaẓ*'s documentation does not record what were its committees nor who were its representatives, the Central Eretz Israel Office was established in Bari in March 1944. This office was most likely a guidance office for those interested in pursuing the path of preparation for '*aliyah*'. It was formed by representatives of the political movements of the *Yishuv*. For example, one of its sections was reserved for the *Histadrut* (the Organization of Trade Union of the *Yishuv*), organization which already in mid-March numbered 217 members among the Jewish DPs in Italy.

The actions of the *Merkaẓ ha-Plitim* and then of the *Merkaẓ la-Golah* were all aimed at achieving '*aliyah*' from Italy to Palestine of as many Jews as possible. To this end, the *hayalim* guided by the *Yishuv* developed a plan that over the months assumed increasingly defined features and involved several different institutions and Jewish organizations. It was a sort of mission whose key word was "education". In fact, the *hayalim* and the institutions they established - as well as other organizations who worked for the same goal- - did not play a

⁵³ ACS, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia*, 30 January 1944, Reel n. 104F, *Jews in Italy*, December 1943 – March 1944.

⁵⁴ ACS, *Joint Palestine Emigration Committee Ferramonti*, 2 January 1944, Reel n. 104F, *Jews in Italy*, December 1943 – March 1944.

⁵⁵ CZA, *Duah Me-Pe 'ulat Merkaẓ ha-Plitim Be-Bari Me-15 Be-Y'annu'ar 1944 'ad 15 Be-Marš 1944*, March 28, 1944, Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me- Italiyah (1943-1944), Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: S25 Political Department (1921-48).

purely bureaucratic role, nor wage a simple propagandistic campaign for *'aliyah*. As it will be explained in the third part of this dissertation, the refugees took part in ideological and practical preparations for beginning a new life as pioneers in Eretz Israel.

The main focus of the operations of the *Merkeẓ* became the children and the younger generation. At the beginning, for obvious reasons, the activities of the *hayalim* were addressed to the foreign refugees in the liberated regions, and after the end of the war these activities were extended to the (few) Italian Jews interested in *'aliyah* as well as to the second wave of foreign Jewish refugees that arrived in Italy after the second half of 1945. Starting from 1944, the *hayalim* organized groups of young Jewish refugees to live in *kibbutzim*, *bachsharot*⁵⁶. (agricultural training farm) or in *kfarei-no'ar* (youth villages) with the opportunity to attend schools, seminars, workshops political meetings and other cultural activities. These forms of communitarian life were typical of the *Yishuv* of those years: there, the refugees were grouped according to their needs, their age and their political affiliation with the purpose of prepare themselves for *'aliyah*.

Immediately after the *Merkeẓ* established its headquarters in Bari in January 1944, the Palestinian soldiers founded *kibbutzim* and *bachsharot*. There, the Jewish DPs managed live according to the original principles of Zionism, which exalted manual labor particularly in agriculture. Whereas, the so-called *Kfarei ha-No'ar* were youth villages which addressed primarily the needs of children and teenagers. Their management was based on the educational methods of the *'Aliyat Ha-No'ar*, founded in 1933 in order to save Jewish children from Nazi extermination². As the third part of this study will fully describe, in these youth villages the young refugees were guided by *madrichim* ("guides", in Hebrew), selected from among the *hayalim* or brought over directly from Eretz Israel. In these youth villages, the children studied Hebrew and other subjects such as geography of Eretz Israel and history of the Jewish people, and were initiated into communitarian life and to manual labor.

Kibbutzim, *bachsharot* and *kfarei-no'ar* existed in parallel with the DP camps and assembly centers in liberated Italy. Starting from Apulia that - until the spring of 1947- hosted the largest number of Jewish refugees, these facilities were later opened in almost all the Italian regions. Generally, *kibbutzim*, *bachsharot* and *kfarei ha-no'ar* were housed inside or nearby the DP camps, others were instead isolated. They were often large homes, villas and public

⁵⁶ *Kibbutz* (pl. *kibbutzim*) and *bachsharah* (pl. *bachsharot*) are used as interchangeable terms in the archival sources. *Hachsharah* - which in Hebrew means "preparation" - traditionally refers to agricultural institutions similar to the *kibbutzim*, where Zionist youth learned technical skills necessary for their emigration to Eretz Israel (see: chapter 7).

buildings requisitioned by the Allied military authorities, often located in rural and maritime areas.

The encouragement and preparation for *'aliyah* undertaken by the *Merkeẓ* was later carried on by other Jewish organizations and those organized in Italy on the initiative of the refugees themselves. It is important also to emphasize the supporting role played by Jewish voluntary organizations in negotiating with governmental and intergovernmental institutions as well as in providing economic and ideological support. Among these organizations was the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT).

Kibbutzim, *bachsharot* and *Kfarei-No'ar* were a sort of organizations favored and accepted both by the Allied military authorities and by the international institutions responsible for the rescue of refugees, as UNRRA and then the IRO. From these institutions' point of view, this semi-autonomous organization - in which the Jewish refugees were directly involved and which had their own representative committees - allowed an easier intermediation between the institutions and the refugees themselves. Moreover, the programs proposed in *kibbutzim*, *bachsharot* and *kfarei ha-no'ar* - although promoting Zionist education and a strong sense of national identity - fit the goals and humanitarian attitudes of post-war years. As we shall see, in that period, the humanitarian organizations - with particular reference to UNRRA and IRO - combined the immediate rescue of the refugees with a physical and moral rehabilitation process. Therefore, all agricultural and manual activities performed within *kibbutzim* and *bachsharot*, schools and educational activities of *kfarei ha-no'ar*, workshops inside refugee camps and all recreational and sports activities supported by the Jewish organizations met with wide acceptance by the international institutions.

«It is Important that an Action Be Undertaken»: First *'Aliyot* and Resettlement

The above-depicted core of Jews soon became a special problem of categorization. Most of them appeared to be «reluctant» to declare their nationality for fear of being repatriated. By December 1943, the Post-War Sub-Commission sent a directive to Transit Camps n.1 in Bari and n.2 in Naples, recommending that:

«It is essential that as far as possible the Jewish Refugees shall be categorized in their countries of origin. For reasons of their own they may be reluctant to disclose this information but it is desirable to have this as soon as possible. It is suggested that this situation can be met by informing them that representatives of the different nationalities will shortly be arriving to interview them and it is necessary to know the names of

refugees of each nationality for the purpose of grouping. Those not disclosing a country of origin will be segregated and are liable to be held indefinitely, thus forfeiting their chances of evacuation to another country»⁵⁷.

Notwithstanding the Jewish refugees' «reluctance» to disclose their national origins, the ACC DPs Sub-Commission persistently asked its local officers to furnish detailed personal data of the Jews in the refugee camps in Italy and whether they had obtained a certificate permitting entry to Palestine⁵⁸. The DPs Sub-Commission emphasized the fact that many Jews were afraid to disclose their identity, revealing their particulars only to Jewish soldiers of the Allied Forces⁵⁹.

As shown above, the Allies' refugee policy promoted repatriation according to nationality as the most efficient solution for taking care of the greatest number of refugees in the shortest possible time. At the beginning of the Allies' military presence in Italy, Jews who already possessed a certificate for Palestine were allowed to travel there, as revealed in documents produced by AMGOT during 1943 and 1944. The same documents disclose also the continuing arrival of Jews on the shores of Apulia, thus maintaining a constant presence of non-Italian Jews in the DP camps in Italy⁶⁰.

In order to accelerate emigration procedures, the Jewish refugees in Italy formed informal committees with elected representatives who confronted the Allied authorities and demanded immediate *'aliyah*. One of the first of these committees was The Committee of Relations of the Pentcho Shipwrecked in Palestine, which represented a group of 50 Pentcho survivors who arrived at Ferramonti in 1942. They already possessed *'aliyah* certificates and requested that the Jewish Agency intervene on their behalf with the Allies⁶¹.

Moshe Shertok's arrival in Italy as representative of the Jewish Agency constituted a turning point⁶². The officer of the Regional Control and Military Government Section, in his memorandum to the DPs Sub-Commission on April 22, 1944 stated that «He [Shertok]

⁵⁷ ACS, *Jewish ex-internees and refugees 26 December 1943*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 599B Disposal Jewish Refugees, October 1943 – February 1944.

⁵⁸ ACS, *Jews in Italy, February 12, 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 599B Disposal Jewish Refugees, October 1943 – February 1944.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ See the numerous memoranda about the departures of the Jewish refugees for Palestine in ACS, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 58A Jews and Policy, December 1943 – June 1944.

⁶¹ CAHJP, *The Committee of Relations of the Pentcho Shipwrecked in Palestine, Ferramonti, December 6, 1943*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Praṭey Kol Ba'y-Koa Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

⁶² Moshe Shertok (or Moshe Sharrett) was an Israeli politician, member of the Mapai Party and second Prime Minister of Israel (1954-1955).

explained that his primary mission was to assist in the selection of Jews who should be given the certificates issued by the Colonial Office for emigration to Palestine»⁶³.

Only on May 2, 1944 did the Supreme Allied Commander approve the appointment of a representative of the Jewish Agency to work under the auspices of an IGCR Resident Representative in Italy. The Jewish Agency representative was to be in charge of selecting immigrants for Palestine and of issuing immigration certificates subject to the prior approval of the IGCR Representative⁶⁴. Nevertheless, less than two weeks later, the ACC indicated that the position as regards the representative of the Jewish Agency with the Allies Headquarters in Italy was «yet to be clarified»⁶⁵.

In summer 1944, the Jewish Agency appointed as its official delegate in Italy Umberto Nahon, who was able to reach the country only in February 1945⁶⁶. Despite the uncertain state of the Jewish Agency's role in Italy before Nahon's arrival, on the 25th of May 1944 a ship carrying approximately 560 Jews and 50 tons of baggage left from Taranto port for Palestine. The DPs Sub-Commission managed the transport as well as the embarkation of the Jewish refugees selected by the Jewish Agency for the '*aliyah*'. The passengers of the ship included 300 Jews from Ferramonti Camp, 150 from Santa Maria al Bagno Camp (LE) and 120 from Bari camp⁶⁷.

Before the end of the war, another ship sailed from Italy to Palestine. In December 1944, when Great Britain allowed the Jewish Agency with other 10,300 certificates, around 900 were reserved for '*aliyah*' from Italy. In cooperation with the IGCR and the DPs and Repatriation Sub-Commission of the ACC, Umberto Nahon selected the new immigrants and organized the second '*aliyah*' from Italy. The ship sailed from Italian shores at the end of March 1945, ten months after the leaving of the first one.

Meanwhile international efforts were undertaken in order to meet the needs of the Jews since the destruction caused by the war of vital infrastructure threatened the very success

⁶³ ACS, *Jewish Immigrants to Palestine, April 22, 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 58A Jews and Policy, December 1943 – June 1944.

⁶⁴ ACS, *Displaced Persons – Representation of IGCR and the Jewish Agency in Italy, and proposal to move displaced persons of Jewish extraction to Fedala, May 22, 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 58A Jews and Policy, December 1943 – June 1944.

⁶⁵ ACS, *Representation of the Jewish Agency with the Allied Control Commission, May 15, 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 58A Jews and Policy, December 1943 – June 1944.

⁶⁶ CAHJP, *Memorandum submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine by Dr. S. U. Nahon – Representative in Italy of the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, Archivio U. S. Nahon P239, File: 14 Missione in Italia di Umberto Nahon rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

⁶⁷ ACS, *Immigration Jews to Palestine ex Italy, May 23, 1944*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 58A Jews and Policy, December 1943 – June 1944.

of the organizations working on behalf of the DPs. The most serious difficulties faced by the relief agencies and the Allies in rehabilitating post-war Europe were related to the communication system - totally destroyed by the war – and to the tricky task of transferring funds. A large portion of the financial aid to the Jewish DPs in Europe arrived from the Jewish Community in the US, but it soon became apparent that the Trading with the Enemy Act (TWEA) of 1917 was proving a major obstacle to the accomplishment of the humanitarian program⁶⁸. The only way to overcome these problems was the creation of a network of institutional and private organizations, which would cooperate and serve as secure communication channels and as an indirect vehicle for the transfer of funds to the local rescue missions in Europe.

When the Allies landed in Italy, the Italian institution in charge of taking care of the refugees was the DELASEM. From its establishment, the budget of DELASEM was financed by American Jewish organizations, principally the JDC, that supplied 40-50% of the total budget. Although forced to operate clandestinely, the representatives of DELASEM called in 1943 for the support of public opinion and for the assistance of Jewish relief organizations in order to solve the problems of Jews in Italy who had been expelled, deported and displaced⁶⁹.

In June 1943, even before the so-called “invasion of Sicily”, Vittorio Valobra – Director of DELASEM- informed the US Department of the Treasury of the precarious conditions of the Jews in Italy. He stated that there were at that time 35,000 Jews and 10,000 refugees, of whom 5,000 were Yugoslavs, 2,000 Poles, 750 Czech and the remainder from Germany and Austria. For those who were in internment camps, the Italian Government provided a monthly allocation of 8 lira for men, 4 lira for women and 3 lira for children, whereas for the 3,000 non-interred refugees, the Italian Government made no provision. In order to underwrite much of the DELASEM costs, Mr. Valobra asked that the JDC authorize him to continue borrowing. Nevertheless, the US Department of the Treasury denied Valobra's request, since the TWEA forbade all form of communication with enemy-occupied territory, including any communication between JDC and Italy⁷⁰.

⁶⁸ The TWEA was a US federal law that restricted trade with countries hostile to the United States, thus preventing direct transfer of funds to enemy and enemy-occupied territories.

⁶⁹ Sorani, *Assistenza*; Antonini Sandro, *Storia della più grande organizzazione ebraica italiana di soccorso durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, (Genova: De Ferrari, 2000).

⁷⁰ AJDC, *Memorandum of Telephone Conversation with Mr. I. C. Olson of the Foreign Funds Control Dept. of the Treasury, in Washington, D. C. Author Leavitt, M. A., June 7, 1943*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720 .

Several months after the above-mentioned DELASEM request, on December 17, 1943, Max S. Perlman –Field Representative of the JDC at the Algerian American Consulate and then Head of the JDC Office in Bari – officially submitted a request to the Allied Military Government (AMG) for authorizing a representative of the JDC to enter Italy. This was the result of a previous informal conversation between AMG officials and Mr. Perlman, in which Perlman emphasized the considerable experience of the JDC in dealing with the special problem of stateless and displaced persons as well as in assisting the local Jews.

Perlman ensured that if an authorized JDC representative entered Italy, he would establish a central committee of local persons in Bari to handle Jewish refugees' assistance in Southern Italy, provide the funds for this committee and supervise its work. Moreover, the JDC would examine the possibility of finding permanent residence opportunities for the stateless persons, whether in Palestine or in other overseas countries; assist the local Jewish communities in restoring their educational, cultural and religious institutions; cooperate with the army and any public or private agencies engaged in civilian relief, in dealing with social problems affecting Italian Jews or Jewish refugees; and even render such other services appropriate to the JDC, as the military or other American authorities may request⁷¹.

Moreover, the pleas of Jewish communities and organizations on behalf of the helpless European Jews and their conditions resonated continually worldwide by means of all the communication channels possible, from official declarations to memoranda to the press⁷². By the end of 1943, following the failure of the Bermuda Conference in April 1943 and the missed implementation of the rescue proposals submitted by the World Jewish Congress and the Joint Emergency Committee for European Jewish Affairs, internal pressures developed within the Roosevelt administration, in particular between the Treasury Department and the State Department⁷³. The former accused the State Department of deliberately delaying and obstructing relief efforts by refusing to approve the license to fund the plan. The latter cited the TWEA as the reason for not issuing the license to the Treasury Department.

⁷¹ AJDC, *Memorandum from Max S. Perlman to Brigadier General J. C. Holmes Allied Military Government, Allied Force Headquarters, Subject: Refugees in Italy. Author Perlman, Max S., December, 17 1943*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁷² Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*.

⁷³ Breitman Richard and Kraut Alan, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry, 1933-1945*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987); Feingold Henry, *The Politics of Rescue: The Roosevelt Administration and the Holocaust, 1938-1945*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

On January 14, 1944, Treasury officials denounced the State Department for preventing the funding of rescue programs, as well as for suppressing information about Nazi victims in Europe. A group of senior aides to Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. including John Pehle, Randolph Paul, and Josiah DuBois put these accusations on paper in a 17-page memo addressed to the White House, entitled *The Acquiescence of this Government in the Murder of the Jews*. In analyzing the lack of action by the US Government on behalf of European Jewry, the Treasury report stated:

«Normally it would have been the job of the Government to show itself alert to this tragedy; but when a government neglects a duty it is the job of the legislature in a democracy to remind it of that duty. It is not important who voices a call for action, and it is not important what procedure is being used in order to get action. It is important that action be undertaken»⁷⁴.

In order to allay these accusations, Roosevelt established on the 22nd of January 1944 - with Executive Order number 9417 -, the War Refugee Board (WRB). The board consisted of the Secretary of State, the Secretary of Treasury and the Secretary of War and was charged with:

«the development of plans and programs and the inauguration of effective measures for (a) the rescue, transportation, maintenance and relief of the victims of enemy oppression, and (b) the establishment of havens of temporary refuge for such victims. To this end the Board, through appropriate channels, shall take the necessary steps to enlist the cooperation of foreign governments and obtain their participation in the execution of such plans and programs»⁷⁵.

Furthermore, point number 4 of the Executive Order specified that the Board and the Departments of State, Treasury and War were authorized to accept the services or contributions of any private persons, private organizations, State agencies, or agencies of foreign governments in carrying out the purposes of this Order. The Order thus stressed the importance of cooperation among organizations in handling the problems of refugee rescue, maintenance, transportation, relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement⁷⁶.

⁷⁴ The memo is available online at <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/treasrep.html>, accessed March 2016.

⁷⁵ AJDC, *Establishing a War Refugee Board, January 22, 1944*, Folder: Reports, 1945, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 / 7 / 2052, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945-54 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Organizations - NY AR194554 / 2 | Record Group: U.S. Government - NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 | Series: U.S. War Refugee Board - NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 / 7.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 2.

Until its abolition by President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9614 of September 15, 1945, the WRB worked as an independent government agency under the Executive Branch of the US Government. John W. Pehle, Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury and former Director of the Treasury's Foreign Funds Control, was appointed Executive Director of the Board and served until January 27, 1945. Pehle was replaced by William O'Dwyer – General, US Army and then member of the Allied Commission for Italy – who served as Executive Director of the WRB until its dissolution in September 1945.

On the 15th of September 1945, Executive Director William O'Dwyer submitted the Final Summary Report of the WRB to the White House. He accurately depicted the purposes, the organizations and the rescue measures adopted by the WRB since its establishment in January 1944. The Board had its offices in Washington, and its staff was composed largely of highly-trained professionals and refugee specialists. It worked through a network of overseas representatives, located in «strategic areas of Turkey, Switzerland, Sweden, Portugal, Great Britain; Italy and North Africa». These representatives though not professional refugee relief workers, were accorded diplomatic status and designated as Special Attaches on war refugee matters to the respective United States Mission by the Department of State. They were instructed to cut red tape and take bold action wherever necessary. Their main task was liaison between the local US Mission and the Board, sometimes even dealing with representatives of the enemy countries⁷⁷.

In drafting the Board's programs, efforts were made to enlist the cooperation and participation of other governments and interested international organizations for the rescue of the persecuted minorities in Nazi hands. Special instructions were sent to the United States Mission in neutral countries to urge those governments to accept all refugees who might succeed in reaching their borders and to announce publicly that they would do so. In such cases, the WRB assured funds for the refugees' maintenance and for their evacuation to other places⁷⁸.

The WRB operated in close cooperation with the three main international organizations concerned with the refugee problems: the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees (IGCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the newly established United Nation Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA)⁷⁹.

⁷⁷ Ibid., *Final Summary Report of the Executive Director, War Refugee Board, September 15, 1945*, 4-6, Folder: Reports, 1945, NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 / 7 / 2052.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

Shortly after its creation, the WRB invited Sir Herbert Emerson, Director of the IGCR, to Washington with the purpose of drafting an agreement concerning the work of the two organizations. An agreement of mutual collaboration was achieved: the IGCR was to assist the Board to the extent possible in its efforts to save and bring relief to victims inside enemy territories; the Board would support the IGCR in any rescue work the IGCR might decide to finance or undertake. The Board provided 2 million dollars from the President's Emergency Fund for IGCR relief operations in Europe, using the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee as its agent.

The International Committee of the Red Cross, acting as a neutral organization, played a major role by facilitating official Board relief deliveries inside enemy territories, and by serving as a channel of communication to Nazi officials and collaborators. In fact, in the final month of the war the International Red Cross, at the request of the WRB, undertook negotiations with the Germans in order to obtain permission to station personnel in the principal German concentration centres.

The Board asked for and obtained UNRRA help in finding temporary shelters for rescued victims, for their transportation to safe havens and for their maintenance and transit. The WRB report of September 1945 described the preparation of UNRRA camps in the Middle East, Italy and North Africa «for the reception of thousands of rescued refugees from Yugoslavia, Italy and Spain»⁸⁰.

Notwithstanding the above-mentioned agreements, the hostilities, the economic blockade and the limitations in communicating with enemy countries made it impossible to carry out effective relief and rescue work inside the German-controlled areas. The only possible way to avoid these difficulties was to enlist the help of private organisations. The WRB operated where only a government could operate whereas the private organisations had no such restrictions. The Board therefor obtained government permission for private organisations to send funds into enemy territories, and to communicate with persons in enemy territory. The private organisations also received the help of United States diplomats in dealing with other governments, the use of government communication channels, and the guidance of government officials in developing and organizing programs of rescue and relief in enemy countries.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 8-10.

«No feasible program suffered for lack of funds, because of the generosity of the private agencies», wrote the Director General of the WRB. Between January 1944 and September 1945, the Treasury Department of the United States granted licenses for the transfer abroad of approximately 20 million dollars in private funds for private rescue and relief projects, coordinated by the WRB representatives abroad. In fact, Jewish organizations provided more than 70% of the total amount licenced by the WRB: over 15 million dollars were financed by the JDC, over 1 million dollars by the Joint Emergency Committee and 0.3 million dollars by the World Refugee Congress⁸¹.

Within this structure of networking and cooperation, the JDC received permission to begin its mission in Italy. In June 1944, the IGCR and the JDC set the general terms for the activity of a JDC representative under the supervision of the Resident Representative of IGCR in Italy, Sir Clifford Heathcote Smith. According to the agreements, JDC would work for the benefit of the Jews in Italy without any supervision on the part of the IGCR, but would keep the IGCR Resident Representative advised on their activities⁸².

After having been accused of idleness, the US State Department, following the establishment and the effective commitment of the WRB to the Jewish refugee problem, placed itself in a position that continued even after the end of the war. The WRB, through its network of diplomats, negotiated the effective evacuation of Jews from enemy territories, arranged for their receiving the status of protected nationalities, developed a plan for the refugees' flight from Europe to Palestine, and attempted to find temporary havens of refuge for the displaced persons⁸³. To this end, the WRB selected South Italy as a temporary sanctuary for Jewish refugees, to serve as a «path to freedom» for the refugees who streamed across the Adriatic Sea. This became the largest emergency refugee operation of the WRB⁸⁴.

As the number of Jewish refugees was gradually increasing in South Italy and in order to strengthen the US Government's position vis-à-vis other countries who were repeatedly asked by the WRB to offer refuge to the Nazi victims, President Roosevelt acceded to the Board's recommendation and arranged for 1,000 refugees in Southern Italy to be transferred

⁸¹ Ibid., 12.

⁸² About the agreement between JCD and IGCR in Italy see: AJDC, *Memorandum: Inter Governmental Committee on Refugees in Italy and the Joint Distribution Committee, June, 9 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720; see also: *Letter from Resident Representative to Dr. Joseph Schwartz, Subject: Working of JDC Representatives with and under the Resident Representative of the I G C R in Italy, June 11, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁸³ Ibid., *Final Summary Report of the Executive Director, War Refugee Board, September 15, 1945*, 16-17, Folder: Reports, 1945, NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 / 7 / 2052.

⁸⁴ Friedman Saul, *No Haven for the Oppressed: United States Policy Toward Jewish Refugees, 1938-1945*, (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1973).

immediately to an Emergency Refugee Shelter at Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York⁸⁵. In August 1944, 982 refugees selected by the Displaced Persons Sub-Commission of the ACC in Italy and the WRB representative in Italy, were brought to the Fort Ontario Shelter. The group included a large number of women and children and was composed mainly of stateless Jews originating from Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia and the Balkans.

This emergency project - instituted outside the quotas and regulations of US immigration law – was approved by Congress pursuant to appropriate security restrictions, according to which the refugees were to be repatriated upon the termination of the war. Nevertheless, after the refugees had been in the shelter several months, numerous complaints and criticism were received by the WRB and efforts were made to obtain modification of the restrictive conditions that kept the refugees confined to the Shelter. In light of this pressure, the WRB conducted an inquiry regarding the possibility of returning the refugees to Europe or modifying the limitations on their stay in the United States. The Executive Director submitted the results of the inquiry to the WRB, maintaining that:

«To return these people to Italy on the formal consideration that this was the country from which they were shipped to Oswego, in my opinion, would not be in accordance with the President's commitment. [...]The arbitrary return of these people to Italy would only serve the purpose of getting them out of the United States to some UNRRA camp where they might have to wait for years before final relocation»⁸⁶.

By virtue of these considerations, the Executive Director of the WRB recommended allowing greater freedom to the refugees at Oswego. In view of the imminent termination of the WRB, the responsibility for the project was transferred to the US Department of the Interior.

In February 1946, President Truman closed the Shelter, permitting the refugees legal entry into the country. Almost all the refugees chose resettlement in the United States, with the exception of a group of 66 of the refugees who had chosen in August 1945 to be repatriated to Yugoslavia.

During spring 1944, the Jewish displaced persons in Italy were steered towards repatriation or resettlement. This slow process proceeded, but the continued arrival of new Jewish DPs from Eastern Europe worsened the situation. These so-called «new refugees» became a

⁸⁵ Hurwitz Ariel, "Fort Ontario", in Gutman Israel (ed. by), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust*, (New York: MacMillan, 1990), 503-504.

⁸⁶ Ibid., *Final Summary Report of the Executive Director, War Refugee Board, September 15, 1945*, 61-69, NY AR194554 / 2 / 1 / 7 / 2052.

burden for the military authorities and this led to the involvement of several other organizations in the management of the refugee crisis in Europe.

Conclusions

Since 1943, with the liberation of Ferramonti, the Allies began to handle the first groups of Jewish DPs as well as to face with the issues related to the “Jewish problem”. Already at this first stage of the Allied intervention in Europe, many obstacles emerged in relation to the estimation and registration of the Jews through the nationality line. Repatriation resulted soon a challenging solution for SHAEF, thus requiring the intervention of other international as well as governmental institutions.

The arrival of the Allies in Italy did not marked only the beginning of the liberation of the concentration camps in Europe, but also the involvement of the *Yishuv* in finding a solution to the Jewish displacement. The first encounter between the survived Jews of the Diaspora and the Jews from the *Yishuv* occurred indeed in 1943 on Italian soil. The *hayalim* and the institutions they established were instrumental both in strengthening the “Jewish identity” of the DPs and in developing a sense of belonging to *Eretz Israel*.

Historiography had pointed out the role of Italy as a “Gate to Zion”, but this was possible in particular through the activism of the Jewish soldiers, the chaplains, the *madrichim* and the *shlibim*. Their mission paved the way towards those mechanisms of self-understanding and self-government which will be discussed in the following chapters.

Part Two

HUMANITARIANISM AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING: DP POLICY VS. DP POLITICS

Chapter 3

New Waves of Jewish Refugees

Networking the Assistance for the DPs in Italy

Sharing Post-War Responsibilities

The liberation of Rome in June 1944 was a turning point for the beginning of a more structured plan for the management of post-war refugees in Italy. It sparked a new stage in the administration of the refugee issue in Italy. The military authorities began to share official responsibility for the humanitarian post-war crisis with international institutions (first UNRRA) as well as with the Italian government and private organizations. Specifically, the Italian refugees became responsibility of the Italian Government; UNRRA began to repatriate the Allied nationals and the military authorities continued to deal with those who could not be repatriated. While still maintaining a centralized control, the military authorities progressively entered into agreements with local, international and private institutions, entrusting them with the management of certain refugee camps and thus distributing the workload.

In the general context, the liberation of Rome led to the establishment of a coalition government composed mainly of anti-fascist parties headed by the moderate Ivanoe Bonomi¹. During the summer of 1944, the new government - eager to renew its position in international politics - established the High Commissioner for Refugees, which would look after Italian refugees. Just a month after its founding, the Italian High Commissioner administered directly or indirectly 38 camps, leaving only 10 camps under ACC control. One year later, the responsibility for Italian DPs passed to the Ministry of Post-War Relief which by the second half of 1946 administered 80 camps and assisted 46.382 Italian refugees, half of them from North Africa and the other half Italians displaced internally because of the conflict².

¹ On the establishment of the post-war government in Italy, see: Aga-Rossi Elena, *L'Italia nella sconfitta: politica interna e situazione internazionale durante la Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, (Napoli: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1985), 125–190.

² D'Andrea Antonio, "Campi profughi, centri di lavoro, di studio e di educazione professionale", in *Atti del Convegno per studi di assistenza sociale* (Tremezzo, 16 settembre – 6 ottobre 1946), (Milano: Marzorati Editore, 1947), 599-600.

The involvement of the Italian government in the management of the refugee crisis had a twofold significance: on the one hand, it helped to promote national sovereignty and, on the other hand, it was an important opportunity to gain a new diplomatic position in the international arena. These purposes inevitably interacted with the process of political, economic and social reconstruction of the country, which a little later, would lead to the constitution of the Italian Republic. Between 1944 and 1951, national and international institutions became involved in the rescue of displaced persons in Italy, thus contributing to a constant negotiation «between national and international mandates»³.

In the specific case of the Jewish DPs, the liberation of Rome initiated the process of reconstruction of what - before September 1943 – was considered the core of Italian Jewry. The anti-Semitic policy and, in particular, the deportations between September 1943 and April 1945 harshly damaged Italian Jewry. This resulted in the invaluable loss of more than 6,000 lives as well as in a deep identity crisis of the Italian Jews who survived the Shoah⁴.

The initial impetus for a renewal came again from the *bayalim* as well as from the Jewish voluntary organizations which from that moment began their missions in Italy. From June 1944, Rome hosted the major national and international Jewish institutions and voluntary organizations involved in the assistance to the Italian and non-Italian Jews survived the war⁵. The first step to restart anew was the restoration of the already existing Jewish institutions in the country:

«Roman Jews,

We thank God for giving us the grace to see the bright dawn of this day when we regained our freedom and, with our freedom, our identity.

Suffering, deprivation, anxiety, grief, pain, the abuse suffered during these long terrible nine months, though having put us to the test, not halted us: never a day our activity was suspended, we never hesitated, even for a moment, on the imperative need to continue our work. [...] Even without going into detail in describing such obstacles we had to overcome, it is not an exaggeration to say that we made real miracles.

Two were the most serious obstacles that always companied us during these painful months: personal safety and the need for funds. Both problems have been overcome, albeit through enormous hardships.

³ This expression is used by Silvia Salvatici in an article in which she examines the Italian Government's approach to the refugee problem between 1944 and 1951, see Silvia Salvatici, "Between National and International Mandates".

⁴ For detailed numerical data about the deportation of the Jews from Italy between 1943 and 1945, see: Picciotto Fargion, *Il libro della memoria*.

⁵ About the reconstruction of the Italian Jewish Community after World War II, see Schwartz Guri, *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista*, (Bari: Laterza, 2004); Id., "The Reconstruction of the Jewish Life in Italy After World War II", in *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8, 3 (2009), 360-377.

[...] During these nine months, DELASEM spent about 25,000,000 lire, despite having distributed insufficient subsidies. After this huge effort our possibilities are exhausted and we appeal to all of you, Jews of Rome»⁶.

With the above press release following the liberation of Rome, DELASEM asked the Jews of Rome for an economic support, «a sacrifice». The war had struck deep inside the Italian Jewish Community: Jewish institutions had now to be rebuilt, and the community's identity had to be restored. To achieve this recovery, an outside help was also needed and the Italian Jewish Community indeed found such support from a network of individuals, movements and institutions that helped the Community to recover, rebuild and take part again in national life. Meanwhile also the Allied military authorities in Italy were preparing plans and agreements in order to face the refugee crisis in the country in cooperation with the UN agencies.

«UNRRA Helps Italy»

By mid-1943, a report of the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements estimated there would be about 21 million displaced persons in Europe. Such a large-scale mass movement would interfere with the military and rescue operations, spread disease and increase social as well as economic confusion. Besides the work of the military authorities, it would be essential for national governments and private agencies to provide the necessities required. Moreover, it was assumed that the task of repatriation would be handled as soon as possible by a civilian international organization: UNRRA⁷.

Well before the end of World War II, the Director General of UNRRA was instructed to establish liaison with the Allied military authorities in order to forge plans for dealing with the displaced persons in Europe once the Allies gained control. In November 1944, SHAEF and UNRRA signed an agreement by which the UNRRA agreed to work under the guideline of the Allied Armies⁸. The agreement – signed the 25th of November 1944 by Dwight D. Eisenhower and Herbert H. Lehman, Director-General of UNRRA – gave formal approval to UNRRA's mission within the Displaced Person Branch of SHAEF⁹.

⁶ CAHJP, *Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane. Delegazione assistenza emigranti ebrei – Roma*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, File 11: Pratey Kol Ba'y-Koah Ha-Yehidot Ha-'Ivriyot Be-'Italiyah (December 1943 – August 1944).

⁷ Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, 469.

⁸ The «Agreement to regularize the relations between the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and the Supreme Commander, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) during the military period» is quoted in Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 136-140.

⁹ The «Administrative Memorandum Number 39 (Revisited – 16 April 1945) by the ShaeF» is quoted in Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, Appendix B, 445 and in Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, Appendix 5, 180-209.

The SHAEF-UNRRA Agreement called on UNRRA to rapidly expand its responsibilities, and in particular to provide skilled personnel to relieve the civilian demands on military personnel. According to the agreement, UNRRA workers were under the jurisdiction and direction of the military authorities and remained so until the Zone Agreements were negotiated in 1945-46¹⁰.

The UNRRA-SHAFF Agreement was the result of the work of teams of UNRRA specialists, who during summer 1944 were attached to SHAEF in Europe in order to «observe» the situation and propose plans of action to be approved by the UNRRA Council¹¹. UNRRA specialists found Italy totally annihilated by the conflict:

«The war left Italy in a state of economic paralysis and stagnation. Large areas were devastated during the fighting. There was not enough food to feed the people and the available food could not be properly distributed. There was little railway transport for civilian use and road transport was almost non-existent. Italy had no coal and had lost three-quarters of its hydroelectric power. More than a million of the people in Italy had lost their homes through military action and about 150,000 of these were refugees. Most of them were hungry, ill-clothed and sick. Industries were at a standstill for lack of power and raw materials; farmlands were devastated and without fertilizers»¹².

This description of the dire conditions in Italy immediately after the end of the hostilities is the introduction of a pamphlet titled *UNRRA in Italy*, which described the activities of the UN agency in Italy between 1945 and 1946. This short publication was edited by UNRRA itself, and it is among a series of publicity materials about the UNRRA missions in Europe.

UNRRA's involvement in the reconstruction of Italy started already in late spring 1944, when the Allied Army was advancing on the verge of liberating Rome and the Italian Government began to manage the consequences of the war under the British occupation. At this early stage, because of its status of co-belligerent country, the position of Italy within the international relief program was unclear¹³. In March 1944, Fred K. Hoehler (US Director of the Displaced Persons Division of UNRRA) and Sir Arthur Salter (British Deputy Director General of UNRRA) discussed the possibility that UNRRA might become involved in the

¹⁰ WL, M 317/S37, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra's Work for Displaced Persons in Europe*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946) 7.

¹¹ Ibid. Already in May 1944, UNRRA had assumed financial and administrative responsibilities for operating refugee camps in Egypt, Palestine and Syria, dealing with about 40,000 Yugoslavs and Greeks. Unlike the European missions where UNRRA was in charge only of repatriate the DPs, in the Middle East it had full responsibility for maintaining supplies and for effecting repatriation.

¹² WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office: London, 1946), 2.

¹³ About Italy's status of co-belligerency and the relationship with the Allies, see Ellwood David, *Italy 1943-45*, (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1985), 47-48.

care of UN displaced persons in Southern Italy and in the provision of supplies and services in Italy regardless of Italy's status of enemy country. In view of a possible approval of this proposal at the approaching Second Council Session of UNRRA, the UNRRA Administration in May 1944 approved sending an Observer Mission to Italy.

«In the midst of this destruction, disorganization, and understandable despair, the UNRRA Observer Mission arrived in Italy in July 1944», wrote the official historiographer of UNRRA¹⁴. Spurgeon M. Keeny was Head of the Mission, accompanied by Antonio Sorieri, Guido Nazdo and William G. Welk as advisors. These were US citizens who had prominent roles in government offices and, especially in those agencies temporarily set up in the previous years to deal with the war emergency¹⁵.

Keeny reported about his mission in Italy in detailed letters sent twice a month to Michail M. Menshikov, Vice Director General and Responsible for the UNRRA Bureau of Areas. Due to the development of the military operations by the Allied Army, the UNRRA Observer Mission focused mainly on the areas of Rome, Naples and Bari. Keeny described Italy as devastated, poor and smashed by bombing, with a concentration of displaced persons predominately in the Bari area. Travelling for ten months throughout Italy, Keeny and his colleagues collected data through direct observation and informal interviews.

The Observers established the UNRRA Headquarter in Rome, and prepared a plan for providing immediate relief through the supply of essential goods (for an initially limited budget of 50 million dollars) and the care and repatriation of displaced persons. In order to discuss possible strategies of involvement, Keeny – in his letter to Menshikov - highlighted the importance of strengthening the link with the Italian Government, whose relationship had been limited to informal contacts during 1944¹⁶. For this reason, in summer 1944, the UNRRA team in Italy had made contact only with Guido De Ruggero, Ministry of the Public Education under the Bonomi Government, and with Tito Zaniboni, High Commissioner for the Refugees of the War¹⁷.

The situation improved after the Observer Mission submitted its recommendations to the Second Council Session, held in Montreal in September 1944. These recommendations brought to the fore the urgent need for a relief and rehabilitation mission in Italy. Despite

¹⁴ Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, 257.

¹⁵ For a profile of the UNRRA Missions' Observers in Italy see Salvatici Silvia, ««Not enough food to feed the people». L'UNRRA in Italia (1944-1945)», in *Contemporanea. Rivista di Storia dell'800 e del '900*, 1 (2011), 86-90.

¹⁶ Affinito Michele (ed. by), *La storia della missione esplorativa dell'UNRRA in Italia (1944-1945)*, (Napoli: Università degli studi Suor Orsola Benincasa, 2012), 221.

¹⁷ Salvatici, «Not enough food to feed the people», 93.

the diplomatic position of Italy as a belligerent, the Council approved providing aid, limited however to food supplies, medical help, welfare service for children and mothers as well as assistance in the care and repatriation of DPs. The shipment of supplies began in October 1944 for a total expenditure estimated at 94,800,000 dollars. Provisions included supplementary food for 2,500,000 needy, nursing women and expectant mothers as well as children up to fifteen years of age; essential medical and sanitary supplies; assistance in rehousing and resettlement of the Italian refugees displaced within Italy by reason of war; and care and repatriation of an estimated 20,000 UN displaced persons in Italy eligible for UNRRA aid¹⁸.

The approval of the UNRRA Mission in Italy coincided with the transformation of the Allied Control Commission (ACC) into the Allied Commission (AC) and consequently the gradual reduction of the military's authority and a greater autonomy for UNRRA in dealing with the Italian Government. On January 12, 1945 Keeny had his first official meeting with Prime Minister Ivanoe Bonomi and by February a draft for an Agreement was initiated. There were of necessity several preliminary meetings between the UNRRA and the Italian Government's delegates, and UNRRA's historiographer G. Woodbridge summed the situation up:

«After some puzzling hesitations, it became clear that the Government was most anxious to reformulate the draft in such a way to underline the joint character of the Agreement, thereby emphasizing Italy's participation on equal terms in a United Nations undertaking»¹⁹.

On the 8th of March 1945, the first Agreement with Italy was signed, according to which UNRRA, continued to provide supplementary feeding for children and mothers, urgent medical needs and took over responsibility for the displaced persons camps in South Italy²⁰. Moreover, according to Article IX of the Agreement, a Joint Committee (with representatives of the Italian Government and of UNRRA) was to be established. For this purpose, the Italian Government Delegation for Relations with UNRRA was set up, with Ludovico Montini as Chairman²¹. The Joint Committee was authorized to achieve all supplementary

¹⁸ See: "Summary Report of the UNRRA Observer Mission to Italy, 15 September 1944, 11-17" in Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, 259.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 261.

²⁰ The first contribution of 2,843 tons of UNRRA supplies turned over the Italian Government was made in March 18, 1945 and, by the end of the year 200,000,000 women and children in institutions of every kind, were receiving supplements to their daily rations from UNRRA food stocks. See WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by) *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 3.

²¹ See: ACS, *Verballi della Delegazione dal 1945 a 1947*, Series: Ministero dell'Interno (M.I.), Collection: Amministrazione Attività Assistenziali Italiane e Internazionali, Sub Collection: Segreteria e Presidenza 1944-

agreements necessary to attain the goals of the Agreement itself and was also responsible for the fulfilment of the respective obligations of the parties under the Agreement²².

At the third UNRRA Council Meeting in August 1945, UNRRA was finally authorized to extend its programme in Italy to full-scale relief and rehabilitation, which came into operation in January 1946, when UNRRA and the Italian Government signed a supplementary Agreement.

Under the terms of the 1946 Agreement, UNRRA began to assume a greater part of the relief operations previously undertaken by the Allied Commission. In order to meet its commitments, UNRRA planned to import into Italy a total of 9,000,000 tons of supplies by January 1947²³. Moreover, as reported in APPENDIX 2, with the increase in the size and scope of the UNRRA Mission in Italy, the administrative work was decentralised to eight regional offices in Italy (except Venezia Giulia and Udine), Sicily and Sardinia²⁴.

True to its fundamental policy, UNRRA in Italy was working «to help the people to help themselves», which became the slogan of the UN agency²⁵.

As exemplified in the diagram in APPENDIX 3, the UNRRA Mission in Italy had three parallel goals: on the one hand, implementing immediate relief programs and launching long-term economic rehabilitation projects; and on the other hand, taking care of the DPs, thus alleviating the Italian precarious situation through their repatriation

UNRRA Immediate Relief Program

The immediate relief program of UNRRA continued until the end of 1946, covering provisions and supplies, which included both food and raw materials shipments. Welfare services ensured supplementary feeding for women and children in schools, hospitals and in other institutions. UNRRA supplied clothing collected in the United Nations Clothing Drives. The clothing was distributed both by UNRRA (to non-Italian DPs, Italian refugees

1977, Folder n. 206; for a profile of Lodovico Montini, see Saba Vincenzo, “La figura e l’opera di Lodovico Montini: teoria e pratica del cattolicesimo sociale italiano alla prova delle nuove assistenze americane”, in Ciampani Adrea (ed. by), *L’amministrazione per gli Aiuti Internazionali. La ricostruzione dell’Italia tra dinamiche internazionali e attività assistenziali*, (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2002), 23-46.

²² Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, 261; for the Agreement between UNRRA and the Italian Government see Ibid., Appendix VII.

²³ Between September and December 1945, the UNRRA mission in Italy was financed by the United States Government with a budget of 100,000,000 dollars, which was administered by the United States Foreign Economic Administration (FEA). See: WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by) *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 2; Woodbridge, *UNRRA*, 257-261 and 296-316.

²⁴ See APPENDIX 2.

²⁵ WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by) *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 2.

and to institutions) and by ENDISI (Ente Nazionale Distribuzione Soccorsi in Italia, the National Body for Relief Distribution in Italy) to other needy classes of population. Before issue, clothing was processed in 55 workshops organized by UNRRA, employing Italian refugees and homeless people²⁶. The relief program included also supplies of drugs, insulin crystal, anti-plague vaccine doses, large quantities of DDT powder, penicillin, clothing for operating surgeons and 50 ambulances. UNRRA's health teams engaged in the battle against malaria and other epidemics in Italy as well as in distributing medical supplies²⁷.

UNRRA Long-term Rehabilitation Program

The world shortage of food impelled UNRRA to encourage Italian agricultural and industrial rehabilitation to secure maximum food crops for the following years. Thus, UNRRA imported to Italy crop seeds, fertilizers, pesticides as well as other agricultural supplies²⁸. At the same time, it supplied fuel for agricultural machinery and industry (such as coal and gasoline) and raw materials (such as pig iron, tin, copper, rubber, timber, cotton, wool, etc.) to help restart Italian industries²⁹. Distribution was supervised by a special commission, whose members included both UNRRA officers and representatives of the Delegation of the Italian Government for Relationship with UNRRA³⁰. Rationing and pricing of the commodities were in accordance to UNRRA Resolutions, which aimed at suppressing the black market and encouraging fair and reasonable trade. Funds derived from the sale of UNRRA supplies to the population were placed in a separate fund of the Italian Government and enabled the Government to enhance its program of reconstructing houses and repairing buildings destroyed or damaged by the bombings as well as to take care of Italian DPs and the needy Italian population³¹.

²⁶ Ibid., 9-10. About the welfare program of UNRRA in Italy see: Unrra (ed. by) *Unrra's Welfare Programme in Italy*, (London: UNRRA European Regional Office - Division of Operational Analysis, 1947) and UNRRA (ed. by) *Supplementary feeding of mothers and children*, (London: UNRRA European Regional Office - Division of Operational Analysis, 1946).

²⁷ For details about the UNRRA expenditure in Italy for immediate relief supplies, see APEENDIX 4. WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 9-11. About UNRRA health program for DPs see, Reinisch Jessica, "«Le nazioni hanno bisogno di cittadini sani e coraggiosi»: le Displaced Persons, l'Unrra e la sanità pubblica", in Crainz Guido, Pupo Raoul and Salvatici Silvia (eds. by), *Naufreggi della pace: Il 1945, i profughi e le memorie divise d'Europa*, (Donzelli Editore, 2008), 111-126.

²⁸ On the agricultural rehabilitation program of UNRRA in Italy see: Unrra (ed. by), *Agriculture in Italy*, (London: Unrra European Regional Office, 1947).

²⁹ WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 6-7. About the industrial rehabilitation program of UNRRA in Italy see: Unrra (ed. by), *Industrial Rehabilitation in Italy*, (London: Unrra European Regional Office, 1947).

³⁰ WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 8.

³¹ UNRRA expenses for the long-term programs in Italy between March 1945 and December 1946 are detailed in the table in APPENDIX 5; Ibid, 8-12.

DPs Care & Repatriation

As already detailed, the displaced persons' problem in Italy involved two groups: the non-Italian DPs and the Italian refugees. In 1945 and 1946, UNRRA undertook the care and repatriation of non-Italian DPs as well as the task, in cooperation with Italian Government institutions, of returning to their homes of several hundred thousands of native Italians, released from Germany, Austria and the liberated countries or displaced in Italy itself because of the war.

When hostilities ceased, an estimated 800,000 people started to trek homeward and a constant influx of Italian prisoners of war, slave labourers and ex-concentration camp inmates managed to reach Italy from Germany, Austria and Eastern Europe. From the beginning of its missions in Europe and the Middle East, UNRRA was authorized by the Allies to declare «eligible» for receiving international assistance and repatriation those «people of United Nations nationalities and stateless persons forced to leave their homes by reasons of war» and «ineligible» - enemy prisoners of war, and persons from enemy or ex-enemy countries, except for those forced to move by reasons of race and religion or by activities in favour of the United Nations³².

The question of the exact categories of DPs who should or should not be eligible for UNRRA aid had since been debated at every Council meeting, and remained a complex administrative problem for a long time. The UNRRA binary system of eligibility/ineligibility represented the wishes of UNRRA's member governments to encourage repatriation of as many DPs as possible and to remove collaborators from the DP camps. UNRRA received these directions in the form of Resolutions of the UNRRA Council itself, supplemented (if necessary) by instructions from the Central Committee in between the Sessions of the Council. Based on these Resolutions, UNRRA instructed its Chiefs of Missions responsible for DPs operations, who would provide specific guidance to their staffs³³.

In order to determine the eligibility or ineligibility of DPs in Italy, every unattached individual or family head in the camps was screened and interviewed by experienced interviewers. In general, all persons applying for UNRRA assistance were called to prove that they had been displaced as a result of the war and that they were in financial need in accordance with

³² WL, M 317/S37, UNRRA (ed. by) *Unrra's Work for Displaced Persons in Europe*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, 5 and 24-25.

regulations laid down in the basic plan of operation. According to Resolutions number 57, 71 and 92, there were three categories of persons who fell under the criteria of eligibility:

1. Those of United Nations nationals who hold valid documents of identification issued by one of the United Nations Governments. Persons describing themselves as United Nations nationals but failing to support their claim through a valid document of identification could refer to their own Government Representative in Italy to secure their identity and thus be declared as eligible.
2. Those describing themselves as United Nations nationals but who are unwilling or unable to secure valid documents of identification, but presented to UNRRA positive evidence that they had been deported therefrom by the enemies because of race, religion or activities in favour of the United Nations (indicated as «other» in UNRRA files).
3. Those of nationality other than United Nations ones who presented to Unrra positive evidence that they had been obliged to leave their country of origin or had been deported therefrom by the enemies because of race, religion or activities in favour of the United Nations (indicated as «other» in UNRRA files)³⁴.

Persons of any nationality who had been determined by the military authorities to have collaborated with the enemy or to have committed crimes against the interests or nationals of the United Nations were specifically excluded from UNRRA care. Generally speaking, UNRRA in Italy declared ineligible all those who served or were serving with regular enemy military units in Italy, except for specific cases which allowed UNRRA to assist them in repatriation³⁵. UNRRA policy also prevented assistance to persons who left their home countries in flight before the Allied Army of liberation or who left their countries after liberation.

As in Germany and Austria, UNRRA collaborated with the Tracing Bureau, originally set up in Bad Arolsen (Germany) by the SHAEF. The Bureau, also known as International Tracing Service (ITS) was intended as an instrument for monitoring the refugees' movements and connecting friends and relatives displaced by the war. The Italian Branch was opened at the

³⁴ War Office (hereafter WO), *Criteria of Eligibility, 1946, Unrra Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946*, WO 204/10837, The Enriques Collection, The Wiener Library, London, UK, and selected files from FO, HO and WO, the National Archives, Kew, UK.

³⁵ Ibid.

Red Cross Offices in Rome³⁶. The main task of the Tracing Bureau was to coordinate the tracing work of the different zones of occupation in Europe. It was governed by the UNRRA policies of dealing only with Allied nationals and victims of persecutions and did not trace enemy or ex-enemy nationals, except those who had undergone Nazi persecutions. The work of the Bureau was divided between two main sections: the Records Division - which made enquiries, searched for records of missing people and collected information about and lists of people in concentration camps, labour camps and hospitals – and the Documents Intelligence Division, which compiled lists of all the collected documents with detailed data of each persons recoded³⁷.

Moreover, with the purpose of classifying the information assembled, UNRRA developed a code system which assigned a number and a colour to each category of persons which needed to be identified in determining eligibility. Along with this classification code, there were four main groups, designated by different colours, and 15 sub-groups, which indicated the categories to which each persons belonged, as detailed in APPENDIX 6³⁸. The screening process undertook by UNRRA ended approximatively in mid-1946.

«The Work of the Private Agencies is Both Urgent and Essential»

In parallel with the UNRRA Observer Mission, also several private voluntary organizations began to plan their program of rescue and rehabilitation on behalf of certain groups or categories of refugees. The cooperation between these agencies and the institutional ones was fundamental in assuring a higher standard of assistance to the DPs in post-war Europe. In the specific case of the Jewish DPs, one of the humanitarian organizations that gave a fruitful contribution was the JDC.

Immediately after the news of the Italian surrender, Joseph Schwartz, European Chairman of the JDC, returned from a relief mission in the Middle East to his office in Lisbon, in order

³⁶ Nowadays the extensive collection of personal files produced by UNRRA (and then by IRO) in Italy are preserved in the ITS Archives, located in Bad Arolsen, Germany. International Tracing Service (ITS), *Documents of Its Liaison Missions and National Tracing Bureaus In Chronological Order – Italy 1.6.1945 – 28.8.1953*, Series 6: Record Of The Its And Its Predecessors, Collection 6.1: Administration And Organization, Sub Collection 6.1.1: Predecessor Organizations, Doc. N. 82518210#1 (6.1.1/0088/0010). As early as 1943 and on the initiative of the Allied Forces Headquarters at the British Red Cross in London, the Department of International Affairs was transformed into a Tracing Bureau. The new service began with the task of tracing and registering missing persons. SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces), which established the Central Tracing Bureau on February 15, 1944. The location of the bureaus moved along with the Front to begin with the work of repatriating the first wave of liberated prisoners and deportees.

³⁷ WL, M 317/S37, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra's Work for Displaced Persons in Europe* London, 1946, 21-22.

³⁸ See: APPENDIX 6

to map emergency relief and rehabilitation for the Jews in Italy. Schwartz completed his mission in Italy while the situation of the Jews in the country was still ambiguous as well as irregular. The Nazis occupied North Italy, while the Allied Army was advancing and liberating Rome. Nonetheless, Schwartz's investigation found that though DELASEM went underground during the war and most of its representatives were arrested or forced to hide abroad, the refugees had continued to receive aid from the JDC through the DELASEM even during the occupation of Rome³⁹.

During the first six months of 1944, JDC had been allocated a budget of \$ 120,000 for occupied Italy, but a direct action from the JDC was urgent in Italy. The ACC authorization for posting a JDC representative in the country was granted only in June 1944, after which the JDC began working directly in Italy under the IGCR control⁴⁰.

The first JDC representative in Italy was Max S. Perlman, who opened a JDC office in Bari. At the end of July, another JDC worker, Arthur Greenleigh, arrived in Italy to open and head a second JDC office in Rome. The JDC representatives began their mission in Italy by making contact with all local and international institutions who were working on behalf of the Jews in Italy.

Soon after the agreement with the IGCR, the JDC approved \$ 10,000 for «speedy use» through the Intergovernmental Committee and spent \$ 40,000 in Palestine for purchase of clothing for Jews in Italian camps. On July 1, 1944, Joseph C. Hyman – Executive Vice Chairman of the JDC – briefed the press regarding the immediate financial relief program for refugees in Italy. The JDC would allocate \$ 12,500 monthly for three months in order to reopen Jewish schools and institutions. Hyman announced the approval of another one-time grant of \$ 3,500 for equipping hostels, reopening schools and synagogues and for purchasing medical supplies in the Naples area, where the DELASEM re-established its first office after the Allies' arrival. The JDC planned two further one-time grants: the first one of \$ 20,000 was intended for immediate emergency relief and the second one of \$ 4,800 for developing vocational training in the DP camps⁴¹.

The establishment of a more comprehensive and well-organized network of agencies to work on behalf of the Jewish displaced persons in Italy was outlined at the end of July 1944, at the beginning of the JDC mission in Italy. Following its initial establishment in Italy,

³⁹ AJDC, *Relief work in Liberated Italy, July, 1 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁴⁰ AJDC, *Memorandum: Inter Governmental Committee on Refugees in Italy and the Joint Distribution Committee, June, 9 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁴¹ AJDC, *Relief work in Liberated Italy, July, 1 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

the JDC expanded its presence in the country, corresponding with the advance of the Allied Army, and set up a well-grounded network to work in the most efficient way possible.

During summer 1944, Max Perlman started to forge agreements and informal relations with diplomatic, consular, military and governmental representatives as well as international and private organizations. The JDC assured itself membership on the official advisory committee created by the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ). Besides the JDC, the committee included representatives of UNRRA, the US Political Advisor's Office, the Office of British Resident Minister, the IGCR, the War Refugee Board, the Allied Commission Military Intelligence Section of AFHQ, the Civil Affairs Section of AFHQ and the American Friend's Service Committee.

Since their arrival in Italy, the JDC delegation established a good working relationship with the International Committee of the Red Cross. The JDC kept the Red Cross informed about its activities with the purpose of not encroaching on the Red Cross and cooperating with the organization as best as possible.

Even with the AMG and AMG Sub-Commissions, the JDC established «a close work relation». Its delegates worked in full cooperation with the Finance Sub-Commission, which devoted much time to the problem of the transmission of funds by the JDC, the Palestinian exchange loan repayment and kindred problems. JDC collaborated even with the Legal Sub-Commission in the matter of restoration of rights and property to those from whom these were taken by the Racial Laws⁴².

Furthermore, the Displaced Persons and Repatriation Sub-Commission of ACC was the channel through which JDC suggested the creation of a relief committee to aid those foreign Jews who were not represented by diplomatic missions. Further efforts were made by the JDC in order to maintain contact with the UNRRA Observer Mission in Italy informing the Mission's representatives of the development of its program as well as its planned activities. The JDC took upon itself to clarify its relationship with UNRRA, in order to «solicit» UNRRA's opinion on some matters related to the Jewish DPs' care and to transfer to UNRRA some of the relief activities temporarily carried by the JDC⁴³.

⁴² For a selected bibliography on reparations after anti-Semitic persecutions, see: Pavan Ilaria, "La persecuzione dei beni, le restituzioni ed i risarcimenti: bibliografia consigliata", in Pavan Ilaria and Schwarz Guri (eds. by), *Gli ebrei in Italia tra persecuzione fascista e reintegrazione postbellica*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2001), 109-112.

⁴³ AJDC, *Letter from American Joint Distribution Committee, Rome to American Joint Distribution Committee, Lisbon. Subject: Public Relations, November, 7 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

With the purpose to strengthen the link with the Jews in Italy, the American Jewish organizations identified the Jewish Chaplains as an important link between the JDC and the Jews – both local and DPs - in Italy. In order to instruct the Rabbis about the JDC rescue program, two conferences were organized, one in Naples and one in Florence. These Chaplains - of Italian, American, British, Palestinian and South African origins – enthusiastically attended the meetings and promptly pledged their collaboration. «These chaplains will not only be of assistance to our people wherever they happen to find themselves, but these men are living through a most dynamic experience which will make them real leaders in their communities when they return to civil life», thus concluded the JDC conferences in Naples and Florence⁴⁴.

Already in summer 1944, DELASEM and the JDC were assisting 3,620 Jews: 910 non-Italian refugees, 460 Italian Refugees, 2000 Roman Jews and another 250 refugees in neighbouring towns of Rome⁴⁵.

A more detailed estimate dated June 30, 1944 listed the number, age, sex and nationality of the non-Italian Jews assisted by the DELASEM immediately after the liberation of Rome. According to this source, the total amount of non-Italian Jews assisted was 1,024, although for 102 of them, details of nationality and age were not available. Of the remaining 922 refugees - 505 males and 417 females - 124 were of age between 0 and 14 years, 87 between 15 and 21 years, 237 between 22 and 35, 317 between 36 and 50, 123 between 51 and 65, and 34 were over 65 years.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁵ AJDC, *Report on Jewish Refugee Situation in Rome, July, 23 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

NATIONALITY	MALES	FEMALES	TOTAL
Austrian	43	40	83
Belgian	1	3	4
Czech	20	16	36
Danzig	4	6	10
Dutch	2	5	7
English	3	---	3
French	21	15	36
German	9	11	20
Greek	10	2	12
Hungarian	21	7	28
Jugoslav	175	142	317
Lithuanian	2	6	8
Luxembourg	2	2	4
Lybia	1	1	2
Palestine	1	3	4
Polish	109	102	211
Rhodi	3	2	5
Rumanian	6	6	12
Russian	12	9	21
Turks	5	4	9
Stateless	55	35	90
Total	505	417	922

(source: DELASEM)⁴⁶

For the care for these 3,620 Jews, the DELASEM required a monthly budget of 4,022.000 Lira. This sum included – except for L. 50,000 for administrative and transport expenses - a monthly support of L. 2,400 for each non-Italian Jewish DP and of L. 1,800 for each Italian refugee; a total amount of L. 250,000 for the Roman Jews and of L. 500,000 for the refugees in the neighbouring towns, as well as L. 50,000 for medical assistance and L. 160,000 for the *bachsharot*⁴⁷.

Between July and October 1944, Perlman and Greenleigh carried on an extensive correspondence of official reports as well as informal messages with the JDC headquarters in New York. Traveling and observing the Italian territories liberated by the Allies, they tried to map and evaluate the situation of the Jews displaced in Italy. At this first stage, the analysis of the two social workers included only central and southern Italy and pointed out the organizational contrasts between the two areas, due of course to the difference in time

⁴⁶ AJDC, *Foreign Jews Registered at Delasem until 30/6/1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720 .

⁴⁷ Ibid.

elapsed since liberation. This gap was quickly bridged with the establishment of DELASEM offices (sometimes only temporarily) as the Allies liberated new areas.

The dramatic consequences of the war in Italy are described by the JDC delegates. For example, Arthur Greenleigh - who visited the just liberated central regions - depicted the serious problem that afflicted the population, in particular in Tuscany:

«There is a terrible shortage of food all over Italy, but it is much worse in areas recently liberated. In Florence it was bad, everywhere we went, Army and civilian officials told us about it. Food, therefore, is much more important than money»⁴⁸.

By the end of September 1944, DELASEM (with the help of the JDC) had established several offices in Central Italy, such as in Florence and Leghorn, as well as temporary branch committees in Siena, Perugia, Assisi and Teramo, all of them depending on the DELASEM office in Rome.

Notwithstanding the constant shift in populations, the JDC representatives' reports are fundamental for gaining an initial estimate of the numbers of the Jewish displaced persons in liberated Italy at the end of 1944 as well as for an evaluation of the amount of work their presence implied.

The estimated Jewish population of Rome was 12,000, of whom 9,000 were Romans, 2,000 non-Italian displaced persons and 1,000 Italian refugees. Half of the non-Italian Jews were receiving aid from the Central Office of the DELASEM, re-established in Rome.

In Florence there were about 1,300 Jews: 300 non-Italian displaced persons, 350 Italian refugees and 650 Florentines. In Leghorn there were 1000 Jews, of whom 100 were non-Italian refugees. Most of the non-Italian Jews who during the war had been hiding in the vicinity of these two cities were receiving aid from the DELASEM⁴⁹.

In an informal report, Greenleigh depicted the situation of the Jews in Pisa, Lucca, Siena, Arezzo, Cortona and Viareggio (Tuscany) in 1944. About Pisa, he wrote:

«When I talk to the AMG Provincial Commissioner here and told him of the purpose of my visit, he said there was no Jewish problem because there were no Jews left. He was wrong about the last statement, for there were 75 Jews left, or rather recently returned. [...] We did establish that none of the 75 Jews had had any public assistance,

⁴⁸ AJDC, *Letter from American Joint Distribution Committee, Rome to American Joint Distribution Committee, New York, October 21, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁴⁹ AJDC, *Report of the Joint Distribution Committee activities during month of August 1944, September 25, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720 .

but in the short time we could visit there, we couldn't ascertain whether any had applied for such aid»⁵⁰.

Greenleigh also provided some information about his journey in Lucca, where he found around 250 non-Italian Jews. They were part of a group of approximately 1,000 Polish, Austrian and German Jews interned during the Nazi occupation in Bagni di Lucca Camp. After liberation, most of the group went to Leghorn in order to find assistance, whereas a small number still remained in Lucca area⁵¹. In Siena, Arezzo and Cortona there were only 62 Jews, more than half of them non-Italian Jews assisted by a temporary branch committees of DELASEM⁵².

The final destination of the JDC delegate's journey in Tuscany was Viareggio, «a seashore resort about two or three miles far from the fighting front». Greenleigh ascertained that there were about 100 Jews in Viareggio, who had come down from the surrounding hills where they had been hiding and were now occupying «elaborate villas»⁵³.

At this stage of the military operations, the condition of the Jews in Italian northern regions was still dramatic. Indeed, the north Italy was totally liberated only in spring 1944. Instead, in South Italy, the situation was quite different. When the JDC opened its mission in June 1944, Bari and Naples represented the most important centers for the Jewish DPs in Italy. The Naples Committee included also Avellino, Campagna and Salerno. According to Perlman, the DELASEM office in Naples «seem[ed] to have been handling the relief problem in the area in an increasingly capable manner». The Committee met each week and assisted 239 persons; the table below detailed the numbers of Jews aided in each area as well as the amount required for their assistance:

⁵⁰ AJDC, *Letter from American Joint Distribution Committee, Rome to American Joint Distribution Committee, New York, October 21, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁵¹ Ibid.; AJDC, *1,000 Jews Found Alive in Camp at Lucca, J.D.C. Aide Reveals, December 9, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁵² AJDC, *Report of the Joint Distribution Committee activities during month of August 1944, September 25, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁵³ AJDC, *Letter from American Joint Distribution Committee, Rome to American Joint Distribution Committee, New York, October 21, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

NAPLES COMMITTEE	NUMBER OF PERSONS ASSISTED	BUDGET REQUIRED AND APPROVED
Naples	119	63,513 Lire
Avellino	16	10,500 Lire
Campagna	41	49,200 Lire
Salerno	63	37,500 Lire
Total	239	160,713 Lire

(source: JDC)⁵⁴

By the end of 1944, when Max Perlman and Arthur Greenleigh came back to the US and were replaced by Rubin Reznik and Israel Jacobs, the JDC mission had already found a clear position in the network of assistance operating in Italy on behalf of the Jewish DPs⁵⁵.

After leaving Italy, Max Perlman stated in a press conference held in the US:

«One of the most encouraging things, incidentally, about the entire relief situation in Italy is the amount of operation that is extended from all groups. The governmental and intergovernmental agencies now operating in Italy are all doing what they can to alleviate the situation. Despite that, the need are so great that the work of private agencies such as the JDC is both urgent and essential. As you know, the JDC and the Quakers operate under the aegis of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees. But, in addition, there is the cooperation of the American and British as well as the Palestinian Jewish Army units. The chaplains attached to the American Army are particularly helpful. As areas are taken, they have consistently reported back to us in order that we can send funds for immediate relief»⁵⁶.

JDC and the UN Agencies

Following the Agreement signed in March 1945 by the Italian Government and UNRRA, the UN agency began to administer five DP camps in South Italy, one in Ferramonti and four belonging to the so-called “Lecce Camp Group”. These camps were located in the heel of Italy, in four small villages on the Ionic and the Adriatic coasts of Apulia, namely in Santa Maria al Bagno (which became UNRRA Camp N. 34), in Santa Maria di Leuca (UNRRA Camp N. 35), in Santa Cesarea Terme (UNRRA Camp N. 36) and in Tricase Porto (UNRRA Camp N. 39). The Allies established these camps already in late 1943 by the requisition of private houses and villas owned mainly by wealthy people who lived in these residences only during summer holidays. At the end of 1945, the Allies transferred to UNRRA the camps,

⁵⁴ AJDC, *Report for July, August 18, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁵⁵ WO, *Replacement of Arthur Greenleigh and Max Perlman (JDC), October 22, 1944*, Italy: Joint Distribution Committee: (Jews): Functions And Outline Of Activities, WO 204/2759, The Enriques Collection, The Wiener Library, London, UK, and selected files from FO, HO and WO, the National Archives, Kew, UK.

⁵⁶ AJDC, *JDC Representative Describe Conditions in Italy, December, 13 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

stores and equipment though continued to provide food rations, medical supplies and fuel for vehicles.

In addition to those in the camps, approximately 6,000 displaced persons received UNRRA assistance in cash and supplies outside the camps. UNRRA also administered two hospitals for displaced persons. In September 1945, when UNRRA extended its mission to Northern Italy, the number of those receiving UN assistance outside the camps increased to 9,800. In autumn 1945, the UNRRA Mission in Italy established 14 reception centers in the country, with the purpose of facilitating the return home of Italian refugees displaced in Italy itself⁵⁷.

Between September and November 1945, the DP Sub-Commission and the AC carried out an intensive correspondence that sheds light on the roles played by the military authorities, UNRRA and Italian Government in managing the refugee problem in Italy. The documents produced by the AC offices were essential for reconstructing a detailed map of the major assembly centers and for understanding the magnitude of the refugee emergency in Italy. The archival sources proved the excellent screening process and management of civilian movement carried out by the DP Sub-Commission. During the first year of its activities, the DP Sub-Commission generally gathered the war refugees according to their nationality, placing them in various assembly centers throughout the peninsula according to the transitional or static character of their stay in Italy.

The terms used by the Allies were «transit» or «static». The first indicated those who were in camps awaiting their return home or repatriation, i.e. those willing to return and whose bureaucratic situation would allow fairly quick repatriation, thus their status was only “in transit” through Italy. «Statics» were those refugees who opposed repatriation or those who for political and/or bureaucratic reasons could not be repatriated in the near future. The above division was reflected in the structure of the camps: thus, the «transit camps» housed those refugees waiting for an imminent return home whereas the «static camps» accommodated those who would have waited for a visa as well as the so-called «hard core» cases.

The above-mentioned correspondence reveals that in the first months of 1946, the management of several «transit» camps as well as a limited number of those classified as «static» were gradually handed over to Italian institutions (in the case of assembly centers for Italians) and to UNRRA (in the case of UN nationals' camps). This step coincided with the

⁵⁷ WL, M 317/S37, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra's Work for Displaced Persons in Europe*, London, 1946.

signing in January 1946 of the second agreement between UNRRA and the Italian Government.

According to the AC, at the end of the war the total estimated population of the Displaced Persons camps in Italy was 60,000, but the Allies planned to drastically reduce this number by the end of 1945. According to the proposed scheme reproduced in APPENDIX 7, the camps in Italy were to house no more than 38,900 displaced persons by the end of 1945⁵⁸.

As reported in the appendix, during the last months of 1945, there were about 40 DP camps and assembly centers throughout Italy. Almost all the Italian regions were involved in the refugee emergency after the liberation. From the scheme, it is evident that the transit camps were located in areas close to the borders (such as Turin, Trieste, Bolzano, Udine, nearby the Alps passages), to seaport (such as Bari or Genoa) or in transit areas (such as in Milan, Bologna and Cinecittà). Instead, the static camps - almost all administered by UNRRA - were located in Lecce area, in Marche region as well as in Reggio Emilia (Emilia Romagna region) and Cremona (Lombardy region). These static camps hosted mainly those DPs who refused repatriation or had difficulties in going back home, among them many Yugoslavs and Jews. At this stage of the refugee emergency, one could identify two areas where most of the Jewish DPs were gathered in Italy. In the south, they were accommodated in the UNRRA DP camps of Santa Maria al Bagno, Santa Cesarea Terme, Santa Maria di Leuca and Tricase Porto (with an overall capacity of 7,000 DPs, to be reduced to 6,000); whereas, in the north, UNRRA provided them refuge in Reggio Emilia Camps and Cremona Camps (respectively, with a capacity of 3,000/2,500 DPs and 1,500 DPs)⁵⁹.

This general picture became more clear when the screening procedure by UNRRA of the inmates of 22 out of 24 static Displaced Persons Camps in Italy was completed. On May 1, 1946 the UNRRA Italian Mission reported about its «Eligibility Survey»: out of 18,553 interviewed persons, only 7,920 – mostly Jews – were acceptable in UNRRA camps, whereas the other 10,633 remained under ACC responsibility⁶⁰.

Their distribution is detailed in the table below:

⁵⁸ See APPENDIX 7.

⁵⁹ See APPENDIX 7.

⁶⁰ WO, *Eligibility Survey, May, 1 1946, Attachment V: Eligible and Ineligible Displaced Persons in Unrra-ACC Camps*, UNRRA Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946, WO 204/10837.

CAMP	ELIGIBLE FOR UNRRA CARE	INELIGIBLE FOR UNRRA CARE	TOTAL
Santa Maria al Bagno (LE)	2,152	6	2,158
Santa Cesarea Terme (LE)	1,206	3	1,209
Santa Maria di Leuca (LE)	720	331	1,051
Tricase Porto (LE)	611	7	618
Bari	301	602	903
Aversa (CE)	418	1,253	1,671
Cinecittà (RM)	370	557	927
Fermo	4	1,967	1,971
Jesi (AN)	33	791	824
Senigallia (AN)	13	470	483
Servigliano (FM)	15	1,193	1,208
Riccione (RN)	22	412	434
Bologna IT 47	5	228	233
Bologna IT 48	2	39	41
Reggio Emilia IT 43	17	837	854
Reggio Emilia IT 44	20	221	241
Cremona	1,042	17	1,059
Forlì (Hospital)	9	54	63
Modena	16	1,056	1,072
Genoa	26	51	77
Milan	36	530	566
Turin	882	17	899
Total	7,920	10,633	18,553

Source: UNRRA⁶¹

This distribution remained largely unchanged until the first months of 1947. In fact, at that time, the closure of the four DP camps in Lecce province and the end of the Allied occupation of Italy eventually led to a reduction in the total number of refugee camps and the movement of refugees to the central and northern regions of Italy. Moreover, with the inauguration of the IRO mission, the processes of repatriation and, in particular, of resettlement were accelerated, thus gradually decreasing the presence of the refugees in Italy.

Notwithstanding the cooperation of the refugee agencies, which at the end of the war operated on behalf of the displaced persons in Europe, tracing, mapping or estimating the civilian movements remained a challenging task. The concrete difficulty in controlling the borders, the organization of underground movements as well as *laissez-faire* policy and corruption facilitated the clandestine migration of the displaced persons across Europe.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Many of them arrived in Italy, which – thanks to its geographical position - represented a temporary refuge for those waiting for permanent resettlement.

By the signing of the second Agreement in January 1946, UNRRA was responsible for around 7,000 displaced persons in camps, almost all Jews «not desiring to return to their country of origin»⁶². Nevertheless, according to a memorandum on the situation of the Displaced Persons in Italy prepared by the DPs Sub-Commission, there were many more refugees not within the mandate of the United Nations. The UNRRA mission in Italy left 34,293 persons to the responsibility of the Allied Control Commission⁶³.

For this reason and in virtue of the endless influx of refugees who reached Italy after the end of the hostilities, it appeared that the eligibility/ineligibility system should become more flexible, as the Italian Displaced Persons Sub-Commission noted to UNRRA in April 1946:

«It realised that persons who desire relief from UNRRA must be screened, but the present inflexible rules will drive many poor and destitute men, women and children out of Refugee Centres. This will produce unrest and may be violence throughout Italy. [...] The present tendency in Italy, if continued, will throw practically all the Poles, Yugoslavs and other similarity situated back on the hands of the Allied Commission, while UNRRA will be able, as their Charter is being interpreted, to care only for those of Jewish faith. [...] The principle of the Allied Commission has been to accept all those passed by Field Security of whatever race or faith – the criterion being destitution and need. It is felt the United Nations Organization should have the same general objectives, naturally with certain safeguards»⁶⁴.

Nevertheless, UNRRA policy remained almost unchanged even after the above-mentioned DPs Sub-Commission's request. It continued to consider «administratively» eligible such post-hostilities refugees that fell within special groups persecuted by the enemy, as for example the ex-inmates of concentration camps. In fact, the post-hostilities refugee policy

⁶² WO, *Allocation of Centres to Non-Italian Nationals, September 19, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504, The Enriques Collection, The Wiener Library, London, UK, and selected files from FO, HO and WO, the National Archives, Kew, UK.

⁶³ This group of «ineligibles» included 6,348 Poles, who were in Barletta-Trani Camps and were unacceptable by UNRRA because of their having belonged to two Polish military corps (except for 196 of them). Another group was the Yugoslav one, of whom 5,869 were in camps and were expected to become Italian Government responsibility once the Allies left Italy. Whereas, 4,000 were Royalist ex-soldiers employed in Allied installations, were likely to be admitted to Displaced Persons Camps once their employment was terminated. Other refugees, indicated as «miscellaneous» and unacceptable for UNRRA were 5,236 civilians unable or unwilling to be repatriated because they were considered as dissidents by the governments of their respective countries. Finally, there were 12,840 Chetnik surrendered enemy soldiers who were exclusively British responsibility. See: WO, *Note on the situation in regard to Displaced Persons in Italy*, Unrra Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946, WO 204/10837.

⁶⁴ WO, *Screening of Displaced Persons for retention or acceptance in Unrra Camps, April, 3 1946*, Unrra Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946, WO 204/10837.

of UNRRA stated that «in the case of victims of discriminatory Nazi legislation, for example Jews, no concrete evidence need to be demanded in order to prove eligibility». It meant that the «Jewish infiltrates entering Italy after the war could receive care in UNRRA Camp» while all other persons claiming to have been persecuted «must show concrete evidence in order to establish eligibility for UNRRA care»⁶⁵.

Meanwhile, though both UNRRA and the military authorities, in conjunction with the governments concerned, continued to «encourage» repatriation several hundred thousand unwilling or unable to be repatriated, continued to burden the military authorities as well as the refugee agencies:

«Unwillingness is, in many cases, due to ignorance of conditions in the country from which the displaced persons have been removed, belief – often mistaken – that there is no future for those who return, or simply to a desire to recreate a new life in another part of the world. In other cases, there are political reasons, where the displaced persons all beliefs which they consider to be irreconcilable with those of the regime in the home countries. The Jewish displaced persons, whatever their country of origin (they are in fact mostly from Poland) form a particular group, in that with the awful knowledge that they are practically the sole survivors of their people in occupied Europe – survivors from the six million slaughtered, gassed or starved to death by the Nazis – their only thought is to leave Europe for ever, and to start life anew, if possible in Palestine»⁶⁶.

As reported by UNRRA, they were in particular Jewish DPs who refused repatriation because of the atrocities and the anti-Semitism experienced during the War, that continued to distress the Jews of Eastern Europe even after 1945. Though the “Jewish problem” in Italy could not be compared to that in Germany (above all in terms of numbers), in 1946-47 many Jews arrived in Italy, which became the principal route for the illegal migration to British Palestine⁶⁷. As reported in APPENDICES 8, 9 and 10, during those years the Jewish population displaced in Italy increased constantly (in particular, in the last months of 1946)⁶⁸. In October 1946, UNRRA was assisting 17,095 Jews in Italy, of whom 7,152 were in camps, 5,943 in *bachsharot* and 4,000 in towns⁶⁹. There was a great disproportion between men and women: 64.6% of the DPs were men and only 27.3% were women; whereas, another 8.1% were children under 18 years old. By December 1946, UNRRA estimated the presence of

⁶⁵ WO, *Post-Hostilities, Refugees Policy this Subject Now Agreed with Headquarters*, Unrra Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946, WO 204/10837.

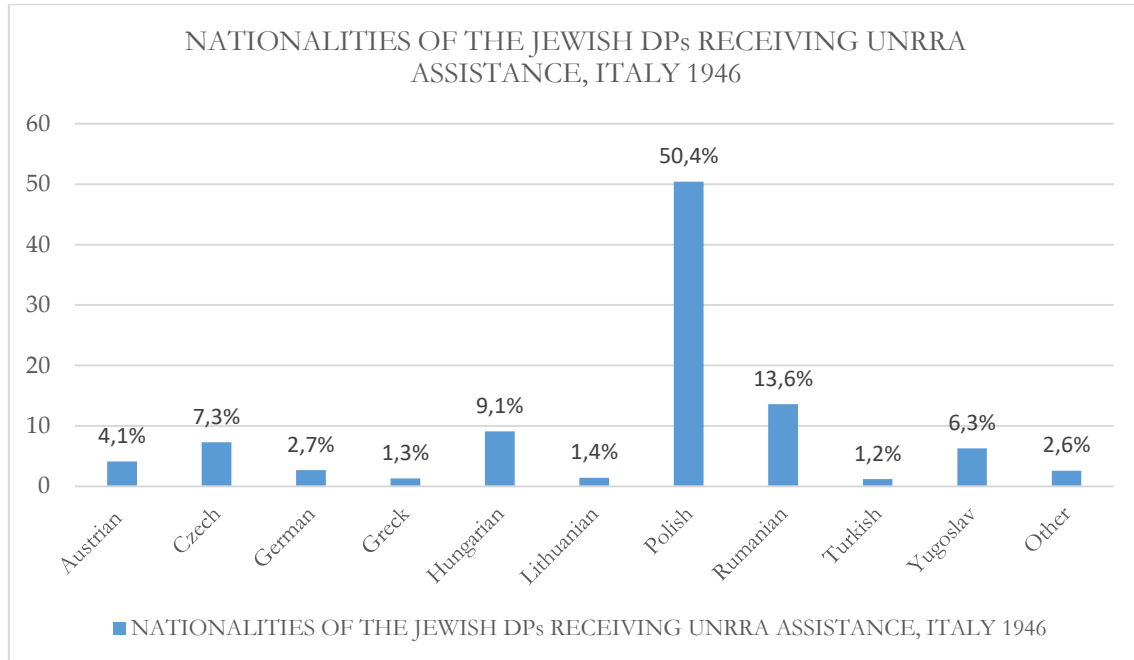
⁶⁶ WL, M 317/S37, UNRRA(ed. by), *Unrra's Work for Displaced Persons in Europe*, London, 1946, 6.

⁶⁷ See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁶⁸ See APPENDICES 8-10.

⁶⁹ This figure is reported in APPENDIX 10.

19,556 non-Italian Jews in Italy. More than half of them came from Poland (50.4%), followed by other smaller groups of Rumanians (13.6%) Hungarians (9.1%), Czechs (7.3%) and Yugoslavs (6.3%):



As for many other groups of refugees in post-war Europe, the Jewish DPs could count on the help of specialized humanitarian organizations. The involvement of the voluntary organizations in the post-war European countries was essential in alleviating and improving the work of the intergovernmental and governmental refugee agencies. Since the early 1945, the agreements signed between UNRRA and JDC established that UNRRA was responsible for providing the basic needs of DPs under its temporary care, while the JDC – as a specialized Jewish agency – provided supplementary facilities and services to all the DPs within the UNRRA mandate⁷⁰. Housing, feeding, providing medical care, assisting in

⁷⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to American Joint Distribution Committee, November, 30 1945*, Folder: Italy, General, 1945, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 629, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Administration: General - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2; AJDC, *JDC. Program in Italy – 1946, February, 18 1947*, Folder: Italy, General, 1946, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Administration: General - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2.

repatriation/resettlement were indeed the principal tasks of UNRRA, extensively supported by the JDC whose contribution ameliorated considerably the condition of the Jews in Italy⁷¹. Moreover, the JDC mission in Italy addressed not only the problem of the Jewish DPs since the Bureau of the Italian Jewish Communities of the JDC was responsible for assistance to Italian Jewish Community institutions and for the relief of the Italian Jews⁷². The assistance was given as financial grants directly to the communities with the advice of UCII (the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities). In 1946, JDC was subsidizing 27 Italian Jewish communities (concentrated above all in northern Italy), 17 DELASEM offices as well as 17 charitable Italian Jewish institutions; at the same time, JDC was sponsoring also 20 elementary schools, 5 old age homes, 2 hospitals and 2 institutions for children⁷³.

The JDC accepted the principles of operation through the UNRRA administrative machinery, «but it was recognized that the question of what was the Joint programme in the camps is a rhetorical one». Thus, Benjamin Brook – JDC representative for the Bari Central Committee – began his speech when he was asked to explain how the funds made available by the JDC would be used. It was clear that the JDC organized its mission in Italy in order to respond to emergencies, but at the same time planning a long-term rehabilitation program for the Jews in the country.

It provided help to the Jews in refugee camps, to those who organized themselves in *bachsharot*, as well as the so-called «out-of-camp refugees» who lived mainly in towns. Indeed, with reference to the particular housing condition of several DPs, who organized themselves in *bachsharot*, the JDC actions were fundamental in granting those Jews to be recognized as within the mandate of UNRRA. In fact, as detailed in Chapter 7, in October 1945, JDC and UNRRA signed an agreement according to the Jewish DPs living in *bachsharot* were considered UNRRA-assisted «out-of-camp refugees»⁷⁴.

It appears that there were three geographic areas where the refugee camps accommodating Jewish DPs were located: the «Southern Camps», which included the four

⁷¹ See Part 3.

⁷² For some considerations about the JDC support on behalf of the Italian Jews see Chapter 9. About the JDC mission in Italy, see moreover: Menici Sonia, «L'opera del Joint in Italia. Un «Piano Marshall» ebraico per la ricostruzione», in *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, vol. 69, n.2 (2003), 593-617.

⁷³ AJDC, *JDC Program in Italy – 1946, February 18, 1947*, Folder Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁷⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. H. Katzki, February, 19 1947*, In Folder: Italy 1947, Reference Code G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - G 45-54 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 | Series: Subject Matter: DP Camps - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14.

DP camps in Lecce province and the transit camp in Bari; the «Rome Region» with Cinecittà transit camp⁷⁵; and the «the Northern Region», which included two transit camps (in Milan and Genoa) and three static camps in Cremona, Rivoli and Grugliasco⁷⁶.

Besides supporting the special needs also provided by UNRRA to the Jewish DPs, the JDC took special care of pregnant women, new-born babies, children and old people. Indeed, the JDC granted to these categories of DPs both further subsidies and specialized medical care. Specifically, women medically certified by the UNNRA doctors as pregnant received by the JDC a monthly allowance of 1.000 Lira; while, new-born babies and their parents were granting 6.000 Lira monthly, layettes and individually helped to buy the necessary items. Furthermore, the JDC agreed to donate a «wedding-gift» of about 1.000-2.000 Lira to each new married couple⁷⁷.

Children in general received a special treatment by the JDC that extended UNRRA definition of “child” from 14 to 18 years old. As specified in the next part of the dissertation, children were assisted by the JDC – as well as by other Jewish organizations – in each field, such as housing, feeding, medical care and education and recreation. A plan was developed also for the old people (i.e. over 55 years old) who could not live in DP camps because of their bad health conditions. The JDC staff dealt individually with every cases, granting both food parcel, monetary assistance and specialized medical care⁷⁸.

Additionally, the JDC was able to furnish to the Jewish DPs a little sum of money for the purchase of essential toilet articles, newspapers, cigarettes, fruit, etc. This further subsidy – called «pocket money» - was granted with many obstacles in collaboration with UNRRA. Moreover, with reference to the needs of the orthodox Jews among the DPs, kosher kitchens in camps, *bachsharot* and towns were subsidized entirely by the JDC⁷⁹.

Besides the above-mentioned relief program and grants, the JDC in Italy managed soon to develop a structured plan for «the use of Joint funds for constructive and productive

⁷⁵ Cinecittà is a large film studio in Rome that could be considered the Italian Hollywood. The studios were built during the Fascist era as part of a scheme to revive the Italian film industry. After the liberation of Rome, those film studios were transformed in a transit camps. About the transit camp in Cinecittà after World War II, see the documentary movie *Profughi a Cinecittà* by Marco Bertozzi (Italia, 2012).

⁷⁶ About the history of Grugliasco DP Camp, see: Vinçon, *Vite in transito*.

⁷⁷ For an overview of the documents related to the marriage between Jewish DPs in Santa Maria al Bagno Camp in 1944-47 see: Lelli (ed. by), *Nardò 1944-1947*.

⁷⁸ See Chapter 6.

⁷⁹ AJDC, *JDC Program in Italy – 1946, February 18, 1947*, Folder Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

work projects»⁸⁰. Acting as a Jewish agency but in line with the humanitarian approach of the post-war era, the JDC made its funds available for several educational activities. As described in the following chapters, JDC cooperated with the other representative institutions and organizations of the Jewish refugees in Italy, becoming the main supporter of the rehabilitation programs provided to the Jews displaced in Italy. The JDC sponsored schools and vocational training courses; granted cash assistance to academic students; financed a wide range of cultural, recreational and artistic activities; supported political, religious and cultural events⁸¹.

Since the Jewish DPs considered Italy simply a waystation towards other destinations of resettlement, in April 1946 the JDC opened also an Emigration Division. As detailed in Chapter 8, the JDC was the major sponsor for the *bachsharot*, which aimed at preparing the Jewish DPs for *‘aliyah*. Nevertheless, until the establishment of the State of Israel, migration to Palestine was regulated by the restrictions of the British Mandate and only those who already had or obtained a certificate were admitted to Palestine. This led to an underground movement of Jews who until 1948 reached Palestine illegally, through the network created by the *Brichah* and the *Mossad le-‘aliyah Bet*⁸². Between 1945 and 1948, these two organizations – guided by the soldiers and the emissaries from the *Yishuv* in Europe – brought around 23,000 Jews from Italy to British Palestine⁸³.

The JDC did not assisted only those DPs longing to reach Palestine. Indeed, the JDC Emigration Division was responsible for providing all services and technical assistance for the emigration of the Jews in Italy. The service – often provided in collaboration with IGCR, UNRRA or other Jewish organizations – included: information on emigration possibilities, registration of applicants for emigration, securing passports or substitute travel documents, work contracts and visas, securing passage, embarkation, etc.

The first emigrants assisted by the JDC Emigration Division left from Italy in May 1946 for the USA, Palestine, South America (Cuba, Uruguay, Brazil, Paraguay, etc) and South Africa. During the first six months of activities, the Emigration Division maintained an average of 35 emigrants per month, thus deciding to establish local offices in all major Italian cities. By the end of November 1946, the offices had received 2,500 applications: 1,000 DPs

⁸⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to American Joint Distribution Committee, New York Paris, Subject: Report of Bari Central Committee - November 30, 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 629.

⁸¹ See Chapters 7 and 8.

⁸² See Chapters 4 and 5.

⁸³ Toscano, *Porta di Sion*, 7.

registered for the USA and about the same number for Brazil. As of the 31st of December 1946, the JDC assisted 718 Jewish DPs to leave Italy for South America (among them, over 500 to Brazil), England and the USA⁸⁴.

In 1947, because of the closure of the four UNRRA refugee camps in Lecce province, the Jewish DPs were moved to the camps in the central and northern regions. This movement of DPs population from south to north of the country coincided also with the announced end of the UNRRA mission and the beginning of a new UN mission: that of the International Refugee Organization (IRO).

IRO was a temporary organization of the United Nations charged with a definitive and specific operational task of bringing about «a rapid and positive solution of the problem of *bona fide* refugees and displaced persons» in post-war Europe either by repatriation or by resettlement⁸⁵. The IRO mission was preceded by those of the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization (PCIRO). Since the early 1947, the PCIRO had the task of taking all necessary steps for promoting the transfer of the activities of UNRRA and IGCR to the IRO by the 30th of June 1947. As reported by Holborn, the official historian of IRO: «although the definitions of refugees and displaced persons differed from SHAEF, UNRRA, and IGCR classifications, virtually the same groups became the concern of the IRO». To them were added also those who, since the end of the war, had left countries behind the “Iron Curtain” and had infiltrated into Germany and Austria, creating new refugee groups. The largest groups of them were Jewish refugees from Poland, Rumania, and Hungary who entered Germany, Austria and Italy after the wave of anti-Semitism in Poland in July 1946⁸⁶.

The functions of IRO were to care for, assist and re-establish the refugees in normal life. For this purpose, IRO attempted to promote repatriation by all possible means. However, in view of the very limited prospects for repatriation, it made every effort to promote a worldwide resettlement program. Thus, IRO was empowered to conduct negotiations and conclude agreements with governments, especially with those countries that were willing to receive refugees.

⁸⁴ AJDC, *JDC Program in Italy – 1946, February 18, 1947*, Folder: Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628; AJDC, *Report, Subject: Various Reports, September 17 1946*, Folder Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁸⁵ These are the words of the Preamble to the Constitution of IRO, reported in Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, 47.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 49.

Between the 80 and 85% of the refugees and DPs - who came under the mandate of the IRO on the 1st of July 1947 – were living in Germany, Austria and Italy. As the operations of UNRRA and IGCR had come to an end, new agreements with the military authorities of the local governments in the three country were needed.

Italy – previously cobelligerent with the UN since 1943 – was restored sovereignty on the 15th of September 1947. While the country was still under Allied occupation, the PCIRO arrangements were made for an agreement on the international assistance program for DPs in Italy and then concluded on the 24th of October 1947. Under the terms of the Agreement, the IRO was responsible for carrying out the operation and administration of the camps, the determination of eligibility of the refugees for its assistance, for providing facilities for repatriation and resettlement, and for protection of the refugees' legitimate interests. A «successful» joint committee, consisting of the delegates of the Italian Government and of representatives of the IRO mission, was set up to implement the Agreement as well as to discuss both policy and day-by-day practical problems⁸⁷.

By the end of 1946, there were 1,037,404 displaced persons in and out of refugee camps in Germany, Austria and Italy, 21% of them were children up to 18, 66% were between 18 and 44 years old and 13% were over 44 years old. They were distributed as follow⁸⁸:

Germany.....	850,774
Austria.....	147, 864
Italy.....	38, 776

In the same period, out of a total number of 794, 735 DPs accommodated in IRO camps in Germany, Austria and Italy, there were 193,332 Jews. When IRO began its mission in Europe in July 1947, there were 154,333 Jewish DPs receiving care and maintenance by the UN agency: 5,471 in Austria, 131,816 in the three zones of occupied Germany and 17,047 in Italy.

In particular, on the 31st of July 1947, the Jewish DPs in Italy represents almost the 60% of the total number of DPs assisted by IRO and came from the following countries:

⁸⁷ The Italian Government granted IRO free use of such property as was needed by IRO. The Government also allowed tax and customs exemptions on supplies imported by IRO, and transportation priorities for the movement of the refugees. The entire burden of subsistence fell upon IRO and special financial provisions facilitated the early period of operation. See Holborn: *International Refugee Organization*, 137.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 197.

COUNTRY OF LAST HABITUAL RESIDENCE	NUMBER
Argentina	1
Austria	196
Belgium and Luxembourg	5
Bulgaria	9
Czechoslovakia	846
Estonia	1
France	3
Germany	110
Greece	68
Hungary	1,213
Italy	33
Lithuania	204
Palestine	13
Poland	11,262
Rumania	2,513
Spain	22
Switzerland	3
Turkey	19
US	2
USSR	118
Yugoslavia	279
Stateless	32
Other	95

Source: IRO⁸⁹

After the beginning of 1947, Great Britain issued 1,500 certificates a month for the Jewish migration to Palestine and IRO supported the about 6,000 emigrants before the withdrawal of the mandatory government. In 1948, when the newly established Government of Israel abolished the 1939 White Paper, introduced a policy of non-selecting immigration. When the First Arab-Israeli War broke out, this open warfare in Palestine represented a serious problem of policy for IRO. Indeed, the Director General issued instructions that IRO's funds were not to be used to assist migration towards belligerent countries in the Middle East⁹⁰.

Nevertheless, the suspension of the IRO's assistance did not bring about a cessation of *'aliyah* from European refugee camps. Between May 1948 and January 1949, the Jewish Agency and

⁸⁹ Ibid., 199.

⁹⁰ It is interesting to note that in that occasion, the British Government upheld the Director General's views; whereas, the USA held the view that it was IRO's responsibility to get out of the camps as many displaced persons as possible, see Ibid., 415.

the JDC cooperated in order to expand their immigration assistance, moving a considerable number of Jewish DPs to Israel⁹¹. An order of priority was established for the countries from which immigrants were to be admitted: refugees from assembly centers in Germany, Austria and Italy had the precedence over all others. During those months, the Jewish Agency and the JDC arranged the migration of around 100,000 Jewish DPs to Israel, thus diminishing the IRO's caseload in Germany, Austria and Italy: 113,218 DPs left from the refugee camps, as detailed in the table below.

AREA OF DEPARTURE	NUMBER OF DPS RESETTLED IN ISRAEL
Austria	21,865
British Zone of Germany	6,585
French Zone of Germany	19
US Zone of Germany	63,447
Non-determined zone of Germany	7,025
Italy	14,277
Total	113, 218

Source: IRO⁹².

During the years of activity of the IRO mission, Israel was the second largest country of immigration, accepting 132,109 displaced persons. About the 86% of those who resettled in Israel arrived from the refugee camps of Germany, Austria and Italy⁹³.

«The Community in Exile»

Though each refugee camp was characterized by its own development, peculiarities and problems, some general considerations could be deduced from the archival collections analysed for this investigation. Indeed, though representing an “institutional point of view”, the sources analysed for this investigation shed light on several aspects of the history of the Jewish DPs in Italy and help us tracing a general picture of the Jewish displacement in Italy.

The status of the Jewish refugees in Italy was far from being defined as excellent. Nevertheless, - though the difficulties caused above all by the high mobility of the DPs and the changes of population within the refugee camps - the JDC delegates who regularly reported about the situation in each area frequently informed about the «satisfactory»

⁹¹ Afterwards the JDC was reimbursed by IRO for assistance provided to the Jews for migration to Israel between May 1948 and January 1949.

⁹² Holborn: *International Refugee Organization*, 435.

⁹³ Ibid., 433-442.

conditions of the camps. The main obstacles were those related to the shortage of food, to the overcrowding and to the inadequacy of the sanitation in the refugee camps. Often, several of these problems were resolved directly by the JDC, which provided further food supplies or employed other personnel for the rescue operations in the refugee camps. Alternatively, the JDC promptly solicited the UN refugee agencies to respond to the urgent needs of the refugees.

Though the post-war Italian situation was disastrous from the socio-political and economic point of view, some factors contributed to guarantee a quite fair standard of living to the Jewish DPs in Italy. If compared to the refugee crisis in Germany, the refugee emergency in Italy appears actually in its more reduced dimension. For example, when IRO began its mission in 1947, in the three western zones of Germany there were 604,556 refugees, whereas in Italy there were “only” 29,170 refugees⁹⁴. Undoubtedly, this helped in managing the refugee camps as well as in facilitating the rescue machinery in Italy.

Moreover, though the continuous movements of people in Italy, the smaller number of DPs allowed the refugee agencies to focus more easily on the refugee needs. This task was facilitated also by the policy of self-administration previously established by the military authorities and followed by UNRRA and IRO. Indeed the refugee agencies involved in the management of the post-war DPs encouraged the formation of camps committees and supported the DPs’ efforts to self-administration and self-organization. This enabled a simplification in the administration of the camps and, because of the fact that they were mainly organized according to ethno-nationality lines, a management of the DPs’ groups as «communities in exile»⁹⁵.

As the historian Anna Holian pointed out:

«Camp administrators, hewing to the model of active welfare, viewed these committees as valuable from a number of perspectives: they reduced the number of military and civilian personnel needed to run the camps; they gave displaced persons a renewed sense of purpose after years of extreme dehumanization and objectification; and they prepared displaced persons for life in a democratic society. [The] support for self-administration helped transform displaced persons from objects of care and control into subjects with distinct civil rights»⁹⁶.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 189.

⁹⁵ This expression is borrowed from the official historian of IRO, Holborn, *International Refugee Organisation*, 188.

⁹⁶ Holian, *Between National Socialism*, 48-49.

Furthermore, the network of UN humanitarian institutions tended to involve the voluntary organizations as liaisons between them and the different groups of DPs. In the particular case of the Jewish DPs in Italy, this task was covered by the JDC. In order to properly represent the needs of the Jews in Italy in front of UNRRA (and then IRO), the JDC operated in the refugee camps through a system of committees. They connected the JDC Bureaus of Area in Italy (located in Milan, Rome and Bari) to the local committees whose members were elected among the DPs in the refugee camps scattered throughout the country. This method was promoted like a mean of democracy, as it is evident from one of the first report of the JDC office in Bari related to the first months of the JDC mission in Italy:

«Every refugee camp and center in this region is a member of the refugee “parliament” at Bari. This Council speaks for all of the 2,500 refugees in the area. It meets once a month to plan for the relief and rehabilitation of its members, many of whom had been interned for as long as five years. Organized by the JDC, the Council has proved an effective morale builder. It is also a source of experience and knowledge on which to draw in organizing rehabilitation schemes»⁹⁷.

Coordinated by the JDC mission in Italy, each camp committee met regularly in order to discuss the specific problem of the camps and estimate the monthly budget necessary to meet the needs of the DPs. This propose was subsequently submitted to the Bureau of Area and debated among the local JDC representatives. Afterwards, the JDC delegates drafted a detailed report to be submitted to the JDC Executive Committee, which eventually decided how to solve specific issues and whether granting or not the budget required.

Besides the practical advantages of this procedure, the involvement of the DPs in the administration represented also a stimulating task for the refugees on the way towards “normalization”. However, the official support of the Allies and the UN refugee agencies for DPs self-organization was limited to the administrative field. Political forms of aggregation were strictly forbidden. Nevertheless, the organization of the DP camps along ethno-national lines particularly encouraged also the establishment of political organizations among the DPs.

As detailed in the next chapters, this occurred also to the Jewish DPs in Italy. There, in the marginality produced by the refugee camps and the traumatic experience of the *Shoah*, the

⁹⁷ AJDC, *Letter from American Joint Distribution Committee, Rome to American Joint Distribution Committee, New York, October 21, 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

Jewish DPs gathered in the DP camps strengthened their sense of communitarian belonging and unity. Moreover, through the support of external factors (such as the intervention of the emissaries of the *Yishuv* and the Jewish voluntary organizations) they were driven to create their own political representative institution: the Organization of the Jewish Refugees (OJRI).

Chapter 4

The She'erith Ha-Pleitha A Community in Transit

«New Refugees»

The end of World War II led to Italy another wave of Jewish refugees: the so-called «new refugees». They were the Jews who survived the concentration camps, who hid themselves finding a precarious safe shelter, who survived using false documents as well as those who fought as partisans in the ghettos or as leaders of the Zionist organizations of the Diaspora. Many of them attempted to return home after the liberation, being forced to flee again because of the fear of outrages and pogroms in their homecountries.

Few weeks after the end of the war, this caused an increasing movements of Jews who escaped Eastern European countries to find accommodations (sometimes for the second time) in the refugee camps of Germany, Austria and Italy pending resettlement¹. They came from Rumania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Lithuania and above all Poland, where the pogrom occurred in Kielce in July 1946 led an average of 700 Jews per week to leave the country².

The She'erith Ha-Pleitha

By the end of 1944, when European Jewry in the Nazi-controlled territories perceived the German collapse as a palpable possibility, underground groups began to form, looking forward to liberation by the Allies. Between late 1944 and the end of the war, these groups paved the way for the organization of what is known as *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*. This biblical formula - ambivalently translated as “the surviving remnant” and “the saved remnant” - was adopted and updated by European Jewry, giving expression to the hope engendered by the arrival of the Allied troops in Europe³.

¹ On the mass escape movement of Jews after World War II, see: Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*; Albrich and Zweig, *Escape through Austria*, and Albrich, “Way Station of Exodus”.

² About the pogrom in Kielce, see: Gross Jan T., *Anti-semitism in Poland after Auschwitz*, 81-166; Pace Fabio Maria, “L'impossibile ritorno: gli ebrei in Polonia dalla fine della Guerra al pogrom di Kielce”, in Chiappano Alessandra e Minazzi Fabio (eds. by), *Il ritorno alla vita e il problema della testimonianza. Studi e riflessioni sulla Shoah*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 2007), 127-153.

³ Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope*, 2; The term *She'erith ha-Pleitha* as a biblical expression occurred in Genesis 32:9 («And he said: If Esau come to the one camp, and smite it, then the camp which is left shall

The term appeared for the first time in an underground bulletin of the Irgun Brith Zion in the Kovno Ghetto, published by a group of deportees in Kaufering, a sub-camp in Dachau⁴. In the publication of *Nitzotz* (Hebrew for “The Spark”) of November-December 1944, *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* was used to refer to «those who would hopefully survive». As extensively pointed out by Zeev Mankowitz, though there are many interpretations of the initial use of this formula in the concentration camps and in the ghettos, it is commonly understood by historiography as an obvious attempt to build a collective identity among the Jewish survivors⁵.

The ideological foundation of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*, originated by groups of young activists, partisans and Zionists, could be considered as the cornerstone of the structured organization developed by the Jewish displaced persons on a transnational level. Indeed, the awareness of the survivors themselves of their own situation represented a landmark in the process of self-understanding. By identifying themselves as *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*, the survivors called both for a collective identity based on the shared experience of the *Shoah* and for playing a formative role in shaping their future.

According to Mankowitz, the constitution of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* was the result of the tireless resistance of several groups of Jewish deportees, in particular those in Buchenwald and in Dachau. Since 1942, the clandestine activities of the Buchenwald Camp were in the hands of Communist organizations, which had created separate national committees within the camp. Indeed, even before the end of the war, the Jews asked to be recognized as a separate group but these Communist organizations rejected the request as unacceptable in their doctrine. Thus, the Jews in Buchenwald joined the national group of Polish internees. Nevertheless, thanks to several outstanding personalities of the Jewish resistance such as Yechezkiel Tidor, Eliyahu Greenbaum and Arthur Poznansky, the voice of the Jews managed to break through the various internal committees in Buchenwald. These activists, who became the leaders of an informal Zionist underground organization, founded a mutual aid committee, which after the liberation on April, 11 1945 was named the “Jewish Self-Help Committee”. This Committee set up a temporary hospital, provided for the care

escape»); First Chronicles 4: 43 («And they smote the remnant of the Amalekites that escaped, and dwelt there unto this day») and Jeremiah 31: 1 («Thus said the Lord: the people that were left of the sword have found grace in the wilderness, even Israel, when I go to cause him to rest»).

⁴ The Irgun Brith Zion was a Zionist youth movement founded in Kovno during the Soviet occupation of 1940-1941. Its members came from both religious and secular families. The movement aimed at preserving and promoting Jewish, Hebrew and Zionist culture through an array of cultural programs.

⁵ Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope*.

of the children and supplied food and accommodation, so that when the first JDC team arrived in Buchenwald they found a relatively well-established and organized community. In the gradual structuring of the Jewish Self-Help Committee and in bringing together under one wing the Jewish survivors of Buchenwald, two American chaplains played a key role: Rabbi Robert Marcus and Rabbi Herschel Schachter. The latter, in particular, celebrated the first Shabbat after liberation in the previous punishment area of the camps. This historical event - joined by a thousand survivors - was recognized by the historian Yehudit Tidor-Baumel as «a massive demonstration of Jewish identification in Buchenwad»⁶.

In order to lift the spirits of the inmates, demoralized by the uncertainty of their future and by the exhausting waiting for the unknown, the Jewish Self-Help Committee enlisted the help of Rabbi Schachter to locate a place in which to create a *kibbutz-hachsharah*, where young Jewish survivors could train for *'aliyah*. By the end of May 1945, the *Sherith Ha-Pleitha* in Buchenwald founded the so-called Kibbutz Buchenwald, located near the camp. This kibbutz - as it would have happened in to many other *kibbutzim* later- welcomed everyone, without any distinctions of political or religious affiliation, echoing the just shared experience of the European Jewry, and the common yearning of *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* for reaching Eretz Israel⁷.

At the same time, something similar was happening in the Dachau concentration camps' area, to where the survivors of the Kovno Ghetto had been deported in late 1944. Here, a group of young Zionists founded an underground organization that served both as moral support for the Jewish inmates and as an initial network for planning what to do after the liberation. The leaders of this organization were Michael Burnstein, Zalman Grinberg and Leib (or Leon) Garfunkel, who in late 1945 became the leader of the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI).

Once again, a particular episode could be identifies as the founding event of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* after the liberation of Dachau: a meeting among Grinberg, Jacob Oleiski, Samuel Gringauz, Nachum Katz, Rudolf Volsonok and Shlomo Frankel, all of whom charged with leading roles among the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*. During this meeting, it was decided to found a hospital near the camp. Grinberg, who had studied medicine, asked for the US troops' help

⁶ Tydor-Baumel, *Kibbutz Buchenwald*, 24.

⁷ The same happened also in Italy, where the first *hachsharah* welcomed Jewish DPs with different political affiliation, see: Chapter 8.

and, in May 1945, a hospital was opened in the monastery of St. Ottilien, with approximately 400 Jews hospitalized under the supervision of Grinberg himself⁸.

In order to celebrate the end of the war, the Jewish leaders of Dachau organized on May 27 the Liberation Concert in St. Ottilien, which marked the first call for a collective meeting of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* in the camp. With these words, Zeev Mankowitz highlighted the value of this event:

«No operative discussion took place at the Liberation Concert and no formal decisions were taken. The importance of the event is to be found in the gathering itself, in the sense of sharing the burden of the past and beginning to shoulder responsibility for what lay ahead. What emerged from the meeting was a feeling of community, the sense that this was a group of people with a shared identity and purpose rather than a random collection of survivors. At a deeper level this purposefulness seems to be a reaction to the profound helplessness experienced during the Holocaust. On a more immediate level, however, it was a response to the perceived absence of representatives of the Jewish world and stemmed from a painful sense of abandonment»⁹.

Other internees in other camps also organized underground activities of the kind mentioned above. Other political youth movement played a key role in the ideological and pragmatic organization of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* in other concentration camps, organizing clandestine cells, waging battle against moral and physical debilitation and taking a first steps towards a real and concrete collective action of the Jewish survivors.

Nevertheless, two elements were fundamental in the “officialization” of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* and in accelerating this process of unification of the Jewish DPs in Germany: firstly, the support of the Allied Armies’ Jewish Chaplains and secondly, the encounter with the Palestinian soldiers¹⁰. The meeting of the leaders of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*, the Jewish Brigade soldiers and the Jewish Chaplains led to the organization of The First Conference of Zionists in Bavaria. The conference, attended by more than forty representatives of the various refugee camps, was held in Feldafing in July 1945. The Conference representatives elected an official organ of *She'erit Ha-Pleitha* whose purpose was to protect and represent the survivors’ needs¹¹.

By the end of the war, it became clear that the goals and the desires of the *She'erit Ha-Pleitha* could be attained only through a unified effort by the “remnants” of the Jewish Diaspora in

⁸ Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope*, 30-32

⁹ Ibid., 31

¹⁰ Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame*; Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope*.

¹¹ Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope*, 101-130.

Europe. This required an urgent call for unity of all the Jewish and Zionist committees set up in the concentration camps as well as in the refugee camps. In strengthening the bond of this “community in transit” a major role was played by the Jewish delegates from the *Yishuv*, i.e. the *hayalim* and then the *shlichim* of the Jewish Agency. The encounter between the Jews from the *Yishuv* and those of the Diaspora gave birth to a powerful network which vehemently strove for the *She’erith Ha-Pleitat*’s right to make *‘aliyah*. In their attempt to bring as many Jews as possible to Palestine, they were fundamental in building a bridge that privileged Italy as the main route from the refugee camps in Europe to *Eretz Israel*.

This brief summary of what happened in the refugee camps in Germany allow to understand the personal background of those Jews who – after the end of the war – reached Italy, some of them becoming the leaders of the Jewish refugees in Italy. It also highlights the fact that there was a certain uniformity in the paths that led to the constitution of Jewish refugees’ committees in the camps and that there was indeed a kind of common thread that bound the refugees beyond geographical boundaries.

***Brichah*: an «Underground Railway»**

Diplomatic controversies and Allied restrictions did not stop the movement of Jewish DPs across Europe and beyond. This seemingly ceaseless migration began in the spontaneous fleeing of individuals or small groups, and in a short time took on an organized form. Between 1944 and 1948, some 250,000 Jews fled from Eastern Europe to the countries of Central Europe: Germany, Austria and Italy. This mass movement was generally carried out by illegal or quasi-legal means, and it included not only single men and women but also families with children and old people. It was known by the Hebrew name *Brichah* (literally, “flight”), the term referring both to the migration itself and to the organization that later supported it.

According to the Israeli historian Yehuda Bauer, the *Brichah* was probably the largest illegal movement of its kind during the past few decades¹². Because of its clandestine nature, the numerical proportions of *Brichah* is uncertain. The movement started in Eastern Europe after the war, as survivors began to establish individual contact with one another. They managed to organize themselves in small groups in order to escape their homecountries in particular because of the protracted anti-Semitic actions after the end of the war.

¹² Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, VII.

Nevertheless, with the involvement of the *hayalim* in the rescue and military operations in the European Theatre, the *Brichab* evolved soon into an underground organization. The movements was headed both by representatives from the *Yishuv* (in particular members of the *Haganah*) as well as by leaders of the Zionist organizations of the Diaspora. Its members – who knew each other by their first name only or nickname - positioned themselves at railway junctions and other key points in order to ensure the Jewish refugees a safe passage and accommodation during their journey across Europe¹³.

One of the major figures of this invisible network was Aba Kovner, poet and partisan born in 1918 in Sevastopol (Crimea) and raised in Vilnius¹⁴. From his youth, Kovner was involved in Zionist youth movements. By time the Nazi oppression took hold, he was a leader of the *Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsie* (FPO), the United Partisan Organization, the Jewish underground resistance that fought the Nazis both inside and outside the ghettos. Like Aba Kovner, the other members of *Brichab* came from Zionist youth movements of the Diaspora. Nonetheless, the element that drove the *Brichab* to a more structured organization was the Jewish Brigade, at that time stationed in Tarvisio (at the Italian border with Austria). Other figures from the *Yishuv* later joined the *Brichab* organization, many of them agents of the *Haganah* (Hebrew for “defense”), one of the Jewish paramilitary organizations of the *Yishuv* founded in the twenties at the initiative of the *Histadruth* (the Organization of Trade Unions).

With the progressive involvement of the representatives of the *Yishuv* in the rescue of the Jewish DPs, the main task of the *Brichab* became to find routes and arrange transportations to cross national borders with the final purpose to bring the DPs to Palestine¹⁵. There, Brigade soldiers supplied transportation, gasoline and food and collaborated directly with *Brichab*'s agents. In the attempts to find an escape route to Palestine, Italy became the main destination of the *Brichab* as well as the major port from which to sail for *Eretz Israel*. To this end, *Brichab* established a well-connected and efficient network along the way from Eastern Europe to Italy, locating strategic way stations on the route.

The Jews fled Central and Eastern Europe and reached Trieste and Bolzano via Austria or Germany, using makeshift transportation or vehicles marked with Allied logo in order to

¹³ Königseder and Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope*, 57.

¹⁴ On Aba Kovner see Porat Dina, *Me'Ever La-Gašmi: Parašathayanšel 'Aba Kovner* (Tel Aviv: Am'Oved 2000).

¹⁵ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*, 3-42.

avoid controls at the borders. The smuggling took place especially at night through various alternative routes: the Brenner Pass as well as other routes, such as the Resia pass. The documents used by the *Brihah* to cross the borders were often false visas of Italian forced labour returnees¹⁶. The Jewish Brigade set up facilities in order to temporarily welcome the Jews in transit: the principal stations were barracks of the Jewish soldiers in Tarvisio and in Pontebba, nearby the main Alps passes. Afterwards, those who succeed in entering Italy were moved to Milan, in Via Unione 5, which became the core of the activities of the Jewish organizations that at that time assisted the Jews in Italy. In the building of Via Unione, the Jewish refugees found temporary accommodation prior to their distribution in UNRRA camps throughout Italy. In 1945, the prefect of Milan Riccardo Lombardi donated Palazzo Odescalchi at 5 Unione Street, formerly headquarters of a militant fascist group, to the local Jewish Community. For years afterwards this building served as home for the leaders of the Italian Jews, as well as a hub for refugees, canteen and a base for the underground activities of the *hayalim*¹⁷.

The extensive amount of internal signals intercepted by the Allied Force Headquarter in Italy on the illegal movement of Jewish refugees is the most evident proof of the vast dimensions of this project¹⁸.

In August 1945, a cable received by the ACC revealed the unauthorized movements of almost 3,000 Jewish refugees who entered Italy from the Austrian border during summer 1945. The message – marked as «top secret» – included an evaluation regarding what was happening: according to the officer who filed the report, this unofficial movement was supported by the Jewish Brigade as well as by the JDC. Italy – the officer surmised – had been selected as the «dumping ground» for refugees intent on sailing to Palestine, both for the convenience of its geographic position *vis-à-vis* the Mediterranean Sea and the smaller chances of drawing attention to a foreign population in its midst. The officer concluded his report by warning of the need to monitor the movements of the 5,000 Jews who could leave the British, US and French zones of occupation in order to reach Italy on their way to *Eretz Israel*¹⁹.

Despite the constant reference by the ACC and the local authorities to the importance of border controls, the illegal influx of Jews into Italy continued to increase in the second half

¹⁶Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 159.

¹⁷ About the history of the building in Via Unione, see: Villani, “Milano, via Unione 5”.

¹⁸See ACS, *Movimenti di Profughi*, Series: Ministero dell’Interno (M.I.), Collection: Pubblica Sicurezza, Sub Collection: Stranieri ed Ebrei Stranieri, Folder n. A16, Box: 19-22 and 28-35.

¹⁹ACS, *Unauthorized movement into Italy, August 1945*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 16F, Displaced Persons, Jews, July 1945 – January 1947.

of 1945. «During the last four months the number of Central European Jews in Allied Commission Centers and UNRRA Camps has increased from approximatively 1,500 to 8,000», revealed a report of the DP Sub-Commission in November 18, 1945. Furthermore, the report estimated that there were more than 3,000 Jews who had just entered Italy, living precariously in Rome, Milan, Florence and other cities. According to this report, out of 14,000 persons whom UNRRA were assisting, it could be assumed that half were Jews. Most of them were of Polish, Hungarian and Czechoslovakian origins who reached the American as well as the British Zones of occupation in Austria and from there they arrived in Italy through the Resia Pass with comparatively few arriving via the Brenner Pass²⁰.

The DP Sub-Commission put into force new measures intended to restrict this illegal entry by limiting the admission to the DP camps to «genuine displaced persons», strengthening the screening process prior to the admission to the DP camps, and by rejecting all persons who had entered Italy illegally. In a report submitted at the end of November 1945 regarding the illegal influx of Jews into Italy, the Director of the DP Sub-Commission, Colonel Finlay expressed his opinion:

«Although there are a few elder people, the great majority are well made, well-fed young men and young girls between 16 and 35. The young men in many camps are drilling as soldiers and all are being definitely propagandized that their job in life is to fight, cost what it may, to make Palestine into a Jewish country. The young women are getting married so that every single certificates to Palestine will ensure two instead of one being admitted. This is not a movement with which the Allied Commission Italy can deal effectively. The parties arriving illegally across the Austrian frontier could be returned to Austria by the use of armed forces»²¹.

It appears therefore that the intent and the structure of *Brichab* were clear to the military authorities, who nevertheless failed to halt it. At this stage, the Jews were travelling with documents - «apparently in order» – prepared by the UNRRA Offices in Austria, but «it [was] obvious that this movement [was] part of a very large organization with the objective of using Austria and Italy as “transit camps” between Central Europe and Palestine»²².

The ACC was aware that groups of Jews were travelling by night, with their own transport and were «well organized under escort leaders». Indeed, the book of the Italian Frontier Guard showed the names of certain persons who frequently passed through the Alps passes.

²⁰ ACS, *Illegal entry of Jewish Refugees into Italy, November 18, 1945*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 16F, Displaced Persons, Jews, July 1945 – January 1947.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

It was evident that the repetition of some names indicate they were organizers, or group leaders, or responsible officials in this mass movement²³.

The awareness of an efficient Jewish underground movement was repeatedly confirmed by the ACC offices' correspondence:

«It has been established that an effective «Underground Railway» for the westward transit of the Jewish refugees into Italy existed, as an initial stage in their journey to Palestine. This system is controlled by a well-organized committee of Jewish D.P.s which operates independently of constituted authority. Having arrived in Italy the refugees are said to be cared for by the Joint Distribution Committee until they can be moved to Palestine»²⁴.

Gradually, the *Brichah* became an even more structured network, establishing contacts and relations with other Jewish institutions that facilitate the entry of the Jewish DPs in Italy, frequently through underground agreements and support. Indeed, archival sources show that often both the ACC was aware that both the JDC and UNRRA in a certain extent played a fundamental role in this clandestine movement²⁵.

The *Brichah* brought to Italy a wave of new refugees, who became the driving force in shaping a collective identity among the Jews displaced in Italy leading to the establishment of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy. Many of the new refugees were partisans who had fought in the ghettos or had leading roles in the Zionist youth movements of the Diaspora and who had experienced the concentration camps. Their arrival in Italy merged into that invisible network formed of the «old refugees» and the committees and organization created by the *hayalim* and the Jewish voluntary organizations. With the fundamental support of the delegates from the *Yishuv*, the inflow of the *She'erit Ha-Pleita* in Italy marked a turning point in the development of that sense of belonging to a community in transit to *Eretz Israel*. The end of the war, the liberation of the concentration camps and these new waves of DPs in Italy led to the establishment of an official representative organization of the Jewish DPs in Italy. This enabled the Jewish DPs the beginning of a political discourse among the Jewish DPs in Italy, that linking the “remnants” of the Diaspora to their brethren waiting for them in the *Yishuv*, revolved around a new national awareness.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ ACS, *Entry of Jews into Italy, Bolzano, May, 10 1946*, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 16F, Displaced Persons, Jews, July 1945 – January 1947.

²⁵ See for example the correspondence among JDC officers in Italy who discussed the accuses Allies' notification about the JDC involvement in the *Brichah* as well as the UNRRA's «Jewish-friendly» attitude: AJDC, Folder: Italy 1947, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy

The new refugees gave an ideological and political structure to the various Jewish committees already existing in Italy, gathered the Jewish survivors through the shared traumatic past of the *Shoah* and pinned their fate on a future in Palestine. They created a sort of transnational community of displaced persons, wherein each individual was called upon to take an active role in the Jewish nation-building process, beginning in the European DP camps themselves. In Italy, the attitude of the Jewish refugees to self-understanding and self-determination culminated with the establishment of an institution which represented the refugees as a group at the national level. At the same time, it linked them to the other displaced Jews and to the diaspora in general.

In November 1945, the Temporary Central Committee for the Jewish Refugees in Italy – located in Rome – officially called for the unity of the already existing committees of the Jews displaced in Italy²⁶. On the 21st of November, a leaflet circulated among the assembly centers, camps and *bachsharot* in Italy inviting representatives of the Jewish DPs to the First Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy. In preparation of this conference, elections took place among the DPs in Italy on the 8th of November 1945. One delegate – sponsored at least by 20 DPs – was elected for each hundred persons, for a total of 140 delegates. The leaflet declared that the Conference was called in order to replace the Temporary Central Committee by a democratically elected and fully authorized committee as well as to discuss and clarify the problems of the Jewish DPs in Italy, to exchange information and experience and to find ways and means to solve these problems²⁷. At the top of the flyer, which circulated among the DP camps, appeared a list of the new Committee's aims:

1. to represent all the Jewish DPs in Italy, numbering about 15,000;
2. to re-educate them for life in civilized society and develop their sense of social responsibility;
3. to sponsor the creation of institutions for mutual aid;
4. to educate them to productive work;
5. to satisfy their cultural and spiritual needs;

²⁶ CZA, *Activity-Plan of the Temporary refugee-committee in Rome*, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

²⁷ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

6. to fight against phenomenon of demoralization among the refugees, caused by the terrible conditions of persecution and the need to fight for survival in the Ghettos and in the concentration camps;
7. to re-awaken their sense of human dignity, their self-confidence and in general to give them guidance in their return to a normal way of life;
8. to promote agricultural and professional training in view of emigration to Palestine²⁸.

The goal of the conference was to examine the situation of the Jewish DPs in Italy and to draw the attention of world public opinion, of the United Nations and of all the relief organizations to the

«urgent necessity to improve the situation of the Jewish DPs in Italy, to hasten their emigration and settlement in Palestine, and to assist them in their efforts towards rehabilitation and ultimate emigration»²⁹.

The meeting aimed also at speeding up the economic and moral rehabilitation of the DPs through a closer and more stimulating collaboration with UNRRA and JDC. The conference stressed the importance of the return to productive work and the reabsorption into the economic mainstream as the means for the refugees' moral rehabilitation and called for cultural and intellectual education as the first step to start anew after the war³⁰.

The Conference received large coverage by the Italian press. In addition to the 140 delegates elected by the Jewish DPs in Italy, representatives of Italian as well as foreign institutions and governments were invited to attend the meeting³¹. Among them: the Ambassadors of Great Britain, United States, USSR, France, Poland and Switzerland; representatives of the Italian Government and delegates from the Vatican; members of the ACC; representatives of the relief organizations working on behalf of the refugees (JDC, UNRRA, IGCR, ICRC); several Jewish Chaplains; representatives of the Jewish Brigade; Dr. Nathan for the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities (UCII), the Chief Rabbi of Rome

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ With the help of the UN agencies and the representatives of the Yishuv and the Jewish voluntary organizations, the Jewish DPs in Italy took part in workshops and vocational training courses, see: Chapter 8.

³¹ CZA, *Indirizzi della stampa quotidiana di Roma*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- 'Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

Rabbi Prato, Dr. Umberto Nahon for the Jewish Agency; Adv. Carlo Alberto Viterbo for the Italian Zionist Federation; Mr. Settimio Sorani for the Delasem and others³².

The opening session of the Conference was held in Rome on November 26, and the working sessions continued in Ostia (near Rome) until November 28. The hall of the Picchetti Hotel was decorated with white-blue flags and on the stage there was a banner with a slogan in Hebrew «Open the gates of *Eretz Isra'el*». At the head table were seated the members of the Temporary Central Committee on Jewish Refugees, together with Rabbi Prato (Chief Rabbi of the Jewish Community in Rome) and the deputy representative for the Jewish Agency in Italy, Dr. Umberto Nahon. The session was opened by Mr. Leib Garfunkel Head of the Temporary Committee, who memorialized in Hebrew and in English the Jews who perished during the war or fighting against the Nazi. The entire assembly stood up, the chaplains recited a chapter from the Psalms and Rabbi Prato recited the *Kaddish* prayer in commemoration of the war victims. Afterwards, Garfunkel took the floor again and pronounced his speech on behalf of the Jewish DPs in Italy. He spoke in Yiddish - his mother tongue as well as that of most of the Jewish DPs in Italy – and written translations in Italian and English were previously distributed among the guests. After welcoming the guests, Garfunkel opened:

«Our summoned Conference intends to express the plight and endeavours of about 15.000 Jews who survived the tremendous slaughter committed by Nazi-German during the 5 years of World War, in the presence of the whole world and mankind over the weaponless and defenceless Jewish People. [...] After much sufferings and wanderings, we succeeded to reach Italy. There, we face the hard problem how to be included anew into the frames of a normal life as free people and faithful sons of our nation. The aim of our Conference is to consider the ways by which the very hard life of the Jewish Refugees in Italy could be mostly improved, how to mitigate their plight, how to productivize and elevate their cultural and mental level, how to strive against some negative appearances resulting from the severe circumstances of life and steady fight for rescue from the continually menacing extirpation during many years on the Ghettos and concentration camps. It is essential we should assume position towards the cardinal and ardent problem that faces us by all its tragic sharpness as a question of to be or not to be, whereto we should cast our views and steps, where, on which spot in the world we may now create a new, quiet and safe home»³³.

³² CZA, *Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy – The Central Committee, List of invitations*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

³³ CZA, *Opening Speech by L. Garfunkel at the Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, Rome, November 26, 1945*, 3-4, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-

Thus, Leib Garfunkel in the first few words of his opening speech portrayed the post-war position and condition of the Jewish refugees, as well as their needs and their goals. He made it clear the refugees' intention to play an active role in drawing their own future, working with the refugee agencies. For this purpose, from that moment on, the elected Committee would represent the Jewish DPs in Italy before the international institutions.

Garfunkel stated explicitly that the Jewish DPs were looking at Italy as a temporary shelter with the purpose of final resettlement in Palestine, rejecting the Allies' repatriation program as inapplicable to them. He explained the reasons why for the DPs a return to their previous homes was impossible:

«Our previous homes are for us now mere cemeteries. [...] Neither home nor house are there to be build! [...] in consequence of our extermination by the Nazis who have bought us to such a small minority to which any possibility of a successful national reconstruction and cultural development would be excluded. We shall not enjoy there even the right of a national minority, because in the flames of the last World War vanished the whole conception of defence national minority»³⁴.

The speech of the future President of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy proved the existence of a political and historical awareness of the Jewish refugees' condition. According to Garfunkel, the survivors could not go back and rebuild their lives in those countries that they were forced to leave. Neither assimilation nor the constitution of a national minority could be contemplated by the Jews in virtue of what the war had just demonstrated. Anti-Semitism, he added in his speech, had not been defeated by the victory of the Allies; it had become an ideology prevailing European society and still threatening the Jews' safety. Through continuous reference to the Bible and to the recent past, Garfunkel maintained:

«If there is any spot on earth to find rescue for our tortured body and soul – it is only Eretz-Israel. The country on the Mediterranean shores, where once stood the cradle of our history and culture; that country which is historically, politically and culturally alleged to be the only solution to the problem of the Jewish People, that once and for ever could put an end to his lack of territory and home, to his lack of his own spot on earth and place under the sun. [...] Palestine is the only country that is desirous and capable to accept us»³⁵.

Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

³⁴ Ibid, 5-6.

³⁵ Ibid., 7-8.

Garfunkel pointed out that the «martyrdom» of Jews happened in the continent where, less than 150 years before, people chanted the slogan of the French Revolution “*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*”. Jewish communities were nevertheless obliged to live in ghettos for centuries until the *Shoah*, which represented the peak of barbarity and inhumanity reached by European society. After struggling against death in the concentration camps, and after resisting as partisans in the Ghettos, the *She’erith Ha-Pleitha* had, as their unique goal, to reach Palestine. Addressing the representatives of the British Government who were attending the conference, Garfunkel declared the White Paper of 1939 yet another offense against the Jewish people, defining it immoral and illegal. The current policy of the British Mandate in Palestine was - according to Garfunkel - in deep contradiction with the Balfour Declaration. This policy aimed «at curbing the magnificent Jewish reconstruction enterprise» undertaken in Palestine by the Jews and to convert the Jewish population in Palestine into «an eternal minority among the Arab majority»³⁶.

The President of the Jewish DPs’ organization in Italy continued by comparing the «evil» British policy to the «inhuman treatment of the Jews in Yemen», to «the slaughter of the oldest Christian people in Iraq and Lebanon» and to the «last bloody attack on the Jews in Cairo and Tripolitania». He vehemently asked for the immediate rescinding of the White Paper and for allowing free immigration to Palestine, in order to establish a Jewish State there. For their requests – said Garfunkel – the *She’erith Ha-Pleitha* needed the support of the British Labour Party, of both the Republican and the Democratic Parties in the US, of the International Trade Unions as well as of the Vatican³⁷. Before concluding and thanking the guests, Garfunkel addressed a last appeal to the British delegates for their recognition of the Jewish DPs’ condition and for free ‘*aliyah*’ as the only practicable solution to the refugee problem. He concluded his speech by declaring:

«By all ways and paths we shall throng to Palestine, where we foresee our real safe rescue. We shall insist upon it not only for our own sake, but in fulfilling the holy testament of the five million Jews exterminated by the National-Socialism. [...] Dear Delegates and Guests! We are assembled in the time when our destiny is going to be determined. With profound hopes and belief in the future of ours and of the whole Jewish Nation, we open today our Conference highly expressing our dearest slogan: “The Eternity of Israel Will Never Fail, Our Hopes Are Not Lost Yet”»³⁸.

³⁶ Ibid., 8-10.

³⁷ Ibid., 11.

³⁸ Ibid., 12-14.

According to the official report of the Conference, Leib Garfunkel's speech was frequently interrupted by vigorous applause, and his dedication and resolution deeply impressed the attendees. Finally, the first session ended with the whole assembly singing *Ha-Tikvah*, the future Israeli national anthem³⁹.

The second session of the Conference took place on the same day at 7 PM in Ostia (approximately 30 Km from Rome). Mr. Brik, another representative of the Temporary Central Committee, opened the session with a report regarding the activity of the Committee and read a cable received from Mr. Moshe Shertok - member of the Jewish Agency – who sent his greetings to the assembly and reiterated the Zionist Executive's support to the Jewish DPs in Italy. The Conference proceeded with the speeches of prominent Zionist leaders as Gerard Moritz Rigner, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress and Joseph Baratz, a soldier of the Jewish Brigade and one of the founders of Degania (the first Kibbutz established in Palestine in 1909)⁴⁰.

The third and the forth sessions of the Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy was held between the 27th and the 28th of November, during which the assembly of the 140 Jewish delegates elected its official representatives and passed resolutions. Nineteen persons were democratically elected for the Central Committee of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI): Abraham E., Dr. Amsczybowski, L. Bernstein, Z. Brik, L. Garfunkel, S. Goldstein, Togman, Lazar Ch., Landau, L. Lidowski, Epstein, E. Lustinger, Fabrizki, Kaganowitz, B. Kahn, S. Kless, I. Rabinowitz, Dr. Rubinstein and N. Resnik.

The First Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy closed with another brief speech by the newly elected president of OJRI, Leib Garfunkel. The resolutions approved by the assembly of the Jewish DPs in Rome and Ostia were published along with the official summary of Conference, and included 13 political and 6 organizational resolutions «addressed to the whole world»⁴¹.

The tasks of the *Merkeẓ* would be to represent the interests of OJRI towards various non-Jewish and Jewish institutions as UNRRA, ACC, the Italian Government, the JDC, the *Merkeẓ La-Golah*, the UCII, the DELASEM, the Chief Rabbi of Rome and the various Jewish Communities in Italy; to be in touch with the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the World Jewish

³⁹ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 6, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ See APPENDIX 11.

Congress and the OSE (Œuvre de Secours aux Enfants (the Children's Aid Organization) as to the problems of the Jewish DPs; to lead the public relations work regarding the needs and desires of the Jewish DPs - above all with reference to the *'aliyah* – and to inform the press and the institutions about it; to improve the condition of life of the DPs, their care and their health; to manage educational and cultural activities among the refugees; to gather statistical materials regarding the refugees and their dwelling places and to analyze those materials⁴².

OJRI - in Hebrew *Irgun Ha-Plitim Be-Italia* – included the *She'erith Ha-Pleitat*, the Jewish refugees who reached Italy after the end of the war, as well as the so-called «old refugees», i.e. those liberated in Italy in 1943 and those who arrived in Italy from neighbouring countries during the war. It was managed by a Central Committee (*Merkaẓ*), headed by the Presidium (*Nessiuth*) composed of five persons elected by the Central Committee. The *Merkaẓ* worked through a network of Regional Committees (*Wa'adim Eẓorim*) and Local Committees (*Wa'adim Mekomim*). The Regional Committees – composed of members elected both by *Merkaẓ* and by the region - were located in Milan for Northern Italy, in Rome for Central Italy and in Bari for Southern Italy. Whereas, the Local Committees – whose members were elected locally - operated in each DP camp. This hierarchical system, allowed OJRI to exercise on the one hand control over the DPs scattered throughout Italy while granting on the other hand a balance of self-representation by the DPs⁴³.

The Central Committee also set up two control commissions: the Revise-Commission, composed of Adv. Zaks, Zilberger and Lehrer, which supervised the OJRI's economic affairs and the Court, whose members were Alpert, Wolkowski, Wider and Rabbi Fishkin⁴⁴.

In order to fulfil its goals, the Conference established five departments, which would work under the Central Committee's supervision:

1. The Supplies Section was to cooperate with the military authorities, UNRRA and the Jewish organizations and institutions, in order to guarantee the refugees basic provisions. It was to function as an intermediary office, channelling the requests

⁴² CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, 2, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 24, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, 2, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

of the DPs to the relief organizations as well as to the Jewish Agency, which latter organized numerous charity collections in Palestine in those years.

2. The Health Department worked to integrate the health and medical programs already provided by the refugee agencies. For this reason, the OJRI called for the creation of an internal network of physicians and medical personnel among the DPs themselves, which later became the Organization of the Jewish-Refugees Physicians⁴⁵.
3. The Culture and Education Department had the task to fill the cultural and educational gap in the younger Jewish DPs left by the six-year war and to develop intensive educational programs in the DP camps and *hachsharot*. It was suggested to the new Central Committee to summon a meeting of all instructors and teachers among the DPs, in order to create a special education content for the already existing children's homes as well as for those to come. The goal of the Culture and Education Department was to provide a «national education» to the young Jews displaced in Italy «in the spirit of labour and to introduce into the children-homes the teaching and skilling of trades». It emerged the necessity to speed up the publishing of books on Zionism - in particular in Hebrew, but also in Yiddish – and to establish clubs and reading rooms in the DP camps as well as in the towns⁴⁶. Moreover, the Conference gave birth to the Society of Jewish Writers, Journalists and Artists. They eventually founded the *In gang: khoydesh-zhurnal make a literatur kunst* (“On The Move: a Monthly Magazine for Literature and Art”), a literary and art magazine in Yiddish that promoted Jewish culture among the DPs after the war, in a Zionist-awakening framework. *In gang*, published between 1947 and 1949, gave space to personal stories of refugees, to poems and stories written by the DPs themselves, comments about the plays staged in the refugee camps, historical insights, sociological reflections, book reviews and introduction of new artists. During the Conference was established

⁴⁵ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 22, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf hovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, 2, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45; About health security in DP camps and *hachsharot*, see: Chapter 6.

⁴⁶ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 16-18, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf hovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

also an Artistical Ensamble, whose members were Jewish artists displaced in Italy who developed artistic and cultural program among the Jewish refugees⁴⁷.

4. The Conference also established a Press Office and recognized the weekly journal in Yiddish *Baderech* (Hebrew for “On the Way”) as the single and official newspaper of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, asserting that *Baderech* provided important support to the «mental training of the older refugees in the camps». The Conference forbade any group or person among the DPs to publish or help publish any other printed newspaper in Hebrew or Yiddish without the permission of the Central Committee.⁴⁸
5. Lastly, the Conference established a Bureau of Information and Statistics, thereby recognising the importance such unit would fill in providing the Jewish DPs with information and aid, in finding relatives who survived the war and eventually in connecting them⁴⁹.

The Conference expressed the importance of strengthening and maintaining a deep and close relationship with the Jewish Agency and with the World Jewish Congress, whose special deputies attended the Conference and expressed the support of their institutions for the Jewish DPs in Italy. Moreover, a «deep understanding and aid» was created between the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities (UCII) and the OJRI⁵⁰.

Since the primary goal of OJRI was to encourage *‘aliyah*, it would work together with the Central Palestine Office. The OJRI had its own special representatives in the Central Palestine Office in Rome as well as in the local Palestine Offices in Milan, Rome and Bari. Furthermore, the Conference requested the Central Palestine Office to open a network of Palestine offices in Italy and to elect Councils within them, in order to gain the confidence of the whole Jewish public in Italy and for the execution of a complete registration of the

⁴⁷ About the work of the Culture and Education Department of OJRI, see: Chapters 8 and 9.

⁴⁸ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia, 17 e 23* Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 23; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946, 2*, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

⁵⁰ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia, 21*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

refugees applying for ‘*aliyah*’⁵¹. Most important, OJRI would work in close collaboration with the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* (Hebrew for the “Pioneer’s Center”), established by the *Merkaẕ La-Golah* in agreement with the Zionist youth movements in order to manage and lead the youth training camps, i.e. the *Hachsharot*.

The Organization of the Jewish Refugees formalized its affiliation with the Organization of the Jewish Refugee-Artisans (*Ha-‘Oved*), the latter being chosen by the Conference to be the organization that would take into *kibbutzim* all the refugees who because of their full age could not be included into programs of *He-Halutz*. During the Conference, it was «satisfactorily» noted that several *Kibbutzim* of *Ha-‘Oved* already existed in Italy and the Central Committee was charged with the task of establishing a special secretary-office of the *Ha-‘Oved* in Italy. The Organization of the Jewish-Refugee Artisans had its own Yiddish magazine (*Davar Ha-‘Oved*), published as a fortnight supplement to *Baderech*⁵².

Finally, the OJRI linked its activities with that of the Organization of the Jewish Partisans, cited officially during the Conference for their efforts during the war and for their commitment to the “reconstitution in Palestine”⁵³.

The collaboration between OJRI and the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* was fundamental for the planning of the *hachsharot* program, chosen as «the policy for Italy»⁵⁴. This organization was promoted by the *hayalim* – who were indeed pioneers (in Hebrew “*halutzim*”) of the *Yishuv* – who planned for its establishment since the early 1945. After the First Zionist Congress in Italy - held in January 1945 - the delegates of the *halutz*-organized youth of liberated Italy met in Rome and decided to form a provisional committee in order to found the “*He-Halutz*” movement for Italy.

⁵¹ Ibid.; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, 3, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

⁵² CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 22, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, 3, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

⁵³ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, 22, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

⁵⁴ AJDC, *Report of a Field Visit to Italy, August 12-27, 1947*, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Medical - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7.

He-Halutz was in charge of selecting young Jews - both Italians and DPs for the *hachsharot* program, where they would prepare themselves for living in Palestine. In order to continue the organizational work, during the meeting of the delegate in January 1945, the basic principles of the *Merkez He-Halutz* were fixed:

«The “He-Halutz” educates and prepares his members for the ‘aliyah and for the practical realization of our aim to colonise Eretz Israel. The “He-Halutz” obliges his members in the Galut [Hebrew for “Diaspora”] and in Eretz Israel to: (1) Join a hachsharah-group and to carry out any work asked by the movement; (2) study Hebrew language and culture; (3) Emigrate to Palestine according to the principles of the movement; (4) Devote their lives entirely to the tasks and defence of the Yishuv, following the decisions of our movement»⁵⁵.

According to the *Merkez He-Halutz*, only those Jews who resided in hachsharot were considered *halutzim* and could apply for migration to Palestine. In occasion of the meeting which took place in January 1945, the *shlimim* encouraged the constitution of a provisional *He-Halutz* Center Committee among the Jewish DPs and the *bayalim*. It was formed of Arjeh Grossman (*Hachsharah* Ha-Bonim, Santa Maria al Bagno Camp), Abraham Grunsfeld (Santa Maria di Leuca Camp), Montilja Jakob (*Hachsharah* Dror, Bari), Jehudah Herzka (Educational Board, Bari), Reuven Milano (*Hachsharah la-Negev*, Roma), Rachel Engel (*He-Halutz*, Roma) and Barzilai Sonnino (*He-Halutz*, Rome). The *shlimim* charged the representatives of the major assembly centers at that time in Italy to spread the halutzist message among the other Jewish refugees in Italy⁵⁶.

The desire to start a new life led thousands of Jewish DPs to Italy, with the goal to leave Europe for another destination. Not all of them wished to be resettled in Palestine, nevertheless the refugee camps and *hachsharot* in Italy represented an active meeting place for the Jewish DPs as a whole. The arrival of the *She'erit Ha-Pleita* and with them the leaders of the Jewish resistance in Europe marked the beginning of a national discourse among the Jewish DPs in Italy. The establishment of OJRI emphasized the political factors in the Jewish refugees' claims and the promotion of a national Jewish identity.

Through encouragement from and collaboration with the Jewish organizations and the *Yishuv*, the emigration of the Jewish DPs in Italy acquired gradually a structured form. Italy

⁵⁵ CZA, *Executive of the Hechalutz for Italy, January 16, 1945*, Folder: S6/2514, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection: S/6 Immigration Department (1919-80).

⁵⁶ Ibid.

was not only the last stop before *'aliyah*, instead it was the place where the *'olim* trained themselves for being pioneers, in particular in *bachsharot*. While displaced in Italy the Jewish DPs learnt Hebrew, attended vocational courses, confronted themselves with life conditions and collective organizations typical of the *Yishuv*, shaped their identity in view of their imminent resettlement in *Eretz Israel*.

Chapter 5

'Aliyah

«A Question of To Be or Not To Be»

Ha-Mossad le-'Aliyah Bet: Route to Eretz Israel

Until the establishment of the State of Israel, the only way to make *'aliyah* was the illegal sailing, managed by the *Mossad le-'Aliyah Bet*, which - under the control of the Jewish Agency - facilitated the illegal immigration of Jews from Europe to Palestine. The *Mossad* was established in 1938, shortly before the publication of the White Paper of 1939, during a meeting among Eliahu Golomb, a member of the *Haganah*, Berl Katznelson, one of the founders of the Labour Zionist movement (Mapai), and Yitzhak Tabenkin, leader of the Union of the *Kibbutzim*. The other members of the *Mossad* were often recruited from amongst the *Palmakh* (or its naval department, the *Palyam*)¹ and the *Haganah* soldiers. This was the case of the *Haganah* ex-commander Shaul Avigur, who led the activities of the *'Aliyah Bet* from 1938 to 1948.

As mentioned above, the starting point for the creation of the underground network of the *Mossad* in Italy was the support provided by the *bayalim*. Their barracks in Bari and Naples became the first *Mossad* underground headquarters and their military station at the Alps borders was essential to prevent the *Mossad* operations from being discovered by the Allied authorities, at least initially. In early 1945, Shaul Avigur appointed Yehuda Arazi² and Ada Sereni³ as his aid in Italy. Upon his arrival in Italy, Arazi equipped the existing

¹ The *Palmakh* stands for *Plugot Makhatz* (Hebrew for "Striking Units"). It was created in 1941 by the *Haganah*, as paramilitary section with the task of training young Jews. Sereni, *Clandestini*, 62

² Yehuda Arazi (1907-1959) was born in Poland in 1907 and emigrated to Palestine in 1923. At an early age he joined the *Haganah*, where he quickly rose to the rank of captain. Because of failures in investigating the Arlozorov 's assassination in 1933, Arazi left his role, joining again the *Haganah* intelligence a few years later under the code name of "Alon". Arazi, who was wanted by the British on suspicion of arms smuggling, arrived illegally in Italy, from where he directed the operations of the *Mossad le-'aliyah bet* until the spring of 1947see Zertal, *From Catastrophe Power*, 27-29.

³ Ada Sereni Ascarelli (1905-1998) was born in Rome from a wealthy merchant family. In 1928 he decided to emigrate to Palestine with her husband Enzo Sereni, who was among the founders of Kibbutz Giv'at Brenner, south of Tel Aviv. In 1945, she returned to Italy in search of her husband, who in 1944 had enlisted in the Jewish *Plugot* to aid the Jewish victims of fascism in Europe. In 1945, she was entrusted by Shaul Avigur, general commander of the *Mossad le-'aliyah bet*, the role of head of the international relations of the *Mossad* in Italy. Since

headquarters in Bari with two radio stations and created another one in Milan in Cantù Street, just off Via Unione⁴. The preparations for departure of a group of refugees included the purchase of a sea vessel by some owner, finding a person who would act as a figurehead for the purchase, and someone willing to supply the money for the purchase. Then, inside Italian shipyards, the *Mossad* modified the ships, adapting them to the needs of transporting as many passengers as possible, while the *hayalim* were charged with obtaining supplies of fuel and food for the trip.

The passengers were alerted only shortly before sailing, so as to prevent them from spreading information that could reach the police or the press. The refugees were transported from the DP camps to the boarding places by military convoy with false markings of the British Army, driven by Palestinian soldiers, who also helped the refugees' board. After departure, the ships remained in constant radio contact with the *Mossad* station in Milan, which gave directives to be followed, and when they approached *Eretz Israel*, the ships established radio contact with Tel Aviv, which in turn communicated with Milan. The landing, like the departure, took place at night, with the *Palmakh* quickly moving the illegal immigrants away from the coast to prevent discovery of the secret operations of the *Mossad*⁵.

Beyond the economic and logistic problems, the main difficulty was in choosing the small number of passengers from amongst the thousands of DPs waiting for '*aliyah*'. According to Ada Sereni, this decision was the responsibility of the *Merkaz la-Golah*:

«All political parties in Israel were part of the Merkaz. It was evident to all of us that the issue of immigration to Eretz Israel would be the focus of the political struggle between the Palestinian Jews and that the mandatory power would be the vital issue for the million who survived the extermination. The party that had been able to boast the ability to bring many of its members in Eretz Israel, would earn enormous prestige and would attract not only all the apolitical and the hesitant, but many already affiliated to other parties. [...] The strength of a party is based on the number of its members in Italy or on that of all its members in Europe? [...] In all the camps, all refugees were discussing passionately the question»⁶.

Between August 1945 and May 1946, 14 ships of the *Mossad* left from Europe, including 10 from Italy with 5,586 passengers; moreover, between June and September 1946 another 12 ships sailed from Italian shores, including 6 from Italy with 10,408 people⁷. From the end of

the spring of 1947, she replaced Yehuda Arazi, as leader of the Mossad in Italy. She edited her memories: Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*.

⁴ Toscano, *Porta di Sion*, 35; Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 161; Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 50.

⁵ Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*, 57-67.

⁶ Ibid., 58-59.

⁷ Toscano, *Porta di Sion*, 91.

the war until the establishment of the State of Israel, out of the 65 ships of the Mossad sailing from Europe to Palestine, 21 left Italian ports with more than 20,000 Jewish refugees⁸.

Italy was the main transit country for the stream of Jewish survivors from the refugee camps to British Palestine. International historiography extensively addressed this topic, offering in-depth analysis of the underground operations of the *Mossad*, of the *Yishuv*'s response to the Jewish DPs, of the influence of the Holocaust survivors' *'aliyah* on the Zionist struggle for the establishment of the State of Israel as well as of the ambiguous attitude of the national governments⁹. Since all these aspects had long since been debated, this chapter briefly summarizes the historical events and the factors that led the "Jewish DPs question" into the international arena, thus contributing to stimulate a national consciousness among the Jewish refugees. This would help to shed light on the features and the developments of the political/national discourse among the Jewish DPs in Italy, which mainly revolved around obtaining free *'aliyah*.

The Harrison Report

Parallel to the establishment of the Jewish committees and organizations among the DPs seeking recognition of their Jewish identity, the "Jewish DPs' question" began to be discussed on the international level. The immense problem encountered by the Allies in handling 7 million displaced persons in Europe at the end of the War had no parallel in previous military history. Although by December 1945, the Displaced Persons Subcommittee of SHAEF had already repatriated 5.5 million refugees, the logistics of managing, feeding, clothing and providing assistance to these disparate groups of displaced persons continued to represent a challenging task for the SHAEF.

The purpose of SHAEF's decision to divide the refugees in groups according to their nationality was both to facilitate the rescue operations and to respond more quickly to the refugees' needs. However - as pointed out in the previous chapters - the DPs' needs were not always linked to their national origins and, in many circumstances, the war had changed their priorities. Military authorities resisted these considerations and the Jews' case is indeed a paradigmatic example. From the start, the Allies disregarded the Jewish DPs' particular

⁸ Markovizky, "The Italian Government's", 23.

⁹ Bauer, *Flight and Rescue*; Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power*; Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust*; Alamish, *The Exodus Affaire*; Porat Dina, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David. The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939-1945*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Enardu, "L'immigrazione illegale ebraica"; Toscano, «Porta di Sion»; Markovizky, "The Italian Government's"; Sereni, *I clandestini del mare*.

situation, and continued classifying them according to their pre-war nationality and “encouraging” them to agree to repatriation.

Historiography has pointed out that the gradual awareness of what European Jewry had suffered during the war paradoxically did not arouse a feeling of understanding or sympathy. On the contrary, the Jewish survivors were perceived by the Allies as bothersome¹⁰. On their side, the Jews promptly denounced any reluctance in meeting their needs as evidence of anti-Semitism. In his report, Malcolm Proudfoot, who served in the Displaced Persons Branch of the Allied Military Command, wrote:

«Those Jews who survived felt grave apprehension regarding their future [...] they were in an unbalanced emotional condition [...] that required a real effort [...] to keep from being goaded into discriminatory action»¹¹.

Nonetheless, military instructions precluded any possibility of treating the Jewish DPs differently from others. In May 1945, the DPs Branch of SHAEF declared: «the problem of the Jewish DPs are similar to those of other stateless and displaced persons persecuted by reasons of race, religion or political affiliation»¹².

Soon after the end of the war, demonstrations and protests by the DPs themselves as well as domestic political considerations motivated Harry S. Truman, the new elected president of the United States, to initiate an inquiry into the condition of the Jews in Europe. On the one hand, there was the pressure exerted by the Jewish and the Zionist organizations on the War Refugee Board and, on the other hand, there was the Jewish political loyalty to the Democratic Party that alone warranted presidential recognition of Jewish concerns¹³. Based on both humanitarian and political considerations, the newly established Truman administration decided to publicly recognize the need for a positive reply to the organized Jewry. A few months after the end of the war, Truman decided to accept the recommendation of the State Department to conduct an immediate inquiry into the condition of the Jews in the DP camps in Europe. Henry Morgenthau, Secretary of the Treasury, suggested Earl G. Harrison's name to head the presidential investigation. Thus, on 22 June 1945, Earl G. Harrison – who was US Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization, Dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and American

¹⁰ Marrus, *Unwanted*, 307-308, 331-339; Kelly Patrick, “Of Pawns and Players. U.S.-British Politics vis-à-vis Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948”, <http://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/28935?show=full>, 1-31.

¹¹ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*, 324.

¹² Marrus, *Unwanted*, 331-332.

¹³ About the US policy toward the survivors of the Holocaust, see: Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*; on the appointment of the US inquiry to Harrison, see: *Ibid.*, 34-38.

representative to the IGCR – was appointed to head the inquiry regarding the Jewish survivors in Europe.

In his mission in the British and American zones of occupation in Germany and Austria in July 1945, Harrison was accompanied by the European Director of the Joint, Joseph J. Schwartz - whose presence was explicitly requested by Harrison-, as well as by Herbert Katzki of the War Refugee Board, and Patrick M. Malin, Deputy Director of the IGCR.

What is commonly known as “the Harrison Report”, submitted to President Truman in August 1945, was divided into 5 sections and although he specified in its introduction that this was only «a partial report», the author opened with these sharp words¹⁴:

«Generally speaking, three months after the V-E Day, [...] many Jewish displaced persons and other possibly non-repatriables are living under guard behind barbed fences in camps [...], including some of the most notorious at the concentration camps, amid crowded, frequently unsanitary and generally grim conditions, in complete idleness, with no opportunity [...] to communicate with the outside world, waiting, hoping for some word of encouragement and action in their behalf»¹⁵.

Earl G. Harrison gave a chilling description of the Jewish refugees’ situation in Germany and Austria: they were living in former concentration camps and were still wearing striped pyjamas or even SS uniforms. He emphatically denounced the fact that the Allies were not making enough effort toward rehabilitating the Jewish survivors nor to reunite family groups; food was scarce and housing was unfit. «They have been liberated more in a military sense than actually», denounced the White House’s emissary¹⁶.

In the second section, titled *Needs of the Jews*, he highlighted the urgency of recognizing their special status, i.e. «their status as Jews». According to Harrison’s opinion, there was «a distinctly unrealistic approach to the problem» because during wartime Jews have been more victimized than others, so they should be considered a separate group independent of their nationality¹⁷. He harshly criticized the nationality lines followed by the Allies in managing the refugee crisis and also criticised the work of UNRRA with its disorganization and its

¹⁴ The White House (ed. by), *Earl G. Harrison’s Report to President Truman on the Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe*, Washington, 29th of September 1945; available on line: <http://collections.ushmm.org/artifact/image/library/harrisonreport.pdf> (accessed November 2016); or in: Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 291-293.

¹⁵ The White House (ed. by), *Earl G. Harrison’s Report, Paragraph I: Germany and Austria- Conditions*, 292.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., *Paragraph II: Needs of the Jews*, 294.

unqualified personnel¹⁸. He urged that the Allied authorities house Jews separately and transfer the management of the DP camps from the Army to UNRRA.

Harrison reported that relatively little has been done in meeting the needs of the Jewish survivors and emphasized SHAEF's resistance to the involvement of international as well as voluntary agency representatives in the camps, this being a clear reference to the (at least initially) limited role of the Jewish aid organizations.¹⁹

In *Conclusions and Recommendations*, Harrison «with no reference to ideological or political consideration» recommended modification of Britain's 1939 White Paper as well as admission to the USA of a larger quota of Jews, hoping that this action would encourage other countries to keep their doors open. In his recommendations, Harrison vehemently exhorted the United States to support the Jewish Agency's request to the British Government to grant 100,000 additional immigration certificates to Palestine²⁰. In the concluding paragraph, Harrison explicitly asserted that «the only real solution of the problem lies in the quick evacuation of all non-repatriable Jews [...] to Palestine»²¹.

After being submitted to President Truman, the Harrison Report was given extensive coverage in the media, provoking a widespread sense of shock. . The cruel testimony of his three-week trip through the liberated concentration camps of Germany and Austria was released to the international press, and gained a wide audience. For months afterwards, Earl Harrison was invited to speak about his experiences in Europe. The brutal descriptions of what he saw during his mission in Germany and Austria deeply impressed public opinion. He himself testified to his personal feelings and impressions in an article he wrote following his visits in the ex-concentration camps in Europe:

«[About Bergen Belsen] we had repeatedly [been] told that it was useless to visit this place, hitherto one of the most terrible of all the Nazi concentration camps, because "it's all burned down". Building No. 1, with the gas chambers and crematories, had been destroyed. All the rest of Belsen remains much as the Nazis left it. The buildings are substantial but frightfully overcrowded. We were in one loft, 20 by 80 feet, which housed 85 people about half of them Jews with all their belongings. Their whole lives – eating, sleeping, bathing, laundry, "recreation" – had to be carried on in that cramped, partitionless, dreary space»²².

¹⁸ Ibid., 294-295.

¹⁹ Ibid., *Paragraph III: Manner in which Needs are being met*, 297.

²⁰ Ibid., *Paragraph IV: Conclusions and Recommendations*, 298-304.

²¹ Ibid., *Paragraph V: Other Comments*, 304-305.

²² Some of the papers related to Harrison's mission in Europe are available at the Archives of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (hereafter, USHMM), Earl G. Harrison, «Last Hundred Thousand», The Nation

President Truman rapidly forwarded the report to the Commanding General of the Allied Armies Dwight Eisenhower, openly expressing his position concerning the Jews' claims:

«We must intensify our efforts to get these people out of camps and into decent houses until they can be repatriated or evacuated. [...] I am communicating directly with the British Government in an effort to have the doors of Palestine opened to such of these displaced persons as wish to go there»²³.

Not surprising, Harrison's stinging language aroused a great deal of bitterness among the military commanders of the European theatre, who were accused by Harrison of acting like the Nazis with the only exception that they «do not exterminate them»²⁴. Harrison's and then Truman's criticism led to a speedy reaction by Eisenhower, who wrote a detailed reply on October 7, indicating improvements that had been made since Harrison's visit, emphasizing the obstacles that the Allies were facing and censuring Harrison for having overlooked the work of his Army. Moreover, although Eisenhower had rejected months before the proposal that Rabbi Stephen S. Wise be attached as a Jewish liaison officer to the Eisenhower's SHAEF Headquarters, now, after Harrison's report, Eisenhower appointed Rabbi Judah Nadich as SHAEF advisor for Jewish Affairs. He concluded: «Perfection never will be attained, but real and honest efforts are being made to provide suitable living conditions for the persecuted people»²⁵.

After Harrison's report was published, the US military command – unlike the British – allowed David Ben Gurion, at that time chair of the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to visit the American Zone of Occupation in Germany as well as to meet Eisenhower and his staff. After his tour in October 1945, Ben Gurion submitted a memorandum to SHAEF requesting

Jewish Monthly, November 1945, Earl G. Harrison Paper (1945-1946), Record Group 10.088, Folder 2, accessed October 2015:

http://digitalarchives.assets.ushmm.org/pdfjs/web/viewer.html?file=http://digitalarchives.assets.ushmm.org/pdf/1994.A.0079_001_002.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,-19,828 (accessed November 2016). About the Jewish DPs in Bergen Belsen, see: Lavsky, *New Beginnings*.

²³ Letter from President Truman to General Eisenhower enclosing the Harrison Report on the treatment of displaced Jews in the U. S. Zone, September 29, 1945, accessed October 2015: https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Holocaust/truman_on_harrison.html.

²⁴ The White House (ed. by), *Earl G. Harrison's Report*.

²⁵ Rabbi Stephen S. Wise was a prominent American Jewish leader and president of the American Jewish Congress. About the impact of the Harrison Report and the attachment of a Jewish liaison officer see: Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 95; Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame*, 65-87; see, moreover: Foreign Office (hereafter, FO), *Jewish Adviser to the Control Commission: Colonel Solomon and His Recommendations For Jews*, Control Office For Germany And Austria And Foreign Office, German Section: General Department. The National Archives FO 945/384, The Henriques Collection, The Wiener Library, London, UK and selected files from series FO, HO and WO, The National Archives, Kew UK.

«to concentrate the Jews in a separate region, either urban or rural; to allow the Jewish DPs to govern themselves, subjected to the ultimate authority of the US Army; to provide agricultural training through instructors who would come from Palestine; to confiscate Nazi farms; to provide vocational and paramilitary training to the DPs; and to establish weekly flights between the camps and Palestine to bring in instructors and books»²⁶.

Though the US presidential commission did not look into the situation in Italy and focused mainly on the situation of the Jewish DPs in Germany, the worldwide reaction to the Harrison report had effects on all the European military theatres²⁷. The Report brought into the open the differences between the British and the US policy towards the Jewish displaced persons.

While US policy tended to agree with most of Harrison recommendations and Ben Gurion's comments, British policy continued to separate the problem of Jewish displacement in Europe and the Palestine question. Unlike the Jews in the US zone of occupation, those in the British zone continued to be treated according to their nationality because, as stated by the office of Chief of Staff British Zone Command in Germany, «it is undesirable to accept the Nazi theory that the Jews are a separate race»²⁸.

The Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry in Italy

The Harrison Report and its recommendation that one hundred thousand Jewish DPs be transferred to Palestine created the link e between the problem of caring for the Jewish DPs in Europe and the question of the Mandate in Palestine. It enable the Holocaust survivors' issue to acquire a fundamental role in the political struggle of Zionism for the establishment of the "Jewish National Home".

In order to find and suggest new solutions to the "Jewish problem", Bevin called for sharing responsibility for implementation of the Harrison Report's recommendations and and opted for cooperation with Truman²⁹.

Thus, in October 1945 Lord Halifax, Britain's ambassador in Washington, and James F. Byrnes, American Secretary of State, met in order to set up an Anglo-American Committee

²⁶ Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 94.

²⁷ See Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*; Königseder and Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope*, 31-41; Myers-Feinstein, *Holocaust Survivors*, 11- 15;

²⁸ Königseder and Wetzel, *Waiting for Hope*, 39.

²⁹ For a deep analysis of the diplomatic consideration that led the British Government to involve the United States in a joint policy on Palestine through the Jewish DPs' question, see: Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 98-133.

of Inquiry. The British representative defined the main goals of the joint inquiry as the analysis of the condition of the Jewish DPs in the refugee camps in Europe; the estimation of the number of Jews who could not be repatriated; and recommendations regarding possible resettlement in «other non-European countries». The United States partially rejected these objectives, suggesting several adjustments as prior conditions for US agreement to a joint inquiry. Byrnes proposed to emphasize the role of Palestine as crucial in the resolution of the problem, rather than using the general definition «other countries outside Europe» introduced by Lord Halifax. The Secretary of State strove to avoid the “other countries formula” since it would automatically position the United States as an alternative for the resettlement of the Jews, a solution unpopular with US public opinion.

In order to secure American participation in the joint inquiry, Bevin accepted Byrnes’ proposal. The preamble of the AAC report listed as the main goals of the inquiry:

«(1) to examine political, economic and social conditions in Palestine as they bear upon the problem of the Jewish immigration and settlement therein and the well-being of the peoples now living therein; (2) to examine the position of the Jews in those countries in Europe where they had been the victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution, and the practical measures taken or contemplated to be taken in those countries to enable them to live free from discrimination and oppression and to make estimates of those who wish or will be impelled by their conditions to migrate to Palestine or other countries outside Europe»³⁰.

The negotiations for setting up the AAC led to a joint commission headed by Joseph C. Hutcheson as US Chairman and John E. Singleton as British Chairman. The Commission met first in Washington and then in London during January 1946. As detailed in Appendix I of the AAC report, the delegates left in February for Europe, worked in subcommittees, and proceeded in their investigations to Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Italy and Greece. On the 28th of February, they flew to Cairo and on the 6th of March to Jerusalem, where the investigation continued until the 28th of March 1946.

At the end of April 1946, the Commission concluded its work and submitted its report both to the British and to the US Governments. The report opened with ten recommendations that summarized the work of the joint committee, being debated by the British and the US governments through the end of 1946.

³⁰ WL, The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry (ed. by), *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the problems of European Jewry and Palestine*, Lausanne, 20th April, 1946.

Though confirming the central role of Palestine in solving the problem of the Jewish survivors, the AAC appealed for «universal respect for, and to the observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms» provisioned by the UN Charter for promoting both the repatriation and the emigration of the Jews:

«[...] countries other than Palestine gave no hope of substantial assistance in finding homes for Jews wishing or impelled to leave Europe. But Palestine alone cannot meet the emigration needs of the Jewish victims of Nazi and Fascist persecution; the whole world shares responsibility for them and indeed for the resettlement of all “displaced persons”. We therefore recommend that our Governments together, and in association with other countries, should endeavor immediately to find new homes for all such “displaced persons”, irrespective of creed or nationality, whose ties with their former communities have been irreparably broken»³¹.

Nonetheless, in order to obtain «a most salutary effect upon the whole situation», the AAC recommended that 100,000 certificates be authorized immediately (within 1946) for the admission into Palestine of Jews who had been victims of Nazi persecution.

The AAC recommend that the government of Palestine be continued under British Mandate, with the desired purpose to guarantee the interests and the rights of the Moslems, the Jews and the Christians as well as equal social and economic development of the three communities in the Mandate. At the same time, the AAC called for the British to administer Palestine according to the Mandate, which declared with regard to immigration that «the administration of Palestine, while ensuring that the rights and position of other sections of the population are not prejudiced, shall facilitate Jewish immigration under suitable conditions»³². Finally, in its last recommendation titled *The Need for Peace in Palestine* the AAC expressed the view that the Jewish Agency should at once resume active cooperation with the Mandatory government in the suppression of terrorism and of illegal immigration³³.

The recommendations drawn up by the AAC’s traveling investigation denote a certain continuity with the past, but also introduce new elements. On the one hand, the report links the DP issue to the Palestine question and marks an official “interference” by the United States in British Mandatory policy; whereas, on the other, it demonstrates yet another failed attempt to find an alternative solution to the “European problem”.

³¹ Ibid., 1.

³² See: Art. 6 of the British Mandate on Palestine, available on line: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/palmanda.asp (accessed November 2016).

³³ WL, The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry (ed. by), *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the problems of European Jewry and Palestine*, Lausanne, 20th April, 1946, 1-10.

Although the AAC reinforced Harrison's recommendation for the authorization of 100,000 certificates for Jewish immigration to Palestine, at the same time, it called for the UN countries to revise their immigration policies in order to accept more refugees and thus settle the DP problem as quickly as possible. This appeal for a shared responsibility for the consequences of war was echoing the call of the Evian Conference of 1938 which had gone unheeded since then.

The report estimated that of a total pre-War Jewish population of 9,946,200, only 391,000 remained in Europe in the aftermath of the war. According to the AAC, 98,000 Jews were displaced in Germany, Austria and Italy, living in assembly centres whose accommodations differed widely in character: barracks, huts, hotels, apartment house and cottages. The Commission ascertained that the newly established United Nations had taken an increasing part in the relief and rehabilitation of the Jews beginning with the work of the UNRRA Mission in Italy in autumn 1944, followed by missions in Germany and in Austria in the summer and in the latter part of 1945. The AAC recognized that many conditions in the centres might be criticized such as the lack of furniture, unsatisfactory cooking arrangements, overcrowding and a shortage of beds and beddings. It expressed no doubt that these conditions were being remedied even though, due to various circumstances, it was not always within the power of the military authorities those improve conditions. Contrary to what Harrison wrote in his report, the AAC commissioners declared that they felt «the military authorities, UNRRA and the various relief organizations concerned have every reason to be proud of what they have done to succour these remnants of Nazi persecution»³⁴.

The AAC examined the refugee situation also in Italy during February 25-27, 1946. Sir John Singleton, Mr. Phillips, Mr. McDonald, and Sir Frederick Leggett were the representatives of the joint committee in charge of the investigation of the condition of the Jews in Italy. They reported that the Jewish population appeared to be 46,000, of whom 30,000 were native Jews, with regard to whom no special problem arose. There were approximately 6,500 non-Italian Jews in the 4 principal centers in the south of Italy under the administration of UNRRA, about 5,500 in other centers and an additional 4,000 non-Italian Jews in various cities³⁵. According to the data presented by the AAC, the Jewish DPs in Italy formed of 75% Polish, 7% Rumanian, 5% Czech and another 5% Hungarians³⁶.

³⁴ Ibid., 12.

³⁵ Ibid., 55-56.

³⁶ Ibid., 58-59.

The Anglo-American Commission focused its visit in the heel of Italy, which – at that time – hosted the greatest group of non-Italian Jews displaced in Italy. In particular, the Commission visited two of the four DP camps handed over to UNRRA's responsibility in 1945: Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp and Santa Maria di Leuca DP Camp.

Sir John Singleton - in charge of the conducting the investigation in Italy – described the situation of the two above-mentioned camps: around 2,000 non-Italian Jews lived in each camp - once a summer seaside resorts – accommodated in villas «not unattractive, though badly lacking in furniture». Sir John informed that those «young people» crossed the frontier to reach Italy and regard the country only as a point of departure for Palestine. Moreover, although the Italian Government and the Italian people were «friendly» to the Jewish DPs, Italy's economic condition prevented their assimilation even whether they would have wished to remain within the country. Italian Jews on the contrary had no desire to emigrate added the AAC commissioner³⁷.

According to the AAC report, the reception given to its sub-committee in Italy, as well as at many other centers in Germany and elsewhere, was hostile. As pointed out by A. Kochavi, the AAC delegates were aware that the Jewish Agency had sent special representatives from Palestine to the Jewish DPs in Europe in order to prepare them for the visit of the Commission in the camps³⁸.

In Santa Maria al Bagno, six to seven hundred DPs' marched in military fashion carrying banners of protest; a cohort of small children marching in pairs carried a banner with the slogan «Down with the White Paper» and one group of young men, described as «the more turbulent section of the community», carried a banner to the effect that the Committee was «an insult to the Jewish nation». In Santa Maria di Leuca, seven tires of the AAC's cars were cut during the night. «Clearly the demonstration was not spontaneous, but carefully organized», commented Sir Singleton, «such unfortunate incidents are mentioned as evidence of the intense feeling against remaining in refugee camps even in attractive surroundings and of the almost fanatical love for Palestine»³⁹.

The trajectory of the trip undertook by the commissioners of AAC “officially” linked the Jews in Europe to the same fate, from those in the destroyed communities of Poland, to those waiting in the former concentration camps as well as to those displaced in seashore

³⁷ Ibid., 55-56.

³⁸ Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 107.

³⁹ Ibid., 56.

resorts in Apulia. It moved the Holocaust survivors' issue to the international arena, thus involving new actors in the complicated attempt to find a solution to the Jewish displacement. Furthermore, with the AAC inquiry the "Jewish DPs question" in Europe became irremediably connected to the development of the British Mandate in Palestine, turning into a decisive "political factor" in the struggle of the *Yishuv* for the establishment of a Jewish National Home.

'Aliyah: «A Question of To Be or Not To Be»

Reactions and responses to the AAC came from both the *Yishuv* representatives and the Jewish DPs in Italy. Prior to the arrival of the joint commission in Italy, the official delegate of the Jewish Agency in Italy addressed a memorandum to the AAC: He aimed at stressing that the uncertainty of living in refugee camps entailed sufferings and hardships among the Jewish DPs:

«I see every day people who have parents, sons, brothers, and sisters in Palestine and are anxious to rebuild a familiar centre after that bulk of the family has been destroyed. I see hundreds of young couples in which the joy of the expectancy of a child is clouded by the uncertainty of their chances to reach Palestine before the expected birth. I see hundreds of orphans, 15-18 years old, who entered the era of Nazi persecution when they were 8-12 years old, who had a childhood of horror and have a youth without joy. I see hundreds of families whose children are 10-14 years old and who were unable to attend any school at all: they invoke for their children the right to start a normal life, together with other children, in Palestine. I see sick people whose only hope of recovery is to reach the hospitable house of a relative or a friend in Palestine. Everyone stresses his case and insists upon his right to be in first list of selected emigrants. All have the same hope, all are awaiting with the same eagerness»⁴⁰.

Umberto Nahon appealed for a definitive recognition of the sufferings of the Jews in Europe. «Let all those people reach Palestine and do it soon», concluded the delegate of the Jewish Agency in Italy. These claims were supported personally by other representatives of the Jewish committees and organizations in Italy, who had the chance to debate with the AAC commissioners in a meeting held in Bari. The few information about this encounter was collected by the historian Sergio Minerbi who interviewed Avraham Gollub, who took part at the meeting as member of the *Merkeẓ la-Golah*. According to Minerbi's reconstruction, it

⁴⁰ CAHJP, *Memorandum submitted to the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry on Palestine by Dr. S. U. Nahon – Representative in Italy of the Jewish Agency for Palestine*, Archivio U. S. Nahon P239, File: 14 Missione in Italia di Umberto Nahon rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

appears that representatives of UNRRA, OJRI, the *Merkeẓ la-Golah* and UCII confirmed their support to the Jewish DPs' right to make '*aliyah*, which they seen as the only possible solution to the "Jewish problem"⁴¹.

We do not know whether the above-mentioned delegated committee received an immediate replay by the AAC sub-commission in charge of the investigation in Italy. Nevertheless, the Jewish DPs did not remain silent in the face of the White Paper restrictions nor to the visit of the AAC in Italy. In February 1946, also OJRI prepared a memorandum signed by its president Leo Garfunkel to be submitted to the AAC⁴².

Leo Garfunkel, introducing himself as the spokesperson of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, portrayed in detail the demographic makeup of the Jewish DPs in Italy. He counted approximately 15,000, 20% of whom were the so-called "old refugees", who had reached Italy from the neighbouring countries before hostilities began, whereas 80% of them consisted of the "new refugees", namely those who arrived in Italy after Nazi capitulation. Among these "new refugees", 64% of them came from Poland, 13.5% came from Rumania, 7.5% came from Czechoslovakia, and the remaining 15% from other countries. The new refugees came to Italy either from Germany where they were liberated from various concentration camps after the victory of the Allies, or from other East-European countries (such as Poland, Rumania, Hungary, etc), where they succeeded in fleeing or escaping from the ghettos in the period of German occupation and where they hid until the end of the war. Garfunkel described the community of the Jewish DPs in Italy as «quite abnormal» from the demographical point of view, above all in virtue of the disproportion of sexes: more than 60% were men and less and 40% were women. Moreover, he emphasized the fact that the number of children under 13 years old was remarkably small; that there were almost no old people; and those with families were few. Of the new refugees, none of them had ever lived in Italy before nor had they found any relatives. They were almost all without any occupation since Italy was unable to absorb them in its precarious economy. For these reasons, they were living in DP camps, and 83% was living in *bachsharot*⁴³. Garfunkel remarked:

⁴¹ Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 169-174.

⁴² Garfunkel's memorandum is available in Archives of the Institute for Jewish Research (hereafter, YIVO), *Drafts of report concerning Jewish refugees in Italy by Leo Garfunkel, president of the Central Committee, February 1946*, Folder 242, Roll 20, Frame 363, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 1: Central Committee of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, Sub-series: Organization of the Central Committee; it is also available at the National Library of Israel (hereafter, NL), The Central Committee of the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *Memorandum to the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine submitted by Leon Garfunkel*, (Rome, 1946).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5-7.

«They present, as a whole, an integral part of the so-called «*Sherith Ha-Pletah*» (remnants of European Jewry) who succeeded in escaping from Nazi annihilation. Much of what is said about them here may be applied – *mutatis mutandi* – to Jewish refugees in Germany, Austria, and other countries, too, and vice-versa»⁴⁴.

Garfunkel pointed out that the Jews of Europe were linked by the same fate: they shared the traumatic experience of the persecution, the element that bound together the “surviving remnant” after the war at a transnational level. They categorically declared that they could not remain in Europe in any event despite the collapse of National Socialism:

«This attitude of Jewish refugees is not a result of a temporary and passing atmosphere. It is a very deep-rooted feeling which forms the basis of that difficult and complicated problem of these remnants of Jewry in Europe. The reasons are psychological, national and political»⁴⁵.

The OJRI leader identified three factors that validated and supported the urgent need of the *She'erith Ha-Pleita* to leave Europe. He stressed the point that from the psychological point of view many Jewish refugees had lost their nearest family members and relatives because of the war. «For these people their former homes constituted mass grave-yards», wrote Garfunkel. The small number of Jews remaining alive in various European countries after the Nazi surrender was so small that – according to the memorandum – there were «no perspectives for any national creation or culture there». Continuing to live in Europe, according to Garfunkel:

«[...] their number would after all remain too restricted to display any real national creative potency. There will be no place for Jewish book-publishing, for any Jewish press, for Jewish schools, theatre or sport. The remaining Jewish population would be too small quantitatively and too anaemic in order to have any power to develop any form of Jewish economic life, reciprocal assistance, co-operation, etc., and even to rebuild their former communal, religious and educational institutions. They never will be able to form a factor of importance in the local economy; they will be condemned to miserable vegetation and national decline from the material as well as from the cultural point of view»⁴⁶.

Garfunkel, in examining the second factor - the national one - that prevented the Jews to rebuild anew in Europe, displayed his leadership as well as his ability in political discourse. As he already stated in the opening speech of the First Conference of the Jewish Refugees

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 8-9.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10-12.

in Italy held in November 1945, he highlighted again in this memorandum the impossibility for the Jews to live as a minority in the post-war order. He argued that the whole institution of protection of national minorities and of rights of such minorities has been almost completely destroyed both in its internal form in various countries as well as in the international form. Furthermore, he provocatively questioned how Jews could represent an exception to the tendency to reorganize Europe on the basis that «in one country or region there should live only one nation»⁴⁷.

The third factor cited by Garfunkel behind the urgent need of the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha* to leave Europe was the political one. This was manifested in the hostile attitude towards the Jewish survivors both by the local population and by governments. Garfunkel pointed out that “the Jewish problem in Europe” existed even before the rise of National Socialism or any other forms of totalitarian system, considering anti-Semitism a widespread phenomenon rooted in European society at all levels:

«[...] anti-Semitism takes its roots more from irrational spheres of nation's psychology than from the rational. Anti-Semitism itself, as a phenomenon of public life, belongs in greatest measure not only to the domain of psychology, but also even to that of psychopathology. Anti-Semitism serves as a valve through which human individuals and total groups look for discharging themselves from a certain kind of destructive energy which, being a product of various political and social instincts, oppresses them»⁴⁸.

Garfunkel devoted the central part of his memorandum to the analysis of the European attitude towards the Jews before, during and after the war. Even recognizing that many people helped numerous Jews in saving themselves from persecution sometimes even at risk of their own lives, he advanced the fact that in the most tragic period in the life of European Jewry large masses of local population actively collaborated «with the Swastika in the diabolic work of exterminating Jews». Consequently, if the Jewish refugees went back to their home countries, they would be forced to come in contact «with people whose dark conscience ought to be troubled by those mass murders»⁴⁹.

The memorandum submitted to the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry appealed not only to the «human sentiment», but also to political consciousness. It pointed out that many European governments were still pervaded by anti-Semitic ideology, citing examples from Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland (where in July 1946 occurred the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 12.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 20.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 17-18.

cruellest post-war pogrom)⁵⁰. Garfunkel supported his opinion with the effective observation that in many European countries Jews were not able to recover their property, an obstacle that engraved the economic conditions of the Jews as well as of the Jewish communities⁵¹.

No future for the Jews in Europe was possible according to Garfunkel because no democratic government could eliminate «those tragic symptoms» whose origins were to be found not in a political conjecture but in the structure of the Jewish Diaspora. This condition was defined by the Jewish DPs' leader as the «abnormal situation of the Jewish Nation»:

«The whole complex question which forms the so-called Jewish problem has its origin in the special situation of the Jewish Nation (a situation being unique for this group of people) since it became a nation without territory and without a home to develop its own life in freedom and independence. Jews are, therefore, forced to live as a minority among other majority-nations and to adapt themselves culturally and materially to other strange and often hostile surroundings. Having a very pronounced national individuality, belonging to a nation with historical inheritance, Jews diverse quite strongly from the surrounding population, even if they live among it, and participate in its national life and externally seem assimilated. They remain different in many ways: in their historical past, in their religion, culture, spiritual mentality, social structure and the functions they fulfil in the economy of the country»⁵².

After these arguments - which on the one hand highlighted that there were no conditions for the resettlement of the Jewish DPs in Europe and, on the other hand, pointed out the existence of a well-defined political and national awareness - Garfunkel addressed a rhetorical question to the AAC: «have the Jews a duty to help in the reconstruction of Europe?». It would be unacceptable to expect that the *She'erith Ha-Pletah* «should waste the rest of their strength and nerves in helping to rebuild Germany, Austria, Poland, Hungary, etc., instead of placing themselves at the disposal of their own nation»⁵³.

In the Jewish DPs' view, emigration would be the only means to alleviate their situation and offer them a «better and brighter future». But the great question was «where to?». In his memorandum, Garfunkel explained that Italy was considered by the Jewish DPs only a temporary refuge, from where they would have to make their way further to a place where they would be able «to root deeply and forever in new soil». He called the attention of the Commission to the demoralizing effect of this wandering from place to place for years.

⁵⁰ About the Kielce pogrom see: Pace, *L'impossibile ritorno*.

⁵¹ NL, The Central Committee of the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *Memorandum to the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry on Palestine submitted by Leon Garfunkel*, (Rome, 1946), 23.

⁵² Ibid., 14.

⁵³ Ibid., 26.

In that situation which is extremely hard both from a material and moral point of view, Jewish refugees were sustained only by the hope that their present situation was nothing but a temporary one, and that it did not form but a passage to a new life which will be built on foundations entirely different from those in the past. Once again, the Jewish DPs' leader shed light on the diaspora feature of Jewry, which represented «a classic example of a nation dispersed all over the world». The Jewish people represented also the «oldest people in the family of nations» and were claiming the same right to an independent existence as other nations. In virtue of this, the longed for mass emigration to Palestine would mean the overcoming of the situation of dispersion of the Jewish people:

«The above-mentioned need to concentrate [the Jews in one national territory] comes not only from the national interest of the Jewish Nation as a whole, but also from the interests of single individuals who make up the nation, especially the refugees. [...] The whole question should be seen, however, not only from a Jewish aspect, but also from the non-Jewish one. The attitude of diverse countries, which have been previously suggested countries of immigration, to the problem of a new large Jewish immigration, is questionable. [...] This was expressed most impressively by the complete failure of the Conference in Evian upon the eve of the war as well as of that in Bermuda which took place in war-time: the failure of these conferences occurred in spite of the good will of their initiators»⁵⁴.

The Jewish refugees looked at emigration as the only path possible and saw Palestine as the only country in the world that would be able to receive this large-scale emigration.

In supporting his argument, once again Garfunkel showed off his political abilities, mentioning the preamble to the British Mandate on Palestine, which speaks about the «historical connection» of the Jewish People with Palestine.

As a characteristic illustration of the resolve that leads the Jewish refugees in Italy to go to Palestine, the memorandum revealed that – despite the block of immigration – more than 10,000 DPs had already registered themselves for *'aliyah* in the Palestine Offices in Italy:

«The refugees who came to Italy drifted here because it is the shortest route to Palestine. All those of the Jewish refugees, regarding to their age, have organized into Training Centers (Hachsharot) where they are learning trades as agriculture, carpeting, tailoring, fishing, etc. in preparation to a life of productive work in Palestine. It was for them a great disappointment when they came here, that the gates of Palestine are still closed to them»⁵⁵.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 29-30.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 34.

In the last part of his memorandum, the OJRI's president emphasized the fact that the Jewish displaced persons in Italy were part of the same group of Jews living under similar conditions in such countries as Germany and Austria. Therefore, the statement made by Earl G. Harrison, who some months before the AAC began its mission had visited the Jewish DPs in Germany and Austria on behalf of President Truman, were applicable also to the refugees in Italy. Truman's suggestion to authorize 100,000 immigration certificates to permit immediate entry of Jewish DPs' to Palestine should take into account also the Jewish refugees in Italy.

Garfunkel's words portrayed a group of young people living as refugees in post-war Europe DP camps, waiting hopefully to reach Palestine. Through his memorandum, the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy raised its voice to demand the «broadly opening of the gates of Palestine», calling the attention of the Anglo-American Commission to the fact that '*aliyah* was for the Jewish refugees «a question of life, a question of to be or not to be»⁵⁶.

Italy's geographical position, internal politics, international policy as well as the network created by the emissaries of the *Yishuv*, made the country the major launching point for *Mossad le-'aliyah Bet*'s ship between 1945 and 1948. Against the existing studies on the '*aliyah bet* from Italy, relatively few it is known about the evolution of a national and political consciousness among the Jewish DPs in Italy.

Besides the fundamental support of and encouragement from the external Jewish organizations, the Jewish DPs in post-war Europe were able to mature their own political discourse as well as to delineate their own goals and wishes even before the end of the war. The displacement of the Jewish/Zionist leaders of the Diaspora in the refugee camps of Germany, Austria and Italy represented a fundamental factor that further strengthened social, cultural, political and national bonds among the Jewish DPs. Garfunkel's personal experience as well as the above-examined memorandum, testify to the existence of a decisive leadership among the *She'erith Ha-Pleitha*.

The trauma of the *Schoah*, followed by the post-war displacement in refugee camps, placed the Jewish DPs in a condition of marginality and extraterritoriality. During the three years between the end of World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel, Zionism was the most important element of cohesion for the Jews in refugee camps. This need for an

⁵⁶ Ibid., 37.

ideology grew from the inside of the Jewish DPs, being at the same time constantly fostered from the outside by the *hayalim* and the *shlibim*. As we will see in the following chapters, Zionist spirit dominated the Jewish DPs' life in Italy, but it is not to be intended as a manipulative ideology. Instead, Zionist principles among the Jewish DPs evolved as a consequence both of the *Shoah* and of the effort of the *Yishiv* to direct the Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine.

Part Three

**REHABILITATION AND SELF-GOVERNMENT:
HEALTH, COLLECTIVE LIVING, WORK, EDUCATION AND
RECREATION**

Chapter 6

Health Security among the Jewish DPs in Italy

«The Conditions Are Neither Too Black Nor Too Optimistic»

Towards an International Standard of Health

«Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition. The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States»¹.

Famine and epidemics defy national boundaries and were perceived as a catastrophic threat to public health at a worldwide level. At the end of the War, health security and sanitation appeared as crucial issues in the rehabilitation program for the population damaged by the conflict as well as for the reconstruction of Europe. The main concern was the spread of disease, which represented a definite risk given the uncontrolled mass migrations caused by the war.

As with many other post-war problems, the Allies began considering nutritional, medical and sanitary issues well before the end of the war. Similar to other relief measures adopted by the rescue agencies in Europe, international efforts in the field of health aimed at both immediate solutions and long-term rehabilitation ².

Activity in the health field in Europe was seen and managed as an internationally shared responsibility. The practices adopted became a proving ground for the organization of an international cooperative system that embraced a strategy different in comparison with what happened at the end of World War I. The network of organizations involved in post-WWII

¹ From the Constitution of the World Health Organization, adopted by the International Health Conference held in New York from 19 June to 22 July 1946, signed on 22 July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States and entered into force on 7 April 1948. For the WHO Constitution, see: <http://www.who.int/about/mission/en/> (accessed September 20, 2016).

² Already in September 1941, the British Government had convened representatives of the Allied Governments at St. James Palace in London in order to establish an inter-Allied committee that would estimate the needs to be met after the war. In accordance with its mandate, the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements worked for eighteen months under the supervision of Sir Frederick Leith-Ross arranging for the purchase of surplus commodities and providing a reserve of relief goods. In June 1943, the Leith-Ross Committee reported in Washington on its work and proposed the creation of an international relief agency. By August, a preliminary draft for an agreement to establish the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) had been drawn up and in November 1943, UNRRA became active as an inter-governmental body.

reconstruction approached the sanitary problem not as an emergency, but rather than as a “technical problem”. This new approach led consequently to the creation of specialized institutions in charge of promoting health in the broadest sense of the term. Indeed, the transition from the League of Nations to the United Nations Organization coincided with the foundation of specialized intergovernmental institutions, besides UNRRA. In particular, the foundation of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) marked a turning point in attempting a standardized model of health security³.

Of course, “nutrition and health” were values which moved humanitarianism and – in a broader sense, global governance – well-before the end of World War II. Nevertheless, the extraordinary network of post WWII international aid both emphasized and helped in developing the ideology of food and health security on a worldwide scale.

Since the early twentieth century, humanitarian missions aimed at feeding civilians and preventing famine in zones damaged by conflicts. The extensive cooperation among governmental and non-governmental agencies during the post-war era combined immediate relief with long-term rehabilitation based on planned programs supported by research and investigation. This approach – which reflected the attitude of that time towards the internationalization of social security standards - should be considered not «as a departure point but rather as a turning point», as many recent studies had demonstrated⁴.

The approach to secure health in the post-war era is appropriately summarized by Jessica Reinisch's words:

«Confidence in both planning and relief work was largely fuelled by a conviction in the power of scientific and technocratic solutions to chaos and disorder after war. The search for scientifically informed procedures and policies was of course hardly new. [...] But even if the trend was undoubtedly older, thinking about relief in 1940s was shaped by a new conviction in scientific and technocratic progress, which seemed to distinguish this postwar scenario from the previous ones»⁵.

³ Founded at the end of an international conference which was held in Canada between the 16th of October and the 1st of November 1945, the FAO's main goal was twofold: achieving food security and making agriculture, forestry and fisheries more productive and sustainable. At the same time, the WHO since its establishment in 1946 looked at health as a basic principle for «happiness, harmonious relations and security of all peoples».

⁴ Salvatici Silvia, “Writing the History of Food Security since 1945”, in *Contemporanea. Rivista di Storia dell'800 e del '900*, 3 (2015), 349.

⁵ Reinisch Jessica, “Introduction: Relief in the Aftermath of War”, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, 43, 3 (2008), 382.

Besides trained social workers, the UNRRA mission as well as the other institutions and organizations in Italy, employed a wide-range of specialists and experts in many fields. These professionals conducted preventive investigations on specific issues and recommended *ad hoc* measures and solutions, as well as instructing other personnel⁶.

This scientific approach, combined with the extensive use of penicillin and other new drugs, were among the key reasons that prevented epidemics and famine after WWII, and were among the main features that differed with the approach adopted after WWI.

Only recently, historiography has begun to study the history of the displaced persons in connection with public health⁷. Dealing with the specific case of Jewish DPs in Italy, this analysis takes into account several factors. Indeed, it should be clear that the war had «generated an entirely new category of people in need of relief: the emaciated survivors of the concentration camps»⁸. Starting from this fact, this chapter will depict the relief measures undertaken by international agencies on behalf of the DPs, shedding light on the importance of public health as a fundamental step towards achieving “social security”. Moreover, in analysing the case of the Jewish DPs in Italy, a reflection on the post-War Italian situation shall be included, as well as a focus on the fundamental health and medical programs provided by the Jewish organizations (specifically the JDC) in the country.

Nutrition and Food

Between December 1944 and August 1945, the Nutrition Section of the UNRRA Health Division had already conducted thirty-five nutrition surveys, covering a wide geographic zone that included Southern Italy as well as Central and Northern regions. These activities performed by a specialized UNRRA section had two fundamental purposes. On the one hand, by this kind of assessment operation, the Nutrition Section could gathered epidemiological information on malnutrition. On the other hand, by determining which types of food was required to specifically meet the demonstrated nutritional needs, it was possible to use the results of such surveys as the basis for recommendations that provided guidance to the feeding operations.

⁶ See for example the intervention of the UNRRA Italian Mission's staff in a conference organized in Italy in 1947 about the evolution and the goals of social assistance in Italy: D'Andrea, “Campi profughi”.

⁷ Reinisch, “Displaced Persons and Public Health”; Id. “«Le nazioni hanno bisogno di cittadini sani e coraggiosi»”.

⁸ This expression is borrowed from Reinisch, “Introduction: Relief in the Aftermath of War”, 374.

The surveys conducted by the UNRRA Nutritional Section involved different groups of the Italian population (totalling 4,000 individuals), almost exclusively women and children. The method employed in sample selection followed two scientific principles, already used in other similar surveys. First, pregnant or lactating women as well as children who were experiencing rapid growth spurts were selected as being nutritional stress groups most likely to manifest clinical evidence of malnutrition. Secondly, mothers and children from the lowest socio-economic areas or population groups were selected in order to obtain a weighted sample representative of the worst nutritional situation in a given area. «The UNRRA Health Division has been unable to demonstrate any gross malnutrition», reported the survey. It concluded with a list of common diseases encountered during the investigation, highlighting the «overall positive results»⁹.

No particular diseases linked to malnutrition were noted in Italy, nevertheless: the report prepared by the UNRRA Observer Mission for the UNRRA Council in September 1944 asserted «there is not enough food to feed the people». The “observers” reported the disastrous damage to agricultural and industrial production as well as to the communication system. Based on these considerations, the UNRRA Council approved the Italian Mission, allocating the greatest part of the budget to the feeding program.¹⁰

For these reasons, post-war Italy depended on the international aid for food supplies, whose distribution was regulated by a severe rationing system. Between March 1945 and December 1946, the UNRRA Mission in Italy spent \$195,689,900 for providing food and - in line with the policy to «help the people to help themselves» - launched specific programs for rehabilitating the agricultural and the industrial sectors.

Since UNRRA Italian Mission undertook two different relief programs for the relief of the country and for the assistance to the DPs, even food was supplied according different principles to the Italians and to the DPs. Among the DPs, UNRRA maintained food standards just above the subsistence level, guarantying a daily ration ranging from 2,000 to 2,500 calories. Notwithstanding, the supply of food in the refugee camps was strictly dependent on the availability of food in the country. From the above-depicted circumstances in Italy, it evidently resulted the difficulty in guaranteeing constantly decent food rations to the refugees. The reports about the refugee camps in Italy, showed that the camp committees

⁹ AJDC, *Summary Report on Nutrition Surveys December 1944 - August 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

¹⁰ For an analysis of the UNRRA Observer Mission in Italy, see: Salvatici, “«Not enough food to feed the people»”.

often complained the lack or the quality of the food. At the end of the war the «fight for better food» was a shared condition of both the refugees and the Italians and slightly ameliorated only in the following years.

Health and Prevention

The lack of adequate sanitary conditions, the deprivation and starvation during the years of the war were among the main causes of the spread of infectious diseases. In particular, tuberculosis, malaria and venereal diseases were the main plagues of post-war Europe. Other widespread diseases were typhus, dysentery and polio.

Certainly, mass migration after the war increased the dissemination of disease, but there were also other factors encouraging the circulation of particular diseases. In the case of Italy, tuberculosis and malaria were widespread even before the war, being annihilated only at the end of the 1950's.

The fight against tuberculosis and malaria was among the programmatic and propagandistic goals of Fascism. In fact, between the end of the twenties and the forties, insurance against tuberculosis was compulsory in Italy and several facilities were established specifically to treat this particular disease. Throughout the country, there were dispensaries and clinics for diagnosis of tuberculosis, sanatoria for treating the less critical cases as well as facilities for care of the most serious cases, located usually in isolated, wild and pure areas. Moreover, these sanitary and medical activities were combined with the promotion of land reclamation projects. Although these actions aimed at improving the agricultural and chemical sectors rather than directly ameliorating the health situation, they undoubtedly had a positive effect on the public health and the reduction of malaria. Fascism did not completely overcome these sanitary problems, but the measures adopted during those years were crucial and resulted in a perceptible reduction of both tuberculosis and malaria.

Nevertheless, in analysing the post-war sanitary emergency in Italy, several factors should be emphasized. First, the war in Italy destroyed hospitals, clinics and other medical infrastructure and led to an abrupt cessation of the above preventive measures and care of patients. Secondly, the disastrous socio-economic conditions made post-war Italy strictly subject to the policy of the international aid organizations. Furthermore, the influx of refugees into Italy worsened the country's already precarious situation, thus making it more difficult to carry out remedial actions.

Between 1943 and 1944, while Italy was split in two from the military and political points of view, it was divided into «three Italies» from the sanitary point of view¹¹. The expression is borrowed from the Italian historian Saverio Luzzi, who distinguished three areas – Sicily, the Kingdom of Southern Italy and the Italian Social Republic – where different institutions were in charge of public health after Allies' arrival¹². The decentralization of Italian health administration as well as the post-war logistical problems slowed down the organization of sanitary and medical help by international institutions, such as the International Red Cross and then by UNRRA.

From the second half of 1943, Italy was characterized by large-scale population movement, both of Italian and non-Italian citizens. Thus, at least until the end of 1945, international health care aid aimed at immediate relief measures in order to contain as much as possible the threat of epidemics. The UNRRA activities in the medical and sanitary field should be considered within a wider and deeper involvement that addressed the entire European population, rather than only particular groups. While the uprooted exiled refugees in assembly centers received specific treatments in virtue of their high mobility across the borders, international efforts tended toward the gradual “normalization” of health and sanitary conditions as a whole in post-war Europe. Moreover, in order to better understand the condition of the refugees, it appears necessary to look also at the condition of the countries where they found temporary accommodation. Thus, it would be essential to think at the above-mentioned measures launched the UNRRA Italian Mission has advantage not only for Italians, who would continued to live in the Italy. Eliminating the risk of spreading diseases was convenient also for the refugees, who were just temporarily living in Italy, as well as for the countries they would continued to cross before repatriation or resettlement. Between 1945 and the first half of 1946, UNRRA supplied Italy with drugs, including 25.000.000 units of zine insulin crystal, 100,000 doses of anti-plague vaccine, large quantities of DDT powder and penicillin, cloth for sewing operating gowns for Italian surgeons and 50 ambulances.

UNRRA's health teams were engaged in 1945 primarily in the battle against malaria and other epidemic diseases in Italy as well as in the distribution of UNRRA medical supplies through the Italian Government. Outstanding among the activities of the UNRRA Health Division

¹¹ Luzzi Saverio, *Salute e sanità nell'Italia repubblicana*, (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2014), 109.

¹² About the administration of public health in Sicily see Luzzi, *Salute*, 104-105; whereas about public health in the Kingdom of Southern Italy and Italian Social Republic, see Luzzi, *Salute*, 109-113.

was the large-scale programme of malaria control undertaken beginning in February 1945 in Sicily, Sardinia and on the Italian mainland. By May 1945 – i.e. within three months from the beginning of the UNRRA mission in Italy – approximately 150,000,000 square feet of wall surface had been treated with DDT to prevent malaria spread¹³.

Even the access to international health care was regulated by the binary system of eligibility/ineligibility which was dependent mainly on the DP's nationality. Since sound personal health was a fundamental prerequisite for resettlement, it was a shared goal of all the refugee agencies operating on behalf of the DPs, whose aim was the cessation of mass civilian migrations as soon as possible. As proved by the extensive archival collection of the International Tracing Service¹⁴, the DPs who did not obtain a certificate of good health were denied resettlement. They thus became «hard-core cases», i.e. those refugees for whom no permanent resettlement solution was found even for many years after the end of the war, and they therefore continued to need international aid. .

Even in this field, the sources showed a great cooperation among the institutions involved in rescuing the DPs in Italy. The first international mission totally committed to provide medical helps on Italian soil was that of the Red Cross, which – at least until the late 1944 – was the only one approved by the SHAEF. It was followed by the intervention of the United Nations, with the official beginning of UNRRA Mission in Italy between 1945 and mid-1947. From that moment, the UN appointed IRO for taking care of the refugee problem until 1951.

If UNRRA health program had the twofold goal of rehabilitating both the DPs and the Italian sanitary situation, IRO devoted its program exclusively to the refugees. When IRO began its mission in Italy, the immediate urgency of medical assistance were successfully met by UNRRA and the military authorities. According the official history of IRO, the program it inherited from UNRRA was comprehensive. Housing and sanitation standards were established; nutrition and health policy were closely coordinated, and special diets were available for certain medical categories. Medical nursing and dental services were established in assembly centers staffed by qualified personnel among whom refugees. Elaborate measures for the control of infectious diseases were put into practice, including notification,

¹³ WL, M 317/S36, UNRRA (ed. by), *Unrra in Italy*, (European Regional Office: London, 1946), 5 and 10-11

¹⁴ In particular, see the personal files in ITS, Series 3: Registrations and Files of Displaced Persons, Children and Missing Persons.

quarantine, and hospitalization. Special clinic existed for maternal, infant, and child welfare services for cases of tuberculosis and of venereal diseases¹⁵.

Nevertheless, though the high standard reached by international medical assistance to the DPs at the end of WWII, the situation was different in each camp and assembly center. Many factors influenced the fulfilment of the international health program, which prevented at the same time to depict a generalized frame of the DP's health situation. Obviously, it depended to a great extent on availability of supplies as well as the employment of experienced and qualified personnel. Often, both the refugees and the staff of the international organization involved in assisting the DPs complained the lack of supplies and of personnel too. In this case, the cooperation with the voluntary organizations was fundamental in guaranteeing the possibility to find other channel to collect medical supplies and employed specialized personnel. Furthermore, in order to solve the problem related to the lack of medical staff, IRO relied greatly upon the services of the DPs themselves. In the first year of the operation, more than 2,500 refugee physicians and 2,000 refugee nurses collaborated with a small staff of IRO medical personnel¹⁶.

Others obstacles to the success of the health and sanitation standards in each refugee camps were related to overcrowding. The dangers of overcrowding were mitigated by some precautions, such as a generous application of DDT. This practise often occurred in refugee camps and assembly centers in Italy, where the DPs should obtain the "FFI" stamp (Free From Infection) on their ID cards. In fact, besides the later discovered injurious effect of the DDT, undoubtedly its use tended to eliminate its most blatant effects rather than its actual causes¹⁷. Moreover, difficulties arose even from the refugees' attitude itself. Ordinances about immunization or sanitation were very unpopular and often «the more ignorant or prejudiced» refused to participate to the health program¹⁸.

In consequence, it is difficult to assess the work done by the refugee agencies in term of statistics as well as it is quite impossible to deduce an uniform and constant analysis of the situation of the DPs in each camp.

¹⁵ Holborn, *International Refugee Organisation*, 239.

¹⁶ Ibid., 238-245.

¹⁷ The toxicity of the DDT was proved first in 1962 by the US biologist Rachel L. Carson, whose book became a fundamental text for the new environmental studies, see Carson Rachel L., *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1962).

¹⁸ Holborn, *International Refugee Organisation*, 245.

JDC Medical Program among the Jewish DPs in Italy

In general, the role of both UNRRA and IRO could be fully grasped only by looking at the other organizations involved in the management of the DPs' emergency. In fact, the cooperation of the voluntary agencies was important and – in the case of the Jewish DPs in Italy – the medical assistance provided by the JDC was essential.

The JDC already had a central Health Division, but - with the arrival of a new wave of Jewish refugees in 1945 - the Italian mission highlighted to the central bureau the need to constitute a further medical committee:

«Due to the need for medical supplies and some form of medical attention to the refugees who came from the concentration camps, our office has recently organised a medical committee, headed by Dr. Chaim Finkelstein of Kaunas, Lithuania»¹⁹.

In the same period, during the first conference held by the Jewish DPs in Italy, the newly constituted OJRI decided to establish an Organization of the Jewish Refugee-Physicians in Italy. It would employ doctors and nurses among the Jewish DPs themselves, providing further medical assistance through the activities of the OJRI Health Department, headed by Dr. E. Amscibowski²⁰.

Between 1945 and 1951, JDC worked together with UNRRA and IRO with the purpose of guarantying medical care and in providing sanitary measures to the Jewish DPs in the refugees camps. Moreover, they cooperated in investigating about problems of diet and nutrition and in assisting in sanitarian issues. The JDC could assisted only those declared eligible according to the UN policy. It provided supplementary food, drugs and equipment for special cases of chronic illnesses, pregnant women, nursing mothers, infants and children²¹.

A general impression about DPs' health conditions' in Italy arose from the examination of the JDC medical reports. In general, JDC delegates' complains were related to the above-mentioned difficulties: lack of supplies or personnel, overcrowding and unwillingness of the refugees to comply with sanitation rules. Nevertheless, the situation in Italian DP camps or

¹⁹ AJCD, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brock to American Joint Distribution Committee, Subject: Report of Medical Committee, November 21, 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

²⁰ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Protokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

²¹ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J. M. Shapira to Mr. J. L. Trobe, Subject: Monthly Report for September, October 15, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

bachsharot was never depicted as a tragic one, though it was complicated to solve the problems related to these obstacles. Indeed, in several reports the JDC delegates praised the strict collaboration with UNRRA, even though in many others they highlighted the deficiency of the UNRRA medical programs²².

The nature of the Jewish displacement in Italy - characterized by a high mobility of the DPs and by their distribution in several areas of the country – prevented a systematic examination of the health conditions both geographically and chronologically. The results shown below intended to offer a general idea of the management of the health and sanitary problems as well as of the attitude of the refugee agencies (mainly, the JDC) to the issue of the health security among the Jewish DPs in Italy.

It is evident the JDC Health Division distinguished three main areas as well as three kind of structures where it provided and supported the medical care. From the geographical and administrative point of views, there were the «Southern Italian Camps» which included the four UNRRA camps in Lecce province and the Bari area; the «Rome Area», which included above all the *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim* in Rome vicinity; and, the «Northern Area» by which the JDC Health Division delegates meant a wider zone that referred to all the refugee camps, assembly centers, kibbutzim and *hachcharot* in Lombardy, Tuscany and Piedmont. JDC supplied medical care in the DP camps, the *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim* and opened also some special clinics throughout Italy. The formers were equipped with ambulatories, doctors and nurses by the JDC in agreement with UNRRA and IRO; instead, the special clinics and the convalescent homes were completely financed and administered by the JDC²³. One of the first detailed information about the medical conditions of the Jewish DPs in Italian refugee camps was signed by Dr. Finkelstein, of the JDC Health Division²⁴.

Southern Region

During his four-days trip, he focused on the UNRRA Southern Italian Camps by providing a realistic report of the health and sanitarian situations in the area where most of the Jewish DPs were gathered in 1945-1946. He began his report by stressing

²² AJDC, *Italy, Medical 1945-1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

²³ In particular, see: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Medical - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7.

²⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ch. Finkelstein to For Distribution, Subject: Report on Trip to the Unrra Southern Italy Camps, April 1, 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

«the fact that all the people are living in camps and keeping this in mind we will see the conditions are neither too black nor too optimistic. We also do not want to look at them through a microscope so that tiny things might turn out as mountains»²⁵.

According to the information collected by Dr. Finkelstein no special problem related to social diseases were registered among the Jewish DPs in the Italian camps administered by UNRRA in 1945. He referred to the camps in the Southern Region, furnishing some information about how the medical situation was managed locally in the first half of 1945²⁶.

Finkelstein reported about the 2200 displaced persons who in 1945 were living in the UNRRA Camp n. 34 at Santa Maria al Bagno and were cared for by four doctors and one dentist.

«I saw many of the sick and talked to them for a little while. Most of them are not seriously sick. They are suffering from such skin-diseases as scabies, dermatitis, furunculosis, etc. The ambulatorium looks very clean and treatment seems to be very good»²⁷.

The chief of the sanitary team was Dr. Nacht, defined by Finkelstein as «an experienced physician, who does his best to improve the health conditions of his camp». Santa Maria al Bagno Camp had one hospital - equipped with 35 beds and where only light and intern cases were accepted - and one ambulatory, which was visited by forty to sixty persons a day²⁸.

Five doctors looked after the 1800 refugees – 1400 Jews and 400 non-Jews - in Santa Maria di Leuca, where there were an ambulatory and a hospital. The ambulatory was similar to the one in Santa Maria al Bagno, used only for light cases (especially diseases that might be considered as consequences of scabies). The hospital in Leuca created a «good impression» to the JDC delegate: « [it] is very well equipped and the camps inmates are well satisfied. A good gynaecologist assists and treats all pregnant women who are sent to him»²⁹. The hospital in Leuca opened by the Allies in the early 1944 at the former Colonia Marina (Summer Camp) “Scarciglia”. Until the closure of the UNRRA DP camps in Lecce province, it represented the main hospital unit for the displaced persons in that area. According to the oral testimonies, the staff of the hospital in Leuca consisted of international personnel

²⁵ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ch. Finkelstein to For Distribution, Subject: Report on Trip to the Unrra Southern Italy Camps, April 1, 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

employed by the military authorities, UNRRA personnel, local Italian personnel (first of all the nuns of the Congregation of the Sacred Heart) and displaced persons as well³⁰.

During spring 1945, Tricase UNRRA Camp accommodated 700 refugees cared for by two doctors in an ambulatory «which makes a rather poor impression». There was no hospital and sick people were being sent either to Santa Maria al Bagno or to Santa Maria di Leuca, but «in the near future a room for slightly sick people is being built, where they can stay for a few days». The ambulatory visited by about 30 people per day, most of them suffering from skin diseases; whereas no case of tuberculosis were registered in Tricase camp³¹.

In Santa Cesarea, there were two doctors, one ambulatory, a hospital and a dentist for 1100 refugees. The 35-bed hospital did not make a good impression to Dr. Finkelstein, as it did not seem to be as efficient as those in Santa Maria di Leuca and Santa Maria al Bagno: «it is dirty, the walls are not clean, no bed tables, no bathing tub etc. The sanitation of the hospital is very bad»³².

In general, between 1945 and 1946, in the southern UNRRA camps there were few cases of ascertain venereal diseases and the situation was considered under control. The local sanitary team confirmed sporadic cases of syphilis and gonorrhoea in each of the UNRRA Southern Camps, except from that in Santa Cesarea. Furthermore, of a population of 6,100, there were only 6 displaced persons who suffered from tuberculosis: 4 cases in Santa Maria al Bagno and 2 in Santa Maria di Leuca. Dr. Finkelstein informed the Central Offices of the JDC about the TBC preventive measures adopted in the UNRRA camps. In that area, sick persons who were supposed to have TBC were being sent as soon as they was discovered to the hospital, being observed for a certain period. For this purpose, the hospital in Santa Maria di Leuca had an isolation ward for people who were supposed to have tuberculosis. The sick were carefully visited - «their blood is being controlled and temperature is being taken» specified Dr. Finkelstein in his report – and, if active TBC was found, they were sent to Lecce sanatorium. Nevertheless, though Finkelstein's investigation did not show any particular concern about the TBC infection, he expressed several doubts about the way of

³⁰ See the personal testimony of Padre Anselmo Raguso about the displaced persons arrival in Santa Maria di Leuca: Raguso Anselmo, “Cronaca del Convento e Parrocchia di Cristo Re – Marina di Leuca”, in Leuzzi Vito Antonio (ed. by), *La Puglia dell'accoglienza. Profughi, rifugiati e rimpatriati nel Novecento*, (Bari: Progedit, 2006), 319-327; Renzo Chiara, “Aprite le porte. I profughi ebrei nei campi di transito del Salento, 1944-1947”, (MA Dissertation, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, February 2013), 88.

³¹ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ch. Finkelstein to For Distribution, Subject: Report on Trip to the Unrra Southern Italy Camps, April 1, 1945*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

³² Ibid.

acting TBC control among the DPs, above all in Santa Maria di Leuca. In fact, a general examination by X-rays had already been taken place and the related report showed that 60 people were suspected to have TBC and one or two were supposed to have active tuberculosis. Those 60 people were asked to go to the hospital for a second visit, but only a very small percentage appeared:

«They were invited once more but nobody came. It is not possible to compel the people to come. I talked with the committee about this question and explained to them the consequences of this way of acting. They promised to exert all the authority in persuading the people to go to the doctor. Therefore there seems to be some TBC amongst the people, but it is not the fault of the doctors that they are not yet found but rather the committee which does not exert all its influence on the people for being visited medically»³³.

It is interesting to note that according to Finkelstein's report, the hesitation of the Jewish DPs towards the medical measures in the camps depended also on a trauma related to the wartime:

«During my discussion with the committee I found out that the people do not want to be inoculated and that they do not come for the medical control. This has its reasons in reminiscences of the concentration camps and people are still suspicious. Therefore I propose that the Joint send a doctor down to the camps who shall give lessons which easily can be understood and explanations so that the factor of suspicion can be eliminated»³⁴.

In line with the medical approach of those years, Dr. Finkelstein urged the local medical committee to combine the practical work with an extensive action aimed at informing the DPs about the prevention, control and care for social diseases.

The Bari area which – according to the JDC Health Division was included in the Southern Camps – represented a particular case, since already in 1945 combined Jewish DPs living in transit camps, *bachsharot* and in the town of Bari.

During spring 1945, 1,400 Jewish refugees lived in the area of Bari: 900 of them in town and the others were organized in *bachsharot*. Dr. Orenstein – employed by the JDC – was taking care of the sick people in an ambulatory that treated 4 to 5 persons per day. There were also a «Jewish hospital for refugees» that – according to Dr. Finkelstein evaluation – was not necessary, since «the 900 refugees are economically quite well off, [...] all the others are self-

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

supporting and in the case of illness they have the possibility of being treated in the clinic of the University». Moreover, no extra hospital was needed in Bari since also people who needed to receive medical treatment could find shelter in Santa Maria di Leuca, where the hospital corresponded to any requirements. Nevertheless, according to the delegate of the JDC Medical Department, a medical inspection room with 20 beds should be established for the *bachsharot* to be used only for light cases. Finkelstein suggested a medical student who could work as assistant to Dr. Orenstein and who in turn would visit three times a week³⁵.

Rome Area and Northern Region

In cooperation with UNRRA, the JDC established three sanitary districts in Rome, which during summer 1946 hosted a population of about 3,000 refugees. In the Northern Region, sanitary and medical service improved only at the end of 1946, when the JDC divided the area in three districts for the purpose of sanitary supervision. The first one included Milan area, the second one referred to Turin area and the third to those outside of these areas.

Both for the Rome Area and the Northern Region, each districts was provided with a well equipped dispensary with a physician and a nurse attached. Moreover, since many Jewish DPs in central and northern Italy were organized in *bachsharot*, full or part time physicians were employed, who either lived there or visit the places periodically. The doctors also visited the *bachsharot* to attend the sick patients; the nurse likewise visited the places, selected the cases for the dispensary and supervised the local first aid station, for which she trained nurse-aids. The nurse was also in charge of control the cleanliness of the rooms, kitchen, laundry, etc; to select and follow up cases for special clinics (prenatal, infant and child care, gynaecological), which were held once a week by specialists in their respective fields³⁶.

The JDC guaranteed medical services, equipment and drugs to the Italian³⁷ as well as non-Italian Jews who lived in towns. There were two main urban centers: Milan and Rome.

In Milan, the JDC created a dispensary in Via Unione 5, headed by Dr. Welf with the help of a nurse. Similarly, in Rome the JDC created a dispensary at the Jewish Hospital – headed by Dr. Rechnitzer with Miss Weiss as nurse in attendance – which served mostly the town refugees. «The question of the Jewish Hospital in Rome» soon became part of the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J.M. Shapiro to Mr. J. L. Trobe, September 9, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

³⁷ In general, the Italian Jews were cared for Italian Jewish doctors or private physicians and local hospitals served them AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J. M. Shapira to Mr. J. L. Trobe, Subject: Monthly Report for September, October 15, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

reconstruction plan of the JDC. It derived from a Jewish Charity of the seventieth century, which aimed at providing a minimum health care to the Jewish population of Rome, whose life in the ghetto prevented them access to hospitals. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, care and support for the Jewish Hospital of Rome was bolstered by a network of Jewish associations and confraternities. Obviously, the war did not spare this Hospital. Thus, the JDC mission in Italy in its attempt to rehabilitate the local Jewish institutions worked towards the restoration of the most important Jewish medical institution in Italy. After one year since the liberation of Rome, the Hospital was in bad condition above all from the administrative point of view. It was crowded, the service rooms were in the same corridor as the patient's rooms, the dispensary was on the same floor as the wards, and there were no waiting room for visitors nor recreational room. The JDC delegate in charge of the report thus described what he had seen:

«The present condition and service is far from satisfactory, and it seems that some radical change will have to be made to improve the situation. [...] The place is noisy and generally does not give the impression of a hospital. The administration is not abreast of modern methods of running a hospital».

According to the JDC delegate, the hospital should be completely reorganized both as equipment and as management. The JDC employed additional staff at the hospital and planned to add also a refugee surgeon since «there has been a great demand for such service»³⁸.

Hachsharot & Kibbutzim³⁹

Already in November 1945, there were about 3,200 Jewish DPs organized in 26 *kibbutzim* and *hachsharot*. The number of the members in each installation varied from 50 to 200, but «medical assistance in the *kibbutzim*, especially in the smaller ones are unsatisfactory». The main problem reported by the JDC delegates were the lack of medical personnel as well as of pharmacies where the *kibbutzim* and the *hachsharot* were located, which would guaranteed first aid supplies.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ The use of the terms *kibbutz* and *hachsharah* in the archival sources of JDC is often interchangeable. Both refers to installations where the Jewish DPs in Italy trained themselves for emigration to Palestine. See: Chapter 7.

The situation depicted about the health conditions within these installations in Italy was worrisome:

«There are a quite number of persons who have chronic sickness who become a burden on the Kibbutz. There is no one to take care of them or to attend to their needs. They are without any medical help in rather difficult conditions. Now with winter approaching the situation is more serious as in most cases, there is no heating in the kibbutzim».

According to JDC investigations, in the first months after the end of the war there were already 60-70 Jewish DPs in *kibbutzim* suffering from consumption and about 30 from syphilis. Furthermore, there were a non-specified number of DPs who were suffering from heart disease, anaemia, rheumatism and other illness that need medical treatment⁴⁰.

Between 1946 and 1947 the number of Jewish displaced persons who lived in *hachsharot* had reached the peak: there were approximatively 7,500 non-Italian Jews in more than 60 *hachsharot* scattered throughout Italy. The DPs were organized in groups of 75 up to 150 people, in several areas which included mainly Bari, Rome, Florence, Milan and Turin. Because of the fact that often these structures were isolated, providing medical service continued to be rather complicated⁴¹.

Because of his particular circumstances, all matters pertaining to sanitary installations and equipment was being attended to by specialized sections of the JDC, i.e. the Hachsharot Department and the Sanitary Department⁴².

In October 1946, in the Bari area with a population of about 500 Jewish DPs, the health and medical care was responsibility both of UNRRA and the JDC. In particular, Dr. Purer was the physician in charge of the five *hachsharot* in that area⁴³.

Even though «under control», the *hachsharot* near Turin, Milan and Florence (the Northern Area) were those which met the main obstacles in obtaining adequate medical services because of their isolated position. Nevertheless, the JDC and UNRRA supplied local small dispensaries in each hachsharah, where either the presence of a full or part time doctors was guaranteed with many difficulties.

In the same period, the medical supervision in the Rome area was carried out by three sanitary inspectors, each attached to a district and responsible to Headquarter Medical Officer. Even

⁴⁰ AJDC, *Medical Report, November 21, 1945* NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁴¹ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J. M. Shapiro to Mr. J. L. Trobe, Subject: Monthly Report for September, October 15, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

the *bachsharot* nearby Rome were a shared responsibility of the JDC and UNRRA. In particular, JDC and UNRRA employed full or part time physicians for the *bachsharot* in Anzio (Dr. Alpert Abraham, JDC), Monte Mario (Dr. Rosenzweig, JDC), Ostia (Dr. Donati, UNRRA), Ladispoli (Dr. Verona, UNRRA), Galliciano (Dr. Bongiovanni, UNRRA), Soriano nel Cimino (Dr. Vinciguerra, UNRRA) and Bagnaia (Dr. Bacalcheca, UNRRA). Moreover, Dr. Silberstein was in charge by Unrra and the JDC of the child welfare clinic at Grottaferrata and Castel Gandolfo; whereas the JDC attached two additional specialists: Dr. Rubinstein who attended to clinics in « diseased to the Hachsharah in Ostia and Dr. Dlugi Hitsz, a part time physician attending to clinics in gynaecology for all the *bachsharot* in Rome area. Patients from the *bachsharot* nearby Rome referred to the Jewish Hospital or to the Italian hospitals in Rome district⁴⁴.

Convalescent Homes & Special Clinics

Moreover, JDC Medical Department devoted special attention also to those DPs who need convalescent cares. In September 1946, a report about the JDC medical program for Italy, informed about the existence of four convalescent homes. Except from the one in Rome catered for cases in need of rest and special dietary treatments, the other ones were located far from urban centers, often in places surrounded by nature. In particular, there was a convalescent home for special dietary treatment in Arona (in Novara province, Piedmont). When the facilities was temporary closed for repair between the end of 1946 and the beginning of 1947, the patients were sent to a private rest home located in Chiavari (near Genoa). From a report related to that field trip, it emerged even that «patients enjoyed excellent care and were very unhappy when their cure period terminated»⁴⁵.

Moreover, the JDC opened an invalid's home in San Damaso (near Modena, Emilia-Romagna) for cases of amputations, contractures and paralysis; and a center which accommodated cases of rheumatism and kindred affection in Aquì Terme (Piedmont) as well as several camps, infant's, children's and prenatal specialists visited once a week in camps and *bachsharot*⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ AJDC, *Letter from Fanny Golub, to Public Health Nursing Department, Subject: Report on Activities for Past Six Months, June 6, 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / .

⁴⁶ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J. M. Shapiro to Mr. J. L. Trobe, Subject: Monthly Report for September, October 15, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651; AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

Dental Care Program

UNRRA was in charge of providing dental care to the DPs as part of its health program, whereas in the *bachsharot* it was a shared responsibility both by UNRRA and the JDC. The method for obtaining dental care was quite rigid for the refugees. Only patients who had been authorized by the UNRRA Medical Officer or the JDC Medical Department were treated. Then, the dentist prepared diagnosis and estimated the cost that would be approved once again by UNRRA or JDC. Finally, once the treatment was concluded, the patients signed a statement to indicate that the service was completed to her/his satisfaction⁴⁷.

The JDC efforts to improve such service was fundamental by virtue of the UNRRA budgeting and personnel limitations. In a specific report on the dental care program in Italy, Dr. Ast - in charge of furnishing information to the JDC central bureau about the problem – wrote:

«While no survey of the dental needs of displaced persons in Italy has been made, it is reasonable to assume that these persons present the same defects as are found among displaced persons in Germany since they originate from the same areas and have experienced the same environmental hardships. A survey of the needs among displaced persons in Germany indicate that almost 100% require some dental care. Between the ages of the 16 and 30, approximately 30% require prosthesis and in the 15 thru 50 year-old group, 36% (31-50 it is 61%) require some form of prosthesis»⁴⁸.

It is interesting to note a particular recommendation made by the JDC delegate in charge of investigate and suggest how to improve the dental care program for Italy:

«Especially in Italy is it important for those requiring dental restorations to receive them as quickly as possible since the movement of population is quite fluid»⁴⁹.

In fact, though the budgetary question could be overcome by the JDC support, the main problems related to the supply of dental care were the difficult to coordinate the medical operation with the population movements and the «dearth of Jewish dentists in Italy»⁵⁰.

As for the Jewish DPs in Austria and Germany, even in Italy the JDC adopted a priority formula in order to provide adequate care. Even though JDC suggested that the DPs should be treated as a whole, the «magnitude of the problem» led the JDC Medical Department to

⁴⁷ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ast to Dr. J. Shapiro, Subject: Review of Dental Care Program, Italy, November 7, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy, Central Committee to Mr. J. Trobe, Subject: Dental Service, July 30, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

provide dental care first to three groups of DPs. Thus, priority was guaranteed to «Aliyah groups» - which included children, adolescents and young adults – as well as adolescents and young adults who were about to be resettled in countries other than Palestine. In this way, «when they reach their new homes they will not be prevented from becoming self-sustaining because of dental defects». Special attention was devoted also to those children «not designated as Aliyah nor scheduled for emigration in immediate future». A long-range program of periodic examinations and dental care was instituted by the JDC. Finally, also the older adults «who required bridges and plates to help them to properly masticate their food» were classified as a priority group⁵¹.

This evaluation was confirmed also in the results of a JDC investigations among the Jewish DPs in Italy. In the southern camps of Santa Maria al Bagno, Santa Maria di Leuca, Santa Cesarea Terme and Tricase, UNRRA employed a full-time dentist in each camp. Nevertheless, the situation depicted by the JDC delegate to the JDC Director in Italy was discouraging:

«The dental service in general is both inadequate and unsatisfactory. It is difficult to determine training qualifications of dentists employed but my observations indicate that they are not well qualified»⁵².

A dental clinic was opened also in ViaUnione in Milan, headed by a part-time dentist employed by the JDC. He served the local Jewish community, the displaced persons in transit passing through ViaUnione itself or the *bachsharot* in the immediate vicinity of Milan. In ViaUnione, approximatively 35 patients a day were treated and there were also a dental laboratory with two technicians and 4 apprentices⁵³.

Scuola Cadorna – a UNRRA Transit Camp – had an UNRRA dentist as well as a dental laboratory with a full-time technician. Moreover, the Scuola Cadorna could count on the Italian University Policlinic in Milan.

In the *bachsharah* in Tradate - numbering a population of about 500 DPs – the JDC guaranteed the presence of a dentist as well as a laboratory, which at the end of 1946 was almost dismantled.

⁵¹ AJDC, *Dental Care Program for Austria, Germany and Italy*, June 2, 1947, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ast to Dr. J. Shapiro, Subject: Review of Dental Care Program, Italy*, November 7, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁵² AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ast to Dr. J. Shapiro, Subject: Review of Dental Care Program, Italy*, November 7, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁵³ Ibid.; AJDC, *Letter from Dr. David B. to Dr. Maurice Keplan, Subject: Field Trip Italy*, October 9, 1947, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

In Rome area, it appeared that in November 1946 the dental care system was well-structured. There were two types of programs: the «camp program» managed by UNRRA and the «Hachsharot program», in which JDC employed a private dentist⁵⁴.

In general, assistance provided to the Jewish refugees in this field remained unsatisfactory. On the 30th of July 1946, Dr. E. Amscibowski - Chief of the OJRI Health Section – wrote to J. Trobe, JDC Director for Italy:

«Although a certain work has already been done in this area, one must recognize, however, that the scale of the assistance given until now is not sufficient at all, especially in view of the fact that according to our estimation not less than 50% of the Jewish refugees here need that kind of help. Besides, we should like to point out that according to our information about a half of the refugees who already left Italy emigrating to other countries did not have possibility to cure their teeth before leaving»⁵⁵.

The Hard Core Cases: «We Must Get Them Out of Italy»

Approximately, one year after the end of the war, the JDC managed to open a TBC Home in Merano (Bolzen province), at the Italian border with Austria. It was officially inaugurated on the 6th of October 1946 through the financial support of the JDC, the Central British Fund and the South African War Appeal as well as the «affection and friendship of the Italian people», as it was written on the plaque at the Sanatorium entrance⁵⁶.

Dr. Sydney Gottlieb became the medical superintendent at the TBC Home in Merano. In 1938, he emigrated from South Africa to England, where he graduated in Medicine at the Liverpool University. Gottlieb joined the Royal Army Medical Force, and thanks to his expertise in chest medicine he was in charge to deal with tuberculosis.

One week after the opening, in his first report on the Merano Sanatorium, Dr. Gottlieb thus described the structure:

«The building [...] has an attractive appearance with spacious and airy terrace leading out from the ward and overlooking the lawn just been laid. On the edge of the lawn is situated a synagogue.

[...] in the Merano Sanatorium we have a first-class, modern sanatorium, adequately equipped to cope with at least 120 patients. The conditions of work are above the

⁵⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. Ast to Dr. J. Shapiro, Subject: Review of Dental Care Program, Italy, November 7, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁵⁵ AJDC, *Letter from Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy, Central Committee to Mr. J. Trobe, Subject: Dental Service, July 30, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁵⁶ WL, Photo Archives, Henriques Collection, box 29, *Album Merano, Italy*.

average and the standard of the personnel is good. There is every material reason why the Merano Sanatorium should become the pride of the AJDC»⁵⁷.

For its geographical position as well as for being a medical center of excellence, Merano Sanatorium admitted Jewish TBC patients from Italy, Austria, Germany and – since 1948 – also from North Africa⁵⁸. Thus, it was not being considered as part of the Italian program except for administrative purposes⁵⁹.

Before the establishment of the Sanatorium in Merano, the Jewish DPs who suffered of TBC were cared for in Italian public and private sanatoria. In October 1946, the UNRRA DP Division informed its branches and DP Field Supervisors in Milan, Lecce, Cinecittà and Bari that «a Sanitarium for the treatment of tuberculosis among the Jewish displaced persons, under the auspices of the American Joint Distribution Committee, is being established in Merano». It would be ready to admit patients for treatment since October 20, 1946 with fifty beds reserved to Jewish DPs living in Italy and already assisted by UNRRA⁶⁰.

According to UNRRA, priority in selecting cases for admission would have been agreed to patients with active TB as evidenced by clinical findings, to those with minimal or moderately advanced TB but excluding patients with advanced TB. Preference would have been given to patients up to 25 years of age as well as to those who could not receive accommodation in the accepted sanatoria in Italy or those who are hospitalized in unsatisfactory hostels⁶¹.

In the early 1948, the JDC faced with the problem regarding the TB children in camps. In fact, Italian private sanatorium refused to accept children, with the exception of the Garbagnate Sanatorium (near Milan), at that time overcrowded. They were temporarily accommodated in the Convalescent Home at Arona (Piedmont), where the JDC had arranged a TB department. Thus, in order to handle with this emergency, the JDC set up a part of the Merano Sanatorium to accommodate TB children⁶².

⁵⁷ AJDC, *Report on Merano Sanatorium, October 14, 1946*, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Medical - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7.

⁵⁸ AJDC, *Memorandum from William M. Schmidt to Personnel Department, Re: Replacement for Dr. Gottlieb Merano Sanatorium, Italy, November 26, 1948*, Reference Code G 45-54 / 3 / 10 / SM.605, Full Reference Collection: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Subject Matter - G 45-54 / 3 | Record Group: Medical - G 45-54 / 3 / 10.

⁵⁹ AJDC, *Letter to Mrs. Esther C. Elbergen Document type Textual Material Dates September 2, 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁶⁰ AJDC, *Letter from the UNRRA D. P. Division to Medical Branch, Subject: Merano Sanatorium, October 14, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² AJDC, *Memorandum from Mrs. Esther C. Elbogen to Mr. Pilpel, Subject: TB Child Patients in Italy, March 5, 1948*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

In 1951, in Italy remained two medical installations – that in Merano and another in Grottaferrata (Rome province) - with 281 patients⁶³. The AJDC Sanatorium in Merano definitively ceased its activities in March 1953 and its residual 20 patients were transferred to other rehabilitation structures⁶⁴. Whereas, the TBC Rehabilitation Center in Grottaferrata – where there was also a *bachsharah* managed by the Betar (the Revisionist Zionist movement) – remained open at least until 1954.

In line with the policy and the goals of the refugee agencies, the medical and rehabilitation centers were gradually liquidated. The patients who had ameliorated their health conditions were allowed to be resettled or were moved to other installations in order to complete their rehabilitation. For example, already in the second half of 1947, those who were discharged from Merano Sanatorium were transferred to the Rehabilitation Center in Miradolo Terme (Pavia province, Lombardy). This structure would have been provide «an adequately protective environment, medical follow-up and basic vocational training»⁶⁵.

In line with the resettlement policy of that time, the JDC rehabilitation structures (such as the sanatoria) provided training, work and educational program to the patients on the way to recovery. The main goal was to improve their vocational skills in order to make them independent once resettled. For example, in 1947, the Rehabilitation Center in Miradolo Terme scheduled - through ORT – the establishment of training courses of the duration from 4 to 12 months, which would have been included tricotage, shirtmaking, cutting and millinery⁶⁶.

After the establishment of the State of Israel, selection of candidates from TB Rehabilitation Centers for emigration to Israel in 1949 followed two main criteria. From the medical point of view, Israel admitted the patients who could ascertain 18 months of quiescent disease through documents showing that there were no signs of activity in the meantime. According to the «social criteria», people were declared eligible once they have completed a full course of vocational training with satisfactory results, and who have utilised to maximum advantage

⁶³ AJDC, “In March 1951, More than 2,000 Persons Were Granted Cash Relief by JDC, and 6,380 Rations (Preliminary Figure) Were Distributed...”, May, 22 1951, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

⁶⁴ AJDC, Letter from Dr. M. Tenenbaum to Dr. A. Gonik, Subject: Merano Sanatorium, March 17, 1953, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

⁶⁵ AJDC, *Rehabilitation Project at Terme Di Miradolo for Patients Discharged from Merano Santorium*, October, 3 1947, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁶⁶ According to the Photo Archives of the Jewish Relief Units, the JDC scheduled training and vocational courses also in the Merano Sanatorium, such as shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, see: WL, Photo Archives, Henriques Collection, box 29, *Album Merano, Italy*; AJDC, *Rehabilitation Project at Terno Di Miradolo for Patients Discharged from Merano Santorium*, October, 3 1947, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

all the educational, social and recreational programs provided by the rehabilitation centers. In particular, they would have proved that «they have changed from invalidism to a healthy physical and mental attitude toward normal living». The indications of such progress would have coincided with the regular and constructive participation in the activity programs, the improvement of the personal appearance, habits and relations with other persons, and the

«development of greater personal independence of thought and action as exemplified by a shift from petty complaints to constructive criticism of facilities and program, and active participation in improving the operation of the installation for the benefit of all»⁶⁷.

Thus, it is clear that good health conditions as well as a vocational preparation were among the priorities to obtain resettlement.

After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, arrangements and processing in order to increase the number of the eligible to *'aliyah* became a shared goal both of the Jewish Agency and the JDC:

«The AJDC as well as the Jewish Agency, which has lent its authority to the sponsorship of rehabilitation services, have emphasized that through such a rehabilitation period post-tuberculous patients may qualify for emigration to Israel. In order to maintain the moral of the centers and to have a tangible demonstration that through the patient's own effort in these centers he becomes eligible for emigration, thus encouraging additional patients to accept the service, we think it is very important that we should arrive at an understanding with the Jewish Agency which will assure the emigration of those individuals who have completed this stage of rehabilitation»⁶⁸.

This attitude had a twofold consequences. On the one hand, the JDC intensified vocational training, Hebrew language courses, classes on general aspects of socio-cultural life and conditions in Israel, individualised discussions with welfare workers as part of preparation and provide whatever help was needed in settling personal affairs prior to emigration. On the other hand, JDC organized committees consisting of the JDC tuberculosis specialists, the social workers and the directors of the vocational schools or the rehabilitation centers in Italy in charge of selecting eligible emigrants⁶⁹.

⁶⁷ AJDC, *Criteria for Selection of Candidates from TB Rehabilitation Cantors for Emigration to Israel*, March 18, 1949, Reference Code G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3 / P.I.142, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - G 45-54 / 4 | Record Group: Palestine/Israel - G 45-54 / 4 / 27 | Series: Palestine/Israel: Subject Matter - G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3.

⁶⁸ AJDC, *Memorandum from William M. Schmidt to Mr. Jordan, Re: Arrangements for Emigration of post TB Patients from Rehabilitation Centers to Israel*, January, 3 1949, G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3 / P.I.142.

⁶⁹ AJDC, *Title Preparation and Proposing of Candidates*, March, 18 1949, G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3 / P.I.142

In 1949, there were around 350 Jews still accommodated in rehabilitation centers in Germany, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. The newly established Israeli Government declared the admission of the former TB patients from the JDC rehabilitation Centers in Europe. With this emigration plan, from April 1949, Israel would have accepted 25 'olim per month from each center. The Israeli Government would have guaranteed adequate medical supervisions, but it did not take on the responsibility to provide neither living arrangements nor job placement. Thus, the Israeli Consulates in Europe would have selected first those individuals who were able to secure proper living conditions through their own resources or those of relatives or friends⁷⁰.

The latest TBC Rehabilitation Center of the JDC to be closed in Italy was that in Grottaferrata, near Roma. The JDC began to plan its dismantling in 1952, but it occurred only two years later. In accordance with the international definition, those patients were as a matter of fact "hard core cases". Thus, Charles H. Jordan – JDC delegate - depicted the «emigration picture» in Italy in March 1952:

«As you know, we have still two special problems in Italy. One is the problem of the post-TBs and rejectees in Grottaferrata and the other concerns the people in Camp San-Antonio, among whom are also post-TBs and rejectees under the DP Act. It can, I think, be definitely said that it is impossible for these people to establish themselves in Italy. Aside from the legal difficulties, that is, inability to obtain work permits or legalization of indefinite stay, they are stigmatized by their TB history [...]. We must get them out of Italy. There doesn't seem any immediate possibility of movement to Israel because they are not healthy enough to go as regular emigrants and they are not sick enough to go under the Malben umbrella»⁷¹.

The JDC strove to do its utmost in order to guarantee a resettlement opportunity to the Jewish DPs who remained in Italy in the fifties. According to the JDC delegates above-cited declaration, it appears that the Jewish DPs in the Rehabilitation Center were paradoxically neither healthy enough to be admitted in the US through the 1948 DP Act regulations nor sick enough to be declared eligible for 'aliyah and to demand the MALBEN care policy⁷².

⁷⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Rae A. Levine and L. Molnar to Country Director and Medical Advisor, Re: Emigration of Rehabilitated Former TB Patients to Israel* Author Levine, March, 18 1949, G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3 / P.I.142.

⁷¹ AJDC, *Letter from Charles H. Jordan to Mr. Moses A. Leavitt, Re: Post-TBs and Rejectees in Italy*, March, 3 1952, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

⁷² Malben was the acronym of *Mossadot le- tippul be-'Olim Nehšalim* (Institutions for the Care of Handicapped 'Olim), established in 1949 – at the Israeli Government's invitation by the JDC and the Jewish Agency. They founded Malben in order to deal with veterans of the displaced-persons camps, aged, sick, disabled survivors of concentration camps TB patients utterly dependent on assistance. Malben gave birth to a network of institutions, which converted former British army barracks as well as other buildings into homes for the aged, hospitals, TB sanitariums, sheltered workshops, and rehabilitation centers. Malben started also a rehabilitation

In fact, JDC tried unsuccessfully to appeal to the DP Act of 1948 in order to settle the ex-TB patients in Grottaferrata in the United States. With this provision, President Truman «authoriz[ed] for a limited period of time the admission into the United States of certain European displaced persons for permanent residence, and for other purposes»⁷³. Nevertheless, the preconditions to enter the United States through the DP Act regulations were hostile to the Jewish DPs situations in Italy. At the same time, their health status prevented them to be considered eligible for 'aliyah through MALBEN rehabilitation program.

According to the JDC archival sources, a Committee of the Patients in the Rehabilitation Center in Grottaferrata already existed in 1950. In 1952, it was re-elected at the patients themselves own initiative and to the JDC annoyance which depicted the new patients' representatives as «the most belligerent and unreasonable elements in the camp»⁷⁴.

The collected JDC sources, do not let us know about the faith of the «uncertain tubercular sick of Grottaferrata»⁷⁵, but their appeal to the JDC in March 1950 is meaningful to fully grasp the status of sickness among the DPs, both how it was perceived by the international institutions and by the DPs themselves:

«We are well aware that the problem of chronical sick in a modern state is no more an individual problem of the unfortunate person, but is a social problem. [...] We do not ask for relief anymore; or of any kind of protected existence; we only ask for an immediate occupation. There are periods in history which demand sacrifice from generations, and we do understand it, but, what for others means only hardship, for us may result in life invalidity»⁷⁶.

The words used by the Patients' Committee were indeed perfectly depicting the condition of the so-called "hard-core cases". The Grottaferrata Committee vehemently asked the JDC to make all the effort to allow them leave Italy. Essentially, they asked for the recognition of their ability «to start a normal productive life». Indeed, a certification of good health and

program, which included training of nurses and rehabilitation workers. In 1951, by agreement of all parties, JDC assumed the entire obligation for MALBEN, while the Jewish Agency took on all responsibility for immigrant transportation and resettlement, tasks it had previously shared with JDC. See: <http://archives.jdc.org/history-of-jdc/history-1960.html> (last access, July 29, 2016).

⁷³ See the complete version of the DP Act of 1948 here: <http://library.uwb.edu/static/usimmigration/62%20stat%201009.pdf> (last access, July 29, 2016).

⁷⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Charles H. Jordan to Mr. Morris Laub, Re: Grottaferrata Your letter #4742, September, 18 1952*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

⁷⁵ AJDC, *Memorandum from Irving R. Dickman to Mr. Moses A. Leavitt and Miss Dorothy L. Speiser, Subject: Translation of Grottaferrata letter, July, 7 1954*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / .

⁷⁶ AJDC, *Letter from Patients' Committee, Rehabilitation Center, Grottaferrata to Chief European Mission, AJDC, March, 17 1950*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 653.

vocational skills represented a tangible opportunity for being declared eligible for resettlement.

Conclusions

«The Italian medical program can be stated to be the most effective of any that we are operating in any of the DP countries. In Italy there has been organised a system of medical services, both therapeutic and preventive, which is functioning efficiently and providing adequate help to the Jewish population. It must further be stated that the Italian program cannot in any way be compared to that in other countries, since the situation in Italy and the circumstances under which the work is being carried out are not comparable to that in other countries»⁷⁷.

In these terms, Maurice Kaplan – member of the JDC Medical Department - expressed his opinion after a «field visit» occurred in August 1947. It emerged that the medical situation of the Jewish DPs in Italy was relatively optimistic, whether compared to that in Germany and Austria. Indeed, it was between the late 1946 and the beginning of 1947 that the medical service for the Jewish DPs (as well as for all the other categories of post-war refugees) «were put on a normal footing»⁷⁸.

JDC medical investigations revealed that the health situation of the Jewish DPs in Italy was under control, though not totally satisfactory. Obstacles to the fulfilment of the medical problem were essentially related to the difficulty in supplying medical material and overcrowding. Nevertheless, critical situation were promptly resolved by the JDC intervention. Indeed, the monitoring work of the JDC was fundamental in maintaining a basic standard of health and sanitation within the camps and the *bachsharot*.

The management of the medical care by the JDC Mission in Italy was influenced by the fact that assembly centers, DP camps, *kibbutzim* and *bachsharot* where the Jewish DPs were gathered were scattered throughout the country. This geographical distribution prevented the centralization of the medical system and did not allow a deeper control of the health condition as well as the actual needs of the Jewish DPs. Nevertheless, as stated by Maurice Kaplan in the abovementioned report, the main focus of the JDC medical program were the *bachsharot*:

«The organization of the medical program in Italy was guided by three factors: the nature of the *bachsharot* program which the administration chose as the policy for Italy; the

⁷⁷ AJDC, *Report of a Field Visit to Italy, August 12-27, 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁷⁸ AJDC, *Letter from Dr. J.M.Shapiro to Mr. J.L. Trobe, Subject: Monthly Report for September, October 15, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

fact that UNRRA turned the responsibility for medical care in the *hachsharot* completely over to our organization, assuming only the minimal financial obligation; the mobility of the displaced persons»⁷⁹.

The mobility of the Jewish DPs and the isolated location of several *hachsharot* in Italy were indeed other reasons which threatened the success of the medical program, as extensively disclosed in the previous paragraph. Nevertheless, JDC managed to find a solution even to these problems: opening further dispensaries and clinics as well as employing other medical staff both among the refugees and the local population.

The work of the Medical Department of the JDC was strictly connected to physical and moral rehabilitation as well as to education. Even in this field, assistance to the refugees was not confined only to guaranteeing medical care. While being temporarily accommodated in refugee camps, they were educated to health and sanitation standard. For example, jointly with the Public Health Department, the Education Department of the JDC launched an intensive campaign of health education and social hygiene. The JDC used «American techniques», including posters, lectures, pamphlets, contests, movies, newspapers publicity, etc⁸⁰. This would help to the success of the medical program, as well as to take the refugees more involved in their own fate.

Indeed, since national governments opened their doors to safe people, good health was a precondition for resettlement. For those who unfortunately were in convalescent homes or in rehabilitation centers, an alternative chance of being declared eligible for resettlement became dependent by the acquisition of vocational training skills. Whith the purpose of having «a tangible demonstration that through the patient's own effort in these centers he becomes eligible for emigration», the JDC and the Jewish Agency encouraged patients to attend vocational courses⁸¹.

Thus, physical rehabilitation among the post-war DPs acquired a deeper meaning. This was mainly due to the innovative way in which both institutions and organizations approached to the sanitarian and medical emergency of the post-WWII. The medical program provided by the refugee agencies helped the DPs in becoming more aware of their active role to ensure their own welfare. Their attitude while displaced would influenced their standard of life

⁷⁹ AJDC, *Report of a Field Visit to Italy, August 12-27, 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 7 / 651.

⁸⁰ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁸¹ AJDC, *Memorandum from William M. Schmidt to Mr. Jordan, Re: Arrangements for Emigration of post TB Patients from Rehabilitation Centers to Israel, January, 3 1949*, G 45-54 / 4 / 27 / 3 / P.I.142.

within the camps and the *bachsharot*, their opportunity of resettlement as well as the possibility to start a new life.

Chapter 7

Shaping a New Identity

The Hachsharot, a Stepping Stone Towards Eretz Israel

The «Hachsharah Movement» in Post-War Italy

The establishment of the *hachsharot* in post-war Italy represents a singular feature of the Jewish displacement in the country. Already in the Thirties, Italy became the proving ground for several *hachsharot* which included mainly Italian and German Jews. In these training farms organized by Zionist movements, the Jews acquired agricultural techniques and vocational skills in preparation for *‘aliyah*. Italy was selected as the location for these kind of installations because of practical reasons. Its climate was similar to that of Eretz Israel, and therefore the agricultural techniques and types of crops was similar to that in Israel and thus “exportable”¹. In contrast to the pre-war situation, what the archival sources termed the «hachsharah movement» of post-war Italy was set up to deal with an emergency situation. Beginning in 1944, *hachsharot* were established in the gradually liberated Italian area in order to train Jews who survived the war and longed for resettlement in Palestine. In this case, Italy was selected for its geographical position: it was seen as a bridge on the Mediterranean Sea, connecting Europe to *Eretz Israel*².

In order to trace the history of the *hachsharah* movement in Italy, the starting point should be – once again - the actions of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine. With regard to this, Zvi Ankouri’s words are illuminating.

¹ About the establishment of the *hachsharot* in Italy during the thirties see: Della Seta Simonetta and Carpi Daniel, “Il movimento sionistico”, in Vivanti Corrado (ed. by), *Gli ebrei in Italia. Dall’Emancipazione a oggi, Storia d’Italia*, Annali, vol. 11/2, (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 1342-1349; Marzano Arturo, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l’emigrazione in Palestina prima della Guerra (1920-1940)*, (Genova-Milano: Marietti, 2003), 70-77; on the particular case of the *hachsharah* in Ricavo di Castellina in Chianti (near Siena, Tuscany) see: Forti Carla and Luzzatti Vittorio Haim, *Palestina in Toscana. Pionieri ebrei nel senese 1934-1938*, (Firenze: Aska, 2009) and the personal archives of Mario Ottolenghi, who was secretary of the Italian Zionist Federation between 1933 and 1939, see: CAHJP, Archivio Mario Ottolenghi, P 250.

² Before analysing the development of the *hachsharot* in post-war Italy, a short note about the use of the terms “*hachsharah*” and “*kibbutz*” in this chapter is necessary. The *hachsharot* set up in Italy had the purpose to accommodate and prepare the Jewish DPs to live in Palestine, where they often would have resettled in *kibbutzim*. Thus, the *hachsharot* described in the current chapter functioned as *kibbutzim* or were inspired by the *kibbutz* ideology of collective life. Though the word “*kibbutz*” is used in some archival sources or by some historians in order to refer to the *hachsharot*, I instead will continue to use the term “*hachsharah*” which in its broader meaning includes also those installations that functioned as *kibbutzim*.

Ankouri was a *hayal* enrolled as volunteer in the British Army, and later the leader of the first *bachsharab* for Jewish DPs in Bari area. Concerning the organization of *bachsharot* by the *Plugot* in post-war Italy, Ankouri stated: «What started as an *ad hoc* solution [for the Jewish DPs in Ferramonti] became institutionalized as such by the *Merkaẕ La-Golah*»³. In fact, the first *bachsharot* were set up with the purpose of gathering the Jewish DPs of Ferramonti who wished to migrate to Palestine and temporarily settling them in a new location thus also allowing the closure of the former concentration camp in Ferramonti.

Although *bachsharot* were often established without central planning, the connection between the *hayalim* in Italy and the *Yishuv* appears rather evident as seen from the reports of the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* to the Jewish Agency. For example, in the first report concerning the activities of the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* among the DPs in Italy, Zvi Leiman (head of the *Merkaẕ*) discussed the establishment of a *Misrad Ha-Merkaẕi Ha-Eretẕ Israeli* (Hebrew for “Erezt Israeli Central Committee in Liberated Italy”). The organization was established in Bari at the *Merkaẕ* Headquarters and, already in March 1944, a conference of its representatives – i.e. of the *Yishuv*’s institutions and organizations – planned the Committee’s next moves⁴.

Another factor could be deduced from these reports: the main goal of the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* as well as of the *Misrad Ha-Merkaẕi Ha-Eretẕ Israeli* was the the ‘*aliyah*’ of the DPs. The Central Palestine Office began to register the names of those who wished to migrate to Palestine, whereas – at the same time – the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* undertook a series of programs in order to encourage and prepare the DPs for ‘*aliyah*’. The pervasive political propaganda of the representatives from the *Yishuv* was combined with a well-structured rehabilitation program and promotion of educational opportunities, including schools and vocational training, as well as cultural and recreational activities, such as theatre, music and sport⁵.

The First Stage: the Pioneering Role of the Hayalim

Two phases can be identified in the evolution of the *bachsharot* in Italy. The first one encompasses the years 1944-45, during which the *Plugot* initiated the *bachsharab* movement

³ Oral History Division (OHD), Zvi Ankouri (interview: Jerusalem, 1974), 8 (147).

⁴ CZA, *Duah Mi-Pe’ilot Merqaz Ha-Plitim Be-Bari Me-15 Be-Yanvar 1944 ‘ad 15 Be-Marṣ 1944, March, 28 1944*, Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me-’Italia 1943-1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection: S/25 Political Department (1921-48).

⁵ CZA, *Report on the Jewish Activities in Italy, January, 8 1945*, Folder: S25/5279 Maṭav Yehudey ‘Italia 1944-1945, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection S/25: Political Department (1921-48).

and established its basic focus on preparing the DPs' for 'ahyah. The second phase started with the new wave of Jewish DPs, which arrived in Italy at the end of the conflict and coincided with beginning of the post-war humanitarian missions. In fact, the activities of the international refugee agencies as well as the Jewish volunteer organizations in the rescue of the Jewish DPs drove an expansion of the *bachsharot*, particularly in 1947.

The *bachsharot* scheme was selected as the primary means «to prepare young people for future life in Palestine». These «preparative youth farming colonies» were organized according to the age of the residents: there were *bachsharot* for children up to 15, for young people aged 15 to 18 and for those from 19 years old⁶.

Five *bachsharot* were established in Southern Italy between January and June 1944. According to the archival sources, the first *bachsharah* opened was *Dror* (Hebrew for “Freedom”), near Bari, set up on the 15th of February 1944 to train young Jews from 20 to 35 years old. Two other *bachsharot* were established: *Rishonim* (Hebrew for “First Ones”) near Bari (precisely, in Grumo) and *Ha-Bonim* (Hebrew for “The Builders”) in the DP camp of Santa Maria al Bagno, near Lecce. Both of them were «typical youth-*bachsharot*», which in summer 1944, were housing 45 boys and girls, aged 14 to 18 years⁷. The *bayalim* established also a religious *bachsharah*, which however, became the first one to be closed, before summer 1944. This was *bachsharah* Datit (Hebrew for “Religious”) in Ferramonti Camp, whose last residents were transferred to Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp at the end of 1944⁸. In June 1944, another *bachsharah* was set up in Santa Maria al Bagno Camp: *Baderech* (Hebrew for “On the way”). With its 20 members, it hosted families both with and without children, and functioned similar to a little *kibbutz*. Zvi Leiman described this *bachsharah* as embracing «a new form of the *Halutz* Education». The “innovation” was in the varied ages of its members, which

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ CZA, *Duah Mi-Pe'ilot Merqaz Ha-Plitim Be-Bari Me-15 Be-Yanvar 1944 'ad 15 Be-Marš 1944, March, 28 1944*, Folder: S25/4719 Plitim Me-'Italia 1943-1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestina/Israel abroad, Collection S/25: Political Department (1921-48); CZA, *Situation and activities after the first transport to Palestine, July 8, 1944*, Folder: S25/22512 Tiq Reuven Shiloach. DuHot Mi'et Reuven Shiloach 1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestina/Israel abroad, Collection S/25: Political Department (1921-48).

⁸ CZA, *Situation and activities after the first transport to Palestine, July 8, 1944*, Folder: S25/22512 Tiq Reuven Shiloach. DuHot Mi'et Reuven Shiloach 1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestina/Israel abroad, Collection: S/25 Political Department (1921-48); AJDC, “Our Central Committee in this Area had Some Difficult Getting Adequate Reports and Statistics from the Local Committee...”, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720; AJDC, *Lists of concentration camps in liberated and Nazi occupied Italy, February, 28 1945*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720; AJDC, *Correspondence: G. Cantoni, A.D. Greenleigh, C.E. Heathcote-Smith*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

compromised older people (from 30 to 55 years old) in comparison with the younger populations of other *bachsharot*⁹.

The creation of the *bachsharot* answered several immediate needs. The *bachsharot* framework facilitated the gathering of Jewish DPs that the *hayalim* found at their arrival in Italy as well as those who managed to reach Apulia's shores after the liberation of the southern regions. Secondly, these training farms were the ideal solution for stimulating and training Jewish survivors for '*aliyah*'. Thirdly, the *bachsharot*'s collective economy was an optimal solution in light of the extremely difficult economic conditions of post-war Italy. By the end of summer 1944, two factors seemed to threaten the existence of the *bachsharot* created by the *Plugot* in southern Italy. The Allies' advance northward entailed also the movement north of the *hayalim*, thus depriving the *bachsharot* in southern Italy of leaders and instructors. Secondly, the '*aliyah*' which the *bachsharot* promoted, decreased manpower and working hands, stressing the collective agricultural economy on which these collective farms were based.

The *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* came up with solutions for both of the above problems. In order to replace the Palestinian soldiers who had been the leaders of the *bachsharot* as well as filling roles in the various activities of the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* itself, groups of DPs were trained to serve as *madrachim* (Hebrew for "instructors"). The *Merkeẓ* organized a series of seminars for training new "personnel" among the Jewish displaced civilians, who subsequently took on roles of leadership¹⁰. Moreover, the financial difficulties of the *bachsharot* were abetted through an agreement between the JDC and the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim*. As reported by Zvi Leiman, in correspondence at the time of authorization of the JDC mission in Italy in June 1944, Joseph Schwartz and Max Perlman of the JDC met representatives of the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim*, and decided that *bachsharot*, schools and workshops (later known as the Central Educational Board) would continue to be managed by the *Merkeẓ*, but would henceforth be financed by the JDC¹¹.

⁹ CZA, *Situation and activities after the first transport to Palestine, July 8, 1944*, Folder: S25/22512 Tiq Reuven Shiloach. DuHot Mi'et Reuven Shiloach 1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection: S/25 Political Department (1921-48).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

The Second Stage: the Agreements on Hachsharot

Though it is difficult to trace the evolution of the *bachsharot* movement in Italy, it is quite clear that the end of the war marked the beginning of a new phase. From 1945, a large percentage of the Jewish DPs would live in *bachsharot*, with the support both of the international institutions (such as UNRRA and IRO) and of the Jewish organizations (mainly the JDC, which became the major financier of these institutions).

This situation was most likely due to a combination of practical reasons and political strategies, as well as to a new techniques in dealing with post-conflict issues. First of all, the end of military operations allowed an official and more organized approach to the relief operations on behalf of civilians. Facing the refugee emergency, SHAEF cooperated with different international institutions and organizations, including the IGCR, the UNRRA and the IRO. These intergovernmental bodies signed in turn agreements with other organizations to provide assistance to specific groups of refugees.

In the case of Jewish refugees, the JDC played a key role. The formalization of the JDC mission in Italy in summer 1944 brought great benefits to those local and foreign Jews displaced in the country. The arrival of the JDC representatives in Italy allowed proper evaluation of the needs of the survivors and developing an appropriate action plan. Above all, the representatives established direct links with both the Italian Jewish community and its institutions (in particular UCII and DELASEM), and with the refugees and their representative organizations (the *Merkaẕ ha-Plitim*, the *Merkaẕ la-Golah* and then the OJRI).

The above-mentioned agreements brought another benefit: money transfers related to humanitarian aid were no longer subjected to severe restrictions as during the war. Therefore, the formation of a rescue network under the supervision of SHAEF ensured - among other things - a simpler distribution of the economic subsidies. At the same time, the end of military operations led to more stringent border control and therefore greater control of migration. As is well known and will be analysed further, the Jewish displacement in Italy was characterized by a high degree of movement (both into and out of Italy). The *Brichah* and the *Mossad le-'Aliyah Bet* - under the leadership of the Jewish Agency - transformed Italy into the last stop before leaving for *Eretẕ Israel*. Thus, the establishment of a great number of *bachsharot*, where the Jewish DPs would train for *'aliyah*, could be seen as part of the *Yishuv* policy regarding the European Diaspora emergency. This policy was adopted even by the JDC, which in turn was able to guarantee the support of the IGCR, UNRRA and IRO to the *bachsharot* movement.

The JDC attempted to gain support for the *hachsharah* organization also from the Allied and UN refugee agencies. Already in December 1945, the JDC stressed the advantages of the *hachsharot* as «one of the greatest stimulants to re-establishing a normal pattern of human behaviour»:

«The term “Hachsharah” was originally used to describe the organized training centres where young people were educated and trained in preparation for their immigration to Palestine. During the past few months, we have witnessed in Italy a tremendous influx of Allied national, non-repatriable and stateless persons. [...] These individuals are unskilled workers, either illiterate or semi-literate, with no background of vocational aptitudes or work skills. A goodly number of them were demoralized in the camps, and find themselves psychologically unfit to remain in camps now, until a suitable country for emigration is found for them. [...] As used in Italy today, [...] the hachsharaha community type of living affords and excellent opportunity to help these people become re-orientated to normal community living and to help rehabilitate them to undertake constructive and productive efforts»¹².

An agreement signed in October 1945 between UNRRA and the JDC set the principles and policies for their co-operative operation in Italy regarding the *hachsharot*. The negotiations between Antonio Sorieri and Charles Passman – respectively representatives of UNRRA and the JDC in Italy – seem to have been quite complicated:

«We [representatives of the JDC] therefore started to educate UNRRA on the principles of Hachsharath and gradually succeeded in convincing them that the Hachsharah is a great improvement on camp life while at the same time the refugees are working under an organized and controlled system. The result is that UNRRA finally agreed to consider the Hachsharah groups as a small camps managed by the JDC and for which camps the UNRRA has full responsibility with regards to equipment, clothing, food, medicines, etc»¹³.

Under the agreement, UNRRA recognized the *hachsharot* and considered its residents as «out-of-camp refugees», eligible for receiving UNRRA assistance. The agreement was limited to only 7,500 Jewish DPs, for whom UNRRA guaranteed 3.000 Lira per person monthly and took on responsibility for providing the basic necessities, i.e. housing, food, clothing, etc¹⁴. Moreover, the UNRRA Food Ration enabled the Jewish DPs in *hachsharot* to maintain a

¹² AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to Julian L. Tomlin, December, 15 1945*, Folder: Italy, Hachsharoth, 1945-1950, Reference Code: NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Vocational Training - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12.

¹³ AJDC, *Letter from Charles Passman to American Joint Distribution Committee, March 4, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

¹⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. H. Katzkei, February, 19 1947*, In Folder: Italy 1947, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

reasonable diet, including fresh meat three times a week, 500 gr. of fresh fruit and 400 gr. of bread daily¹⁵.

At the same time, the JDC operated as a specialised Jewish agency providing supplementary goods, facilities and services which UNRRA by its nature and budgetary limitations was unable to provide. The JDC accepted the principle of operating through the UNRRA administrative machinery within the UN institutions and to meet the needs of the DPs on an orderly and uniform basis. The JDC negotiated the use of the site, and provided bedding and initial equipment; underwrote the maintenance costs of the collective farms and the vocational training centers and acted as liaison between UNRRA and the refugee groups. Requests of *hachsharah* groups for materials were channelled through the JDC to UNRRA. JDC contributions to DPs in money and kind were to be channelled through UNRRA administration. Any supplementary programmes were to be applicable uniformly to all UNRRA installations and cleared with UNRRA Mission by the JDC before implementation¹⁶.

Charles Passman – representative of the JDC for the *Hachsharah* Program in Italy – commented on the JDC-UNRRA agreement by saying:

«I consider it of great importance that UNRRA has entrusted to the JDC the care of Jewish refugees in Italy by recognizing Hachsharah groups as UNRRA camps managed by the JDC. This principle can be stretched considerably to cover the greater part of Jewish refugees in Italy and may also be applied to Jewish refugees in the other countries. From the financial point of view once this program will be put into full operation the greater part of the expenses we were having will be covered by UNRRA»¹⁷.

The agreement between UNRRA and the JDC implied a formal endorsement of the *hachsharah* movement. It assured a substantial economic support and constituted a precedent for the exportation of this model to other countries affected by the Jewish DP emergency. The UNRRA-JDC agreement and subsequent cooperation provided an impetus for the growth of the *hachsharot* in Italy. By mid-1947, these training farms accommodated 7,500 Jewish DPs (i.e roughly 40% of the Jewish refugees receiving UNRRA assistance in Italy)¹⁸.

¹⁵ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October 24, 1946*, Folder Italy, Hachsharoth, 1945-1950, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

¹⁶ AJDC, *Draft Memorandum of Agreement between Unrra & AJDC, September 30, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

¹⁷ AJDC, *Letter from Charles Passman to American Joint Distribution Committee, March 4, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

¹⁸ AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. S. M. Keeny, June, 19 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

Between the end of 1945 and the beginning of the 1946, the JDC gave special attention to the development of this program in Northern Italy. Besides the above-mentioned UNRRA support, the JDC received significant funding from the Central British Fund - which contributed during that period 10,000,000 lire for the establishment of ten additional *hachsharot* - and from the Jewish War Appeal, with its ongoing contribution to the JDC in Italy¹⁹.

Towards the closing of the UNRRA Mission in 1947, the JDC representatives in Italy invested their efforts in obtaining from the IRO Mission the same support gained before from UNRRA. The negotiations began already in June 1947 with the PCIRO and continued in autumn with the IRO representatives. From the correspondence between the JDC representatives in Italy and the JDC Central Office, it appears that several difficulties arose during the initial stage of the negotiation. In fact, while the IRO Italian Mission granted its support to the *hachsharah* program, the IRO Geneva Headquarters put up several obstacles to reaching an adequate agreement. In particular, the IRO Headquarters refused to recognize the rights of Jewish DPs in *hachsharot* as the same as those in refugee camps²⁰.

A compromise was reached with the JDC-IRO agreement signed in November 1947, which established that the IRO would extend to the Jewish DPs in *hachsharot* the same basic care as to those in camps. It included food, clothing, medical assistance and cash subsidies according to standards set for DPs in camps. Moreover, the IRO would take on the responsibility for the household equipment, the hygiene and sanitation supplies, the control of supplies, population and eligibility for transit of the *hachsharot* DPs, as well as for their legal protection. With the liberation of Italy and the gradual establishment of a plan of cooperation between the Jewish institutions and organizations and the intergovernmental refugee agencies, the *hachsharah* movement acquired a well-structured organization.

Origin and Goals of the *Hachsharot*

According to the JDC definition:

«the term Hachsharah (vocational training center) stands for a small community (numbering from 35 to 200) whose ultimate aim is settlement in Palestine and whose

¹⁹ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

²⁰ AJDC, *Letter from AJDC Rome to Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz, Subject: IRO-AJDC Negotiations Italy, October, 2 1947*, Folder: Italy: IRO Vocational Training Hachsharot 1947-1949, Reference Code G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 10 / IT.97, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - G 45-54 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 | Series: Organizations: NGOs - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 10; AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. S. M. Keeny, Subject: Hachsharoth. December, 5 1947*, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 10 / IT.97.

present activity tends towards that end. The economy in the hachsharoth is based on collective principles and it is attempted to give the inmates a proper vocational training as well as pro-Palestine cultural activity»²¹.

The *hachsharot* residents were Jewish displaced persons of varied nationalities and with differing backgrounds, but sharing the same wish to reach *Eretz Israel*²². Most of them came from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria, Rumania, Hungary and Greece. Some of them fought as partisans in the Ghettos, others were survivors of the concentration camps, most had lost their families during the conflict and many arrived in Italy in groups after the end of the war²³.

The mechanism through which *hachsharot* were set up is unclear. From the practical point of view, we know that if a *hachsharah* group was to be established outside a DP camp, the JDC provided the initial material equipment, obtained a villa (often, with the help of Italian Jews) or land and paid for initial repairs, construction and organization of the *hachsharah*. Once the *hachsharah* was established, it was expected to function on a self-supporting and self-maintaining basis with the assistance of UNRRA. Differences in the organization and in the economy of the training farms arose due to the territory where it was located or whether it was within or outside an UNRRA camp²⁴.

In a pamphlet published by the JDC Research Department, which described the JDC efforts to rehabilitate the Jewish DPs in Europe, the “birth” of the hachsharot was described as follows:

«The hachsharot in Italy were in most instances established as a result of the initiative of groups of refugees, who chose a suitable place for their purpose and formed the nucleus of a small co-operative community. The founders then selected other interested persons and the group would work hard, inspired by pride in their joint achievement and the spirit of self-help. The original 40-50 members usually grew to 100 and more within a month or two and a program of educational courses and vocational training was launched depending on the instructors and tools available»²⁵.

Once established, the *hachsharot* functioned as self-administered bodies led by an internal committee – the *Mazkirut* (Hebrew for “secretariat”) - of five members, elected by the

²¹ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

²² Though the hachsharot were initially set up with the purpose to accommodate DPs who wished to make ‘aliyah, exceptions would have arisen in late 1946 when a group of Jewish DPs American-oriented requested the JDC to be accommodated in a hachsharah.

²³ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

²⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to AJDC Paris, New York, February, 4 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

²⁵ AJDC, *JDC Aid for Vocational Training, July 24, 1947*, G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4 / ADM.162.

residents. The *Mazkirut* was responsible to the *Merkaẕ be-Halutz*, established by the *Merkaẕ La-Golah*, which in turn was responsible to the JDC on all matters concerning the *bachsharot*²⁶.

Though boasting a quite autonomous administration, the supposed spontaneous establishment of the *bachsharot* seems questionable. To what extent could the foundation of the *bachsharot* be considered a bottom-up instead of a top-down process? This question needs to be rethought taking into account different factors.

The *bachsharah* movement is often described as an initiative of the Jewish DPs themselves, the relevant archival sources report that the population of each *bachsharah* was composed of adherents of the same political party and that the leaders/guides of the group often had a political role. Moreover, in examining the nature of the *bachsharah* movement, it is also important to consider several social aspects, such as the relative young age and the personal background of the DPs in the *bachsharot*.

A large proportion of the Jewish DPs in Italy were young adults between 17 and 25 years old who – in most cases - had lost their relatives during the conflict²⁷. They suffered different experiences during the war and most of them shared those ideals commonly attributed to youth: passion, enthusiasm, desire for revenge, spirit of sacrifice, ability to adapt and – in this particular case – readiness to start anew. Assuming “youth” as an actual influence of the historical condition, it becomes also a relevant factor in explaining the success of the *bachsharot* in Italy.

Indeed, the young Jewish DPs – moved by the need to put their past behind and to rebuild a new life – easily embraced or strengthened their bond with the values of the collective living, physical labour and mutual aid. These ideals were at the basis of the Zionist youth movements founded in Europe from the early 1900's. They had appealed to thousands of young Jews of the Diaspora and had deeply influenced the development of the Jewish settlement in Palestine in the consolidating a national identity throughout the first half of the twentieth century. They contributed in the formation of a homogenous Jewish civil society in British Palestine and paved the way for the so-called state-building process after 1948²⁸.

Most of the Zionist youth movements were founded and were active in Europe for several decades, and were progressively transplanted in *Eretẕ Israel* as the *Yishuv* acquired a more

²⁶ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

²⁷ The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We...Jewish Refugees in Italy. The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946), 32-33.

²⁸ Simoni Marcella, *At the Margins of Conflict. Social perspectives on Arabs and Jews in British Palestine (1922-1948)*, (Venezia: Cafoscarina, 2010), 95-119.

organized structure during the period of the British Mandate. They played a central function among the “surviving remnant”, assisting the refugees and directing them towards migration to *Eretz Israel*²⁹. In this context, the *bachsharah* movement could be seen as the ultimate demonstration of the involvement of Zionist youth movements among the Jewish survivors displaced in Europe.

As already detailed, those who led to the formation of the *bachsharah* movement at the early stage were the soldiers of the *Plugot*, performing the task of *madrichim*. The movement of the Front northwards and finally the end of the war meant that the *hayalim* were no longer serving in Italy. The new post-war waves of Jewish migration into Italy required the assistance of other *madrichim*. Since this problem was seen as threatening the future of *bachsharah* movement among the DPs in Italy, the *hayalim* had managed to train *madrichim* from among the DPs. At the same time, the Jewish Agency as well as all the political parties and organizations of the *Yishuv* sent their own representatives to aid the Jewish refugees. These emissaries were the so-called *shlibim*.

With the establishment of the organizations of self-representation by the Jewish DPs themselves, the *bachsharah* movement began to be increasingly administered by the *Merkeaz He-Halutz*. In agreement with the Zionist movements, the *Merkeaz He-Halutz* selected and gathered the DPs by grouping them according to their political orientation or religious attitude³⁰.

Along with the agreement between the JDC and UNRRA (and confirmed by IRO), only 7,500 Jewish DPs were admitted to live in *bachsharot* and to receive out-of-camp assistance³¹. Since *bachsharot* were considered traditionally a form of collective for preparation of persons desiring to go to Palestine, these 7,500 places would have to serve only Palestine-oriented DPs. The JDC relied totally in the *Merkeaz He-Halutz* for selection of the DPs to be admitted to the training farms:

«The selection of persons for these hachsharot is the responsibility of the Merkaz Hechalutz, which has representatives of all political opinion among the refugees, with the exception of Betar [...]. In fact, the refugees organized themselves in hachsharot according to political parties. There is a constant internal political struggle among them

²⁹ For an analysis of the role of the youth movements among the Jewish DPs in Germany, see: Patt Avinoam, *Finding Home and Homeland. Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009).

³⁰ CZA, Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf ĥovrim Tmunot Proťokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

³¹ AJDC, Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to Mr. H. Katzkei, February, 19 1947, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

as to which party has the superior accommodation. Our own position is to remain aloof from these quarrels choosing to consider that refugees have a right to group themselves according to any social criteria, if necessary, dividing blondes from red heads»³².

Regardless of the political affiliation, the task of the *madrichim* and the *shlibim* was to guide the DPs in preparation for *'aliyah*: educating them ideologically and training them practically to live in *Eretz Israel*³³. The *bachsharab* system allowed the *madrichim* as well as the *shlibim* to supervise small groups of aspiring *'olim* and to serve as liaison between the DPs and the Jewish organizations as well as the international institutions. Notwithstanding the large influence of the *madrichim* and *shlibim*, it cannot be excluded that part of the Jewish DPs who reached Italy were already affiliated (or, at least close) to some Zionist or Palestine-oriented political movement. It can be assumed that some of the DPs arrived in Italy in already affiliated groups; otherwise, they formed into cohesive groups according to their political orientation once in Italy. It also happened that certain *shlibim* themselves recruited members with the purpose of establishing a *bachsharab* and/or acted as glue that held an already founded *bachsharab* group together.

Mapping the *Hachsharot*, Italy 1947

The *bachsharot* in Italy were divided into three regions on the basis of the location of the main JDC administrative offices. Those in Northern Region district were mainly in the Milan and Turin areas, as well as near Genoa, Florence, Venice and Bologna. The Central Region district included *bachsharot* in Rome and its suburbs – i.e. Ostia, Grottaferrata, Castelgandolfo and Ladispoli. In addition, when the four UNRRA Southern DP Camps in Salento were closed in 1947, Bari remained the core of the *bachsharot* in the Southern Region district³⁴.

Usually, the training farms were situated in the vicinity of larger towns, principally those in the Central and Northern regions, or in seasonal tourist locations, such as in the Southern region and for those near Rome and Ancona³⁵.

It is quite impossible to give a precise estimate of the population residing in *bachsharot* in the course of the years, mainly because of the high mobility of the Jewish DPs within Italy and across its borders. At the same time, it is complicated to establish the exact number of

³²The Betar was represented by a shaliah (delegate) who was not part of the Merkaz He-Halutz. AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to AJDC Paris, December, 31 1946*, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

³³ About the role of the *madrichim* in the Zionist/Israeli youth movement see: Israeli Nundi. *The Madrich: The Israeli Youth Leader: Roles, Training, and Social Functions* (Pittsburg: University of Pittsburgh, 1965).

³⁴ See the map in APPENDIX 26.

³⁵ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

bachsharot set up in Italy, since they were often established or closed according to the arrivals and departures of Jewish DPs. Nevertheless, according to a brief survey published by the JDC, the organization aided during 1945 approximately 40 *bachsharah* establishments, housing altogether about 4,000 persons. Both the number of the residents in the *bachsharot* and that of the trainees among them fluctuated constantly³⁶. As a result of the success achieved by the *hachsharot* in taking care of DPs, a further expansion in their number was expected in the following months³⁷.

In early 1946, the Jewish DPs living in almost 70 *bachsharot* numbered 7,000, of a total refugee population of 26,600³⁸. One year later, in February 1947, the number of Jewish DPs organized in collective farms reached its peak: of a total number of 24,638 Jews, 7,469 were housed in 77 *bachsharot*, 10,673 in camps and 6,496 in towns³⁹.

This number remained static until the establishment of the State of Israel in April 1948, when the JDC estimated 7,256 Jews in 74 *bachsharot*⁴⁰. Exactly one year later, only 29 *bachsharot* were still active in Italy, hosting 2,577 DPs⁴¹. The last *bachsharah* hosting Jewish DPs, in Castel Gandolfo near Rome, was closed in 1951⁴².

³⁶ AJDC, *JDC Aid for Vocational Training, July, 24 1947*, Folder: JDC Reports 1946-1947. Reference Code G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4 / ADM.162, Full Reference Collection: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Administration - G 45-54 / 1 | Record Group: Overseas - G 45-54 / 1 / 1 | Series: General - G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4.

³⁷ AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin N. Brook to AJDC Paris, New York, February, 4 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

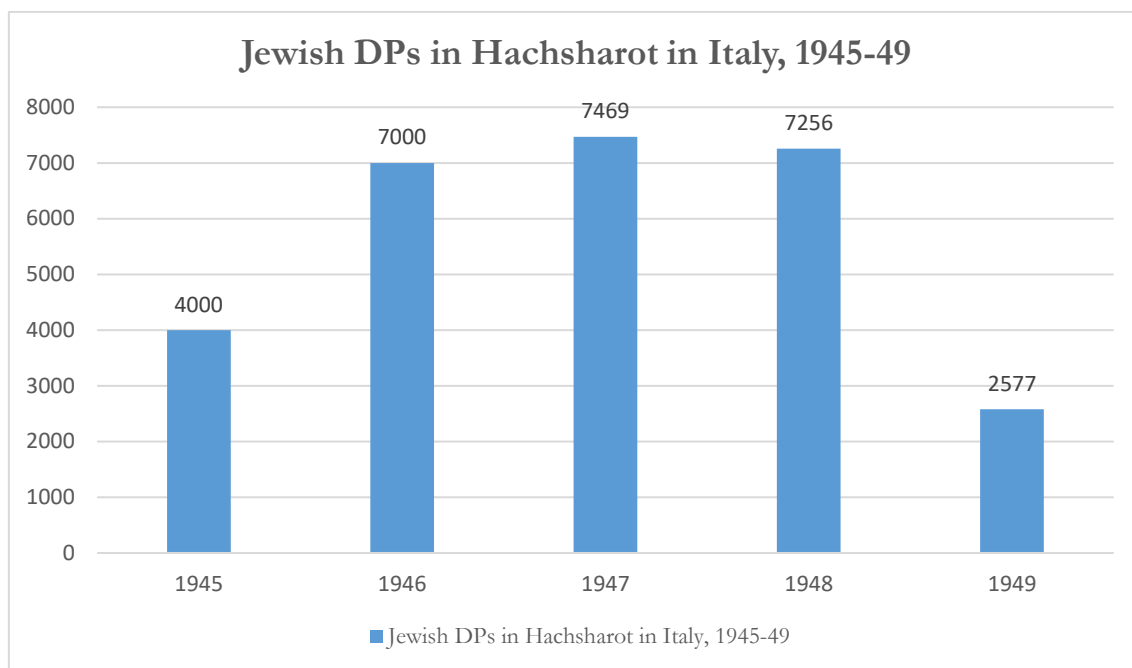
³⁸ In February 1946, the JDC estimated a total population of 26,000 Jewish DPs in Italy: 10,000 in refugee camps, 7,000 in *hachsharot* and 4,500 in towns), see: AJDC, *J. D. C. Program in Italy – 1946, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

³⁹ AJDC, *Italian program second quarter 1947, October, 1 1947*, Folder Italy: 1947-1948, Reference Code G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 1 / IT.1, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - G 45-54 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 | Series: Administration: Financial - G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 1. For a list of the *hachsharot* existing in 1947 see: AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656; AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁴⁰ Marzano Arturo, “Post-War Relief and Rehabilitation. The Hachsharot for Jewish DPs in Italy (1945-48)”, in Bregoli Francesca, Ferrara degli Uberti Carlotta and Schwarz Guri (eds. by), *Italian Jewish Networks in the Early Modern and Modern Period*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming).

⁴¹ AJDC, *Letter from Welfare Bureau to Mr. L. D. Horwitz, Subject: Summary of Emigration Plans of people in Hachsharoth, March, 11 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁴² According to Arturo Marzano, in 1958 the *hachsharah* Tel Broshim – which hosted Italian Jews – was the only one proved to be still active, see: Marzano, “Post-War Relief”.



In the attempt to trace a map of the *bachsharot* in Italy, this paragraph will focus on the year 1947 when the number of training farms in Italy had reached its peak. APPENDIX 12 offers a detailed picture of the distribution of the *bachsharot* in that year⁴³.

Starting from their geographical point of view, it is interesting to note that the many *bachsharot* were concentrated in the areas of Turin and Milan in the Northern Region as well as that of Rome in the Central Region. The southern regions, particularly Apulia, which had filled a prominent role up to 1947, the number of the Jewish DPs was reduced, following the closing of the four UNRRA DP camps in Lecce province in spring 1947.

As it is evident by APPENDIX 12, the *bachsharot* scheme included different typology of institutions – all of them identified in the archival sources with the general term “*bachsharot*” – were the Jewish DPs received a Jewish and (in the most cases) Zionist-oriented education. In the JDC reports, the *bachsharot* system incorporated not only the training farms, but also the already-mentioned refugee center in Unione Street in Milan and several “Children’s Homes”, the “Student’s House” in Turin, the “*Yeshivah*” or Rabbinical College near Rome and the “Artistic Ensemble” in Castel Gandolfo⁴⁴.

As already stated, each *bachsharot* was affiliated with a political, cultural or religious movement and the establishment of different types of *bachsharot* was the sign that each of them was geared towards specific groups of DPs. Indeed, most of the *bachsharot* residents

⁴³ See APPENDIX 12.

⁴⁴ About the Student House in Turin and the Artistic Ensemble see Chapter 8. .

were affiliated with youth pioneering movements inspired by socialist values or religious movements.

The leading role of the Jewish youth movements in British Palestine and the parallel features and requirements of the Jewish DPs can help explain the success of the *bachsharah* movement in Italy. The *bachsharot* presented the Jewish DPs with a concrete opportunity to rebuild a new life, learn a trade and resettle elsewhere from Europe after the traumatic experience of World War II. In the *bachsharah* community they found a group with whom they could share and overcome the trauma of the *Shoah*, and undertake a physical and moral rehabilitation with the support of international institutions and the guidance of Jewish organizations. The *bachsharah* also supported and made possible their longing to reach Palestine.

The table below shows the list of the Zionist parties or religious movements as well as the number of the *bachsharah* members affiliated to each of them in Italy, in March 1947⁴⁵:

Number of DPs affiliated to each youth movement, Italy 1947			
YOUTH MOVEMENT	NORTH	SOUTH	TOTAL
Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzìonì	767	335	1102
Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair	474	463	943
Gordonia	426	506	935
Dror	380	347	727
Pakhakh	392	246	638
Ha-No'ar Ha-'Oved	254	266	520
Betar	172	319	419
Agudat Israel,	329	158	487
Mizrahi	207	214	421
Noham	77	106	183
Ha-Bonim	141	--	--
Bund	49	--	--
Tzofim	--	90	--
Others	393	131	481

⁴⁵ The table is taken from an article published by Federica Francesconi about the first results of her research related to the Jewish DPs in Italy in some archives in the United States, see: Francesconi, "Lo spoglio degli archivi americani", 133.

Confronting the above table with the data presented in APPENDIX 12, it is possible to trace a general picture of the Zionist and Jewish youth movements active in Italy in 1947.

In 1947 – when the number of Jewish DPs as well as the number of *bachsharot* reached the peak – the Jewish youth movement which achieved highest success by numbers was *Ha-No'ar Ha-Tz'ioni* (Hebrew for “The Zionist Youth”). It counted 11 *bachsharot* and more than 1,000 members throughout Italy. There were also several *bachsharot* of *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir* (Hebrew for “The Young Guards”), the oldest Zionist youth movement then in existence. In 1947, *Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir bachsharot* in Italy numbered 943 affiliated among the Jewish DPs and served both groups of youngsters and families, administering also a Children's Home in Avigliana (near Turin)⁴⁶.

According to the JDC records, *Gordonia* counted 935 affiliated DPs in 1947 and established *bachsharot* throughout Italy serving exclusively groups of youngsters. This movement was linked also to the main Children's Home in Italy, in Selvino (Milan area). The Home was established in 1945 in order to house Jewish children who had been rescued by catholic institutions in Poland. The children were brought to Italy by the *hayalim* and sent to the Children's Home in Selvino, which in 1947 accommodated more than 300 children⁴⁷.

From the establishment of the first *bachsharot*, *Dror* (Hebrew for “Liberty”) experienced a significant success among the Jewish DPs in Italy. One of the collective farms set up in Bari in 1944 was named indeed “*Dror*” as well as several *bachsharot* in the UNRRA DP camps of Lecce province⁴⁸. In 1947, the JDC representatives reported the existence of 9 *bachsharot* in Italy linked to *Dror*, gathering 727 youngsters. Another socialist youth movement which established several *bachsharot* – often in combination with other movements such as *Dror* or *Borochow* – was *Ha-Bonim* (Hebrew for “The Builders”). It operated in DP camps already in 1944, when the first *Ha-Bonim bachsharot* was set up in Santa Maria al Bagno DP Camp. The list of Jewish youth movements active in post-war Italy included also *Noham* (derived from the Hebrew acronym *No'ar Halutz'ei Meubad*, i.e. “United Pioneer Youth”). In spring 1947, *Noham bachsharot* were home to approximately 180 youths. Another scouting movement operating in Italy in 1947 was *Ha-Zofim* (Hebrew for “The Scouts”), with a small number of affiliated DPs⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁴⁷ On Selvino, see the memories by Megged Aharon, *The Story of the Selvino Children: Journey to the Promised Land*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002).

⁴⁸ Renzo, *Aprite le porte*, 172-173.

⁴⁹ AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

Finally, besides the above-mentioned scouting and socialist movements, the youth movement Betar of the Revisionist Zionists also took root among the Jewish DPs in Italy. In 1947, there were more than 400 DPs in 5 *hachsharot* sponsored by Betar. Reproducing the configuration of the Jewish Agency, the Merkaz He-Halutz rejected the Betar movement. Archival sources relating to the Jewish displacement in Italy report the influence of three other political movements in the *hachsharot* in Italy. *Ha-No'ar Ha-'Oved* (Hebrew for “The Working Youth”) linked to the trade union of the Yishuv (*Histadrut*), in 1947 was supporting 7 *hachsharot*. According to the JDC records, its affiliated numbered about 500 members among the DPs and its installations gathered mainly family groups. Although they were not considered a political movement, groups of Jewish DPs who fought in the ghettos or as partisans during the War founded several *hachsharot*. The presence of several members of the so-called *Pakhakh* (“*Partizaner, Khayalim und Khalutsim*”, Yiddish for “Partisans, Soldiers and Pioneers”) among the Jewish refugees in Italy has already been discussed since many leaders of OJRI were partisans themselves⁵⁰.

The religiously orthodox *hachsharot* were supported by two political movement *Agudat Israel* (Hebrew for “Union of Israel”) and *Mizrahi* (whose name derived from Hebrew *Merkaz Ruhani*, i.e. “Spiritual Center”). The former is a political movement of Orthodox Jewry. It was established in opposition to both Zionism and to Reform Judaism, with the purpose of giving Orthodox Judaism a renewed and more effectual organization in response to the growing secularization experienced by European Jewry in the early twentieth century. Even though *Agudat Israel* rejected secular Zionism, it did not oppose Jewish settlement in Palestine. In the aftermath of World War II, youth movements affiliated with *Agudat Israel* devoted much of their activities to preparing young Orthodox Jews for emigration to *Eretz Israel*. *Agudah* operated also among the Jewish DPs in Italy, with 400 residents in 8 *hachsharot* in 1947. These were intended mainly for family groups, except for the *hachsharab Meshek Po'alot* in Ostia, which hosted single orthodox girls and women. Moreover, *Agudah* managed a Rabbinical College near Rome – i.e. the *Yeshivah Ma'or la-Golah* – and a Children's Home which hosted up to 70 children in Campolecciano (near Leghorn, Tuscany). At the same time, in 1947 there were more than 400 DPs in *Mizrahi* - affiliated *hachsharot* in Italy. In contrast to *Agudat Israel*, *Mizrahi* is an Orthodox Zionist movement that encouraged Zionist values by assigning religious interpretations to basic Zionist principles. *Mizrahi* training farms

⁵⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

in Italy accommodated youngsters, while children were cared for in the Children's Home in Florence Area⁵¹.

Among religious movements in the *hachsharot* in Italy, that in Positano (near Napoli) deserves special mention. It was named "*Meshumadim*" which derives from a Hebrew term that stands for "convert from Judaism to another religion". Presumably, this was a collective farm which accommodated Jewish DPs who abandoned their religion for another but, because of the lack of other relevant sources among those collected for this investigation, this should be considered only an hypothesis⁵².

Three more interesting cases within the *hachsharah* movement 1947 Italy are worth noting. First, there was a *hachsharah* for Italian Jews in Ceriano Laghetto, near Milan. Assuming that Italian Jewry was far less Palestine-oriented than the non-Italian Jewish DPs who crossed Italy, the Ceriano Laghetto *Hachsharah* could be considered an exceptional institution, afterwards moved near Pisa and closed in 1958⁵³. A second interesting case was the "Aufboi" Cooperative near Rome, which was linked to the Bund. The Bund was a Jewish cultural movement originating in Russia at the end of the Nineteenth century, which encouraged Jewish national autonomism as lived out in Eastern Europe. It was opposed to Zionism, and promoted a non-Palestine-oriented form of national identity. Thirdly, it should be noted that even in the non-Palestinian bound *hachsharot* there were some Jewish DPs who longed for '*aliyah*'. These institutions should thus be considered as mixed⁵⁴.

Among the *hachsharot*, there were some designated by the JDC as «special installations» which served the younger Jewish DPs: the so-called "Children's Homes". In 1947, there were six collective installations for this category of DPs, located above all in the northern and central regions and affiliated to different youth movements⁵⁵.

Nevertheless, the origin of this kind of *hachsharot* in Italy traces back well before the establishment of the agreement between UNRRA and the JDC. Once again, the activities of the *hayalim* on behalf of the Jewish DPs in south Italy between 1944 and 1945 can be considered at the basis of the following creation of the Children's Homes.

⁵¹ AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ The existence of a *hachsharah* for Italian Jews in Ponte di Nona resulted in a JDC report related to 1946, see: AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October 24, 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656; about Tel Broshim *hachsharah* see: Marzano Arturo, "The Italian Jewish migration to Eretz Israel, and the birth of the Italian Chalmutz movement (1938-48)", in *Mediterranean Review*, 3 (2010), 1-29; Id., "Post-War Relief".

⁵⁴ AJDC, *Letter from Welfare Bureau to Mr. L. D. Horwitz, March, 11 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁵⁵ The Children's Homes were located in Selvino, Avigliana, Monte Mario, Florence, Leghorn and Nemi, see: APPENDIX 12.

Several Jewish soldiers who reached Italy with the Allied Army were trained in Palestine to be *madrich* of the above mentioned youth movements, thus *'aliyah* – and in particular youth *'aliyah* – was their declared goal. They - on behalf of the Jewish Agency, the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* and then the *Merkeẓ He-Halutz* - attempted immediately to not displace the youngest Jewish DPs but strengthened their link through several educational activities which gradually led to the foundation of the first *hachsharah*.

At their arrival in Ferramonti, the Jewish soldiers began their pro-Palestine activities among the Jews of Ferramonti, endorsing the possibility to make *'aliyah* among the children and the youngsters, which would have the priority for emigration. In accordance with the policy of the *kibbutz*, where children lived and were educated in separate section from their parents, the representatives of the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* made all their effort to obtain the parents' permission to take with them and educate their children for being resettled in Palestine. Hence, the main purpose of the *hayalim* became gathering all the children in Ferramonti in order to give them an adequate preparation for the *'aliyah*. *Rishonim*, one of the first *hachsharot* established in Bari in 1944, was conceived to respond also to this urgency. Once again, Zvi Ankouri's oral testimony illuminates about the success and the importance of *Rishonim* for the future of the youth *'aliyah* from Italy:

«On the 21st of March 1944 the hachsharah besides Bari was established, which was known as Rishonim, making it viable way for *'aliya*, the hachsharah has this to its credits. It was an achievement to get the parents to give up their children to us. [...] Rishonim was the only hachsharah-kibbutz which had participants both from Betar and Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair as well as Bachad. This first and only example – challenging and successfully unique experience – was later to be changed with the political criterion taking precedence in *Aliya* selection»⁵⁶.

The *'Aliyat Ha-No'ar* – i.e. the branch of the Jewish Agency that dealt with youth *'aliyah* – acquired gradually a structured form. With the establishment of the UNRRA DP camps in Lecce province, also the hachsharot established there by the *hayalim* served young Jewish DP and train them for *'aliyah*. After 1947, with the closure of the UNRRA southern camps, the main Children's Homes were located in Rome Area and in the Northern Region⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ OHD, Zvi Ankouri (interview: Jerusalem, 1974), 8 (147).

⁵⁷ For a preliminary reconstruction of the development of the Youth *'Aliyah* among the Jewish DPs in Italy, see: Cohen Raḥel, *Mossadot pnimayatiyim Be- Italiya le-ieladim u-bnei-no'ar plitei šo'ah ba-šanim 1943-1948*, Mugaš ke- 'avodat gemer kibelet to'ar "musmakh" ba-maḥlaqah le-toledot Isra'el, 'Universitat Bar- Ilan, Ramat Gan, 1998.

An «Emigration Plan»: the Closure of the *Hachsharot* from 1948

After the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948, the JDC in cooperation with the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* began the gradual closure of the *hachsharot* in Italy. Since «all those people who were living in the *hachsharot* were bound for Israel», a migration movement started from Italian ports to the newly established State of Israel⁵⁸.

Already in August 1948, the JDC and the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* planned to close down 11 *hachsharot* (3 in the north and 8 in the south) with a capacity of 900; another group of installations with a capacity of 400-600 was dismantled by September 1948. The *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* decided which installations were to be closed «in terms of political groupings». This meant that the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* - in an attempt to maintain a sort of “political balance” among those who were designated to enter Israel - gave priority for *‘aliyah* to a particular *hachsharah* group over another⁵⁹.

Within one year of the founding of the State of Israel, the number of Jewish DPs assisted by the JDC in the Italian *hachsharot* was significantly reduced to 1,634 persons (934 of them received aid also from IRO). By March 1949 all the *hachsharot* in the Northern Region were already closed and only 29 *hachsharot* were still open in other regions of the country (6 of them set up after 1947)⁶⁰.

As can be deduced from the JDC records, the *hachsharot* in Italy began to take on different functions after the establishment of the State of Israel.

There were those Jewish DPs living in *hachsharot* after 1948 «who [...] originally were Palestine bound but later changed their minds and are now going to the USA»⁶¹. The origin of this American-oriented group of refugees dates back to the last months of 1946. The minutes of a meeting between JDC representatives and a delegation of the camp committee of the Southern Region reveal the existence of a group of 700-800 Jewish DPs interested in emigration to the United States. In December 1946, these DPs were living in the UNRRA camps of Lecce province and were all registered with the American Consulate in Naples (the majority of them had received affidavits from relatives in America). These DPs has requested UNRRA to accommodate them as a group in the vicinity of Naples in order to maintain ready contact with the American Consulate:

⁵⁸ AJDC, *Memorandum from Esther C. Elbin to M. J. Joslow, March 14, 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ AJDC, *Letter from Welfare Bureau to Mr. L. D. Horwitz, March, 11 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁶¹ AJDC, *Memorandum from Esther C. Elbin to M. J. Joslow, March 14, 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

«The [camp] committee requested that the AJDC use its services to have UNRRA secure a suitable place to accommodate this group in the immediate vicinity of Naples. If it not possible for UNRRA to provide such a place, the committee requested empathically that AJDC establish community collectives for this group, in the same manner as is done for those who plan to emigrate to Palestine, - in other words – the organization of *hachsharot* for this group. [...] It was made clear that the principle of AJDC not to establish villas for them at Naples is totally unacceptable to them. They indicated that the failure of the AJDC to help them in the event that UNRRA is unable to secure the place in Naples, will be widely publicized as discriminatory action on the part of the AJDC»⁶².

UNRRA had taken seriously the DPs request and planned to open a camp for these persons with an «all American program». However, the facilities UNRRA offered were considered undesirable by the group of Jewish DPs, who instead “pressed” the JDC for accommodating them in a *hachsharah* framework.

In JDC’s view, this pressure for a *hachsharah* was due above all to the desire of the DPs to leave the refugee camps for better accommodations. Moreover, the so-called “American group” was perceived as a possible forerunner of a problem that the JDC expected to meet more acutely in the future. Although the JDC recognized its moral duty to provide the same assistance to all Jewish DPs, it passed the matter on to UNRRA in February 1947 without taking any position⁶³. Nevertheless, the references in the JDC archival sources of the following years regarding six «non-Palestinian bound» *hachsharot* appear to demonstrate that at least a small group of non-Palestine-oriented DPs were admitted to the *hachsharot*.

In March 1949, there were 10 *hachsharot* identified in Italy as «non-Palestinian Bound» according to the definition used in the JDC reports. In these training farms, the JDC was still assisting almost 600 DPs, of whom 275 had already registered with the JDC Emigration Bureau requesting resettlement to the United States. To these 10 collective farms – all of them located in the Rome area – should be added also the Bund Cooperative Aufboi since half of its approximately 60 members appeared in the list of the JDC Emigration Bureau⁶⁴. This Bund *hachsharah* (S/6) – which seems to have been the only one affiliated with the Bund in Italy – was closed in July 1949, presumably after all its residents had emigrated to countries.

⁶² AJDC, *Letter from Jacob L. Trobe to AJDC Paris, December, 31 1946*, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / IT. 107.

⁶³ AJDC, *Letter from Herbert Katzki to Jacob L. Trobe, February, 14 1947*, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

⁶⁴ In 1949, the Italian *hachsharot* considered by the JDC as «non-Palestinian Bound» were S/8 in Ostia (Agudat Israel), S/9 in Ostia (Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza’ir), S/22 in Grottaferrata (Betar), S/38 in Anzio (Partisans), S/52 in Castelgandolfo (Partisans), S/12 in Ostia (Ha-No’ar Ha-‘Oved), S/27 in Ladispoli (Ha-No’ar Ha-‘Oved), S/48 in Ladispoli (Nocham), S/19 in Castel Gandolfo (Gordonia), S/23 in Grottaferrata (Mizrahi), see: AJDC, *Letter from Welfare Bureau to Mr. L. D. Horwitz, March, 11 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

Notwithstanding its tangible help, the JDC did not look kindly upon those DPs who decided resettle elsewhere from Israel, for the *hachsharot* program was «a costly one and was only established for the purpose of ‘*aliyah* to Palestine»⁶⁵. While JDC policy was to no longer admit DPs into training farms, several installations were maintained as «staging areas» for those Jews en route to Israel. During summer 1948, the rate of emigration to Israel was between 1,800 and 2,000 ‘*olim* per month. Even at this stage, Italy continued to be the Jewish Agency’s choice as the favourite embarkation point for ‘*aliyah*. This is demonstrated – for example - by the fact that during summer 1948 the Jewish Agency requested IRO to arrange for the admission of 5,000 Jewish DPs from Germany into Italy in order to prepare them for emigration to Israel. With regard to this circumstance, the JDC – which had always supported the Jewish DPs’ needs – expressed its doubts since the entrance into Italy of so large a group of refugees would seriously interfere with the JDC scheduled closing down of *hachsharot* (even though theoretically there was place for them in IRO camps)⁶⁶.

The Jews who choose Italy as the springboard for making ‘*aliyah* did not originate exclusively from European countries. A few months after the establishment of the State of Israel, a JDC worker reported to the Central Office:

«The most interesting new development is that people are turning up in Italy from Argentina, Turkey, and South Africa, and numbers are still continuing to come in from Tripoli»⁶⁷.

In early 1949, there were in Italy almost 1000 «Tripolitanian» Jews, of whom approximately 650 were living in eight *hachsharot* in the Rome area⁶⁸. A small number of Jews from Libya managed to reach Israel via Italy, using various pretexts such as business trips, medical care, vocational training in the schools of ORT or the *yeshivah* (Rabbinical College) in Rome.

The emigration from North Africa to Italy was organized between 1944 and 1948, first by Jewish soldiers in the British forces and later by the *Mossad le-‘aliyah Bet*. The ‘*aliyah* of Libyan Jews transiting Italy continued after the establishment of the State of Israel, managed by

⁶⁵ AJDC, *Memorandum from Esther C. Elbin to M. J. Joslow, March, 14 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁶⁶ AJDC, *Letter from Budget and Research Department to Mr. Herbert Katzki, August, 07 1948*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ In 1949 the JDC records reported about the existence of 8 «Tripolitanian» *hachsharot*, which were S/14 in Castel Gandolfo, S/7 in Ostia, S/20 in Grottaferrata, S/33 in Nemi, S/34 in Galliciano, S/49 in Nemi, S/50 in Monte Mario, S/53 (set up after 1947) in Olevano Romano, see: AJDC, *Letter from Louis D. Horwitz to Mr. Passman, March, 15 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656; AJDC, *Letter from Welfare Bureau to Mr. L. D. Horwitz, March, 11 1949*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

shlibim of the Jewish Agency⁶⁹. The immigrants' arrival in Italy burdened the refugee camp system as well as that of the *bachsharot*, where most of the Libyan Jews were already located and whose closure was already being implemented by the JDC. Moreover, since most of the immigrants were elderly and sick people, they required special assistance, often remaining in JDC clinics for years⁷⁰.

Notwithstanding the constant movement of their residents, the *bachsharot* maintained the primary function of training Jews in transit from the Diaspora to Palestine/Israel. The *bachsharot* became one of the most decisive means through which the *bayalim* and the *shlibim* promoted the values and the principles of Zionism. To certain extent, the *bachsharot* reproduced a concrete picture of the collective living of the *Yishuv* and gave the DPs the chance to “regenerate” themselves.

From the humanitarian point of view, the *bachsharot* enabled self-government and rehabilitative programs which were among the main goals of the international agencies involved in the rescue of the refugees. Nevertheless, the influence exercised by the *Merkeẓ He-Halutz* attributed to the *bachsharot* movement a clear national and political ideology. In the transition from Diaspora to the Yishuv/State of Israel, the Jewish DPs approached Zionism and – with the external support of the *shlibim*– reshaped their individual and collective identity in the extraterritorial setting of the refugee camps. There, Zionism became «the main available language of hope» for those Jews yearning for recreating a familiar environment and longing for a sense of home⁷¹.

Work Programs and Vocational Training

Post-war international humanitarianism was characterized by singular features, which resulted in an innovative approach to rehabilitation. World War II and its consequences forced the refugee agencies to devote their resources primarily to basic relief and medical care. Nevertheless, providing employment and vocational training to the uprooted people became part of the shared international agenda. Work and vocational training programs in the DP camps were therefore deeply concerned with the wider goal of rehabilitating the victims of the war as well as restoring the post-war European economy.

⁶⁹ For an overview on the Jewish migration from Libya to Palestine/Israel between 1943 and 1952, see: Roumani Maurice M., *Gli ebrei di Libia: Dalla coesistenza all'esodo* [*The Jews of Libya. Coexistence, Persecution, Resettlement*], (Roma: Castelveccchi, 2015), 198-212; in particular, about 'aliyah via Italy see: Ibid., 200-203.

⁷⁰ See Chapter 6.

⁷¹ This expression is taken from Cohen, *In War's Wake*, 127.

Providing the refugees the opportunity to learn a trade or manufacturing skill or even to rekindle and improve a pre-war skill met several needs. It contributed, firstly, to the DPs ability to earn a livelihood in view of “a new life” after the war experience; secondly, it allowed the DPs to take an active role in the reconstruction of the post-war European economy or in any country where they would be resettled. In fact, the formal acquisition of a vocational skill was a prerequisite for repatriation or resettlement, since many countries accepted refugees only through specific resettlement plan which included the employment of the immigrants.

Another vital reason driving the military authorities and the refugee agencies to encourage vocational training and work among the DPs was to reduce the risk that idleness would increase black-marketing and crime in the refugee camps. Indeed, this would have threatened the success of the rehabilitation program on a large scale. Idleness and black-marketing were serious problems within the refugee camps in post-war Europe. On the one hand, military and local authorities feared that the paradoxically better conditions of life in the DP camps as opposed to outside them would increase apathy among the refugees and lead to a sort of “professional displacement”⁷². This attitude would result in the DPs’ reluctance to leave the refugee camps, thus continuing to burden local governments and international aid agencies. On the other hand, black-marketeering was a problem affecting all the refugee camps in post-war Europe. Since not all categories of refugees received pocket money, and lacking employment, the only way these DPs could “earn” money was by reselling outside the DP camps goods they had received from international aid programs (such as food, clothing, blankets, etc.). For these main reasons, the military authorities as well as the organizations working on behalf of the refugees recognized that training the DPs would facilitate their repatriation/resettlement. Employing the DPs in providing aid to their fellow refugees would help in self-financing the refugee camps and also help make up for the lack of international aid personnel. Furthermore, the employment and training programs would help fighting demoralization and idleness among the refugees.

⁷² This expression was used by Antonio D’Andrea an official of the Italian Ministry of Post-War Assistance, during a meeting about the situation of social assistance in Italy after World War II. In particular, D’Andrea referred in his speech to the situation of the refugee camps in Italy in 1947, see: D’Andrea, “Campi profughi”.

This policy was promoted from the beginning by the SHAEF, which employed DPs for various jobs in the refugee camps, and was carried on by UNRRA and IRO, which furthermore organized vocational training courses in practically every camp⁷³.

When the UN agencies started their mission in Europe, employment within the camps was largely under the control of UNRRA (or IRO, after 1947); whereas employment outside the camps required approval of the military authorities. This situation persisted up until the end of the military occupation. According to international humanitarianism policy, employment was to be voluntary or paid, and it was encouraged and stimulated among the DPs. DPs experienced in crafts were selected among the refugees to do essential work in the DP camps (repairing damaged buildings, tailoring and repairing clothes, building beds and cribs, chairs and tables, etc.). Work within the refugee camps was closely related to proper camp maintenance and development, and to the vocational training schemes, but it was clear that it could not guarantee employment for all. The weak post-war economy in Europe afforded few job opportunities for the refugees and moreover, local government looked with disfavour on their employment. This led the humanitarian organizations to increase vocational training programs among the DPs and to encourage the refugees to manufacture goods to be afterwards supplied to the refugees themselves⁷⁴.

Though these types of rehabilitation activities were initiated and sponsored by SHAEF in 1944-45 and carried on by the IGCR and UNRRA, it was only with the IRO mission that they assumed a more defined structure. The end of the UNRRA mission and the handover to IRO in 1947 was also a point of review and readjustment in the rehabilitation programs. In 1947, the screening procedures were completed and a great number of repatriable DPs had returned to their countries.

The need of the Jewish DPs to travel and cross borders seeking family survivors was slightly reduced in comparison with previous years. The prolonged stay of the remaining DPs in the camps and the assembly centers, actually allowed the refugee agencies to launch longer-term vocational training courses and manufacturing centers. The refugees themselves had a longer opportunity to attend the courses and reasonable time to acquire new skills.

⁷³ About employment and vocational training in the DP camps in post-war Germany, see: Salvatici, *Senza casa*, 199-254; about rehabilitation through work in refugee camps, see: Cohen Daniel, "Regeneration through Labor: Vocational Training and the Reintegration of Deportees and Refugees, 1945-1950", *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History*, vol. 32 (2004), 368-385.

⁷⁴ Woodbrige, *UNRRA*, 519-521.

The vocational training financed by the UN refugee agencies were of two types: one was aimed at those skills that could be acquired by apprentice training, such as shoemaking and repairing, tailoring, sewing, dressmaking carpentry, etc.; the other type required more formal training, often including book learning as well as practical work, such as mechanics, cabinetmaking, and the like. Several of these vocational training courses were opened at the initiative of the DPs themselves, with the supervisions of UNRRA and IRO⁷⁵.

Voluntary agencies made substantial and invaluable contributions in the vocational training field. They supplied the technical specialists to develop and supervise the vocational programs; selected, trained and employed as instructors many hundreds of refugees with basic qualifications in the required vocational skills; provided raw materials, machines and equipment, motor transports and other facilities necessary to support the program. Moreover, the voluntary societies implemented the already existing programs with a wide range of courses in sewing, machine-shop practice, and carpentry as well as more particular training opportunities in such skills as typewriter repair, watchmaking, radio-mechanics and well-drilling⁷⁶.

In the specific case of the Jewish DPs in Italy, the JDC played once again an important role in supporting and promoting employment and vocational training in DP camps and *hachsharot*. As reported in several JDC records, the main difficulties encountered were the rapid turnover of the DP population and the lack of suitable *hachsharah* farms owing to the difficult economic situation of Italy «which made impossible a systematic training and also farming being the proper training for Palestine»⁷⁷.

In spite of these obstacles, work and training activities held a prominent position within the JDC from the very beginning of its mission in Italy. The JDC philosophy about rehabilitating Jewish DPs to work was explained clearly in a short pamphlet regarding the organization of the activities between 1945 and 1946, published by the JDC Research Department:

«Under the circumstances, it is the responsibility of the JDC to finance schools and training centers and to guide their students toward a proper adjustment to social life and to provide for their general and Jewish education, as well as to teach them trades suited to their talents and interests. JDC staff workers and other observers in Germany, Austria and Italy have invariably reported that, even with inadequate facilities and under unsatisfactory living conditions, the process of engaging in purposeful labour and study develops at an early stage a spirit of self-respect and hope on the part of the student. It is generally considered that the farming and the shopwork of the trainees particularly in the displaced persons camps, represent a very desirable step toward their rehabilitation.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Holborn, *International Refugee Organization*, 282.

⁷⁷ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

The products of their labour, food, garments and etc. are in themselves a concrete contribution to the welfare of these groups. The skill acquired by the trainees is obviously important for their reorientation. Apart from such practical achievements, however, there is a unique therapeutic value in these activities which must not be overlooked. Every trainee, who feel that he is making progress toward a new life, is an investment in the welfare of Jewry at large»⁷⁸.

As a result of this positive philosophy, 2,608 DPs in Italy were already receiving training in 1945 in JDC programs.⁷⁹ In addition, the JDC at that time was aiding approximately 40 *hachshsharot*, where about 4,000 Jewish DPs were housed. Although both the number of residents in the training farms and the number of trainees among them fluctuated constantly, a JDC report in July 1945 indicates the numbers and varied trades being taught at the time:

TRAINING CENTERS FOR JEWISH DPs IN ITALY IN 1945

TYPE OF TRAINING CENTERS	HACHSHAROT	TRAINEES
Tailoring	8	315
Mechanics	3	219
Agriculture	3	122
Fishing	2	176
Carpentry	1	75
Shoemaking, tailoring, gardening	6	750
Program in preparation	11	951
Total	34	2,608

Source: JDC⁸⁰

By 1946, the JDC had established 16 tailor shops and 1 cobbler shop working for UNRRA. According to an agreement between the two organizations, UNRRA supplied - mainly to the *hachsharot* - 165 sewing machines, raw materials and clothing to be repaired. The Jewish DPs worked for and were paid by UNRRA, though all the matters concerning these workshops were handled by JDC. The JDC assumed responsibility for materials and production and distributed the earnings among the *hachsharot*⁸¹.

These workshops were not considered vocational training centers, although they did provide the *hachsharah* with additional income helping it to be self-supporting. The JDC reports of

⁷⁸ AJDC, J. D. C. *Aid for Vocational Training*, July, 24 1947, G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4 / ADM.162.

⁷⁹ This figure appeared even more staggering if compared with that of Germany for the same period, where 2,591 Jews received training with the JDC support, see: AJDC, J. D. C. *Aid for Vocational Training*, July, 24 1947, G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4 / ADM.162.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

the time tend to stress the difference between work projects (shops) and vocational training centers. In fact, the instability of the Jewish DP population in Italy led the JDC to recognize the advantages of the work projects for the *hachsharot* rather than vocational training courses. According to the JDC view, work projects helped maintain the economic autonomy of the collective farms as well as the «productivization and activization of people who have not put their hand to productive work» for years during the war⁸².

A considerable number of residents were engaged in the maintenance of the *hachsharot* in the cooking, house-cleaning, laundry, splitting fire-wood, etc.. Moreover, all the *hachsharot* had several internal workshops serving their own needs, including carpentry shops, tailor shops, cobbler shops and barber-shops. However, of a total population of 5,842 DPs in *hachsharot* in 1946 only 25% were involved in these kinds of workshops, providing an income of more than half a million lira⁸³.

The Jewish DPs in Italy benefitted also from the support of another Jewish voluntary association: the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT). It originated in Tsarist Russia at the end of the nineteenth century under the name “Society for the promotion of the manufacturing and the agriculture among the Jews in Russia” (in Russian, Obshestvo Remeslennogo i zemledelcheskogo Truda sredi evreev v Rossii). After World War I, ORT expanded its activities into both Europe and the United States. ORT established vocational schools with the purpose of offering Jews the opportunity to learn manufacturing and – consequently – obtaining vocational certificates, which would facilitate employment as well as resettlement⁸⁴.

ORT opened schools and courses even during World War II. In particular its first post-war installation was opened in October 1945 in the Landsberg, Germany DP camp, headed by Jacob Oleiski, who was director of ORT-Lithuania before the war.

ORT's work in Italy started in late 1946-early 1947, much later than in Germany and Austria⁸⁵. This delay was due to the high degree of movement and turnover of many of the DPs in Italy, which did not let them stay in any one camp long enough to participate in a vocational training program.

⁸² AJDC, *Work program – Hachsharot – Italy, March 1947, May 2, 1947*, G 45-54 / 1 / 1 / 4 / ADM..

⁸³ AJDC, *Hachsharoth Report 12th October, 1946, October, 24 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁸⁴ For a history of ORT, its developments since the foundation, its mission and goals, see: Shapiro Leon, *The History of ORT. A Jewish Movement for Social Change* (New York: Schocken Books, 1980); Rader Jack, *By the Skill of Their Hands: The Story of Ort*, (Geneva: World Ort Union Centre International, 1970).

⁸⁵ Kavanaugh, ORT, VII-XIII; Person Katarzyna and Bracha Rachel (eds. by), *ORT and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors*, (London: World ORT, 2012), 49.

ORT-Italy, working in cooperation with UNRRA, JDC and OJRI, operated in two separate divisions: ORT-North Italy, managing ORT's activities in the northern regions, and ORT-Rome, managing activities in the Rome area and South Italy. It focused its activities first in the northern area and in Rome. In July 1947, ORT was already managing 41 training schools with 936 pupils; by November 1947, there were 1,476 students in 58 ORT institutions throughout the peninsula. Between 1947 and 1950, ORT-Italy had opened other schools mainly near Rome and in Bari. It continued to operate in Italy even after the establishment of the State of Israel, both on behalf of those Jews who were still refugees in Italy as well as the Italian Jews., In 1950, 1,542 students were attending ORT vocational training courses.

ORT-Italy opened one of its first schools in Cremona DP camp. In February 1948, 108 students were attending courses in dressmaking, locksmithing, carpentry, electrical installation and radio technology. In the Milan area, ORT organized schools in the DP camps and *bachsharot* in Milan, Adriatica, Lecco-Brivio and Arona, where the courses taught included men's tailoring, dental mechanics, dressmaking, furriery, locksmithing, metal fitting, training for children's workshops, training of assistants for the chemical industry and typewriter mechanics and repair. The ORT school for building trades in Milan was of particular importance since it was the first Jewish school of its kind in Europe. In the Turin area, ORT vocational training was active both in the refugee camps and in the *bachsharot*, with the DPs attending courses in agricultural training, building construction, corsetry, men's tailoring, dental mechanics, dressmaking, joinery, mechanical knitting, metal work, plumbing, shirt making, tinsmithing, typewriter repair, upholstery and welding. Intensive vocational courses was initiated by ORT also in the Rome area, which included agricultural training, building trades, confectionary, men's and women's tailoring, dental mechanics, embroidery, knitting, ladies's hairdressing, leatherwork, machine knitting, needle trades, plumbing, radio technology, sewing, tailoring and dressmaking, training for mechanics, salesmen, secretaries and television technicians and watch making⁸⁶.

In 1947, an agreement between JDC and ORT arranged the turning over to ORT of the vocational training schemes already active in *bachsharot* and DP camps in Italy. Thanks to the collaboration between the two Jewish organizations, work projects and vocational courses were provided in almost every training farm. APPENDIX 13 is helpful in demonstrating the

⁸⁶ Person, *ORT*, 50-54.

development of these activities among the refugees in 1947, which was the year of strong expansion of the *hachsharah* movement in Italy⁸⁷.

JDC provided vocational training also within their Children's Homes throughout Italy. In particular, ORT was active in Avigliana, running a farming school and handcraft courses; in Selvino with carpentry, locksmithing and toy making shops; and in Nichelino with tailoring and knitting courses. The JDC even organized courses for DP children in Monte Mario: carpentry, locksmithing, handicrafts, and upper leather cutting. In the Children's Home in Nemi, the young DPs were involved both in agricultural and industrial work, with the support of UNRRA and the Italian Ministry of Work. In fact, the JDC in agreement with UNRRA and the Italian Government organized textile industry projects in 15 hachsharot in the southern regions. The Ministry provided the sewing machines and the work project was managed by UNRRA⁸⁸.

Of great interest were the fishing centers of the JDC in Ostia along the Tyrrhenian coast and in Fano on the Adriatic coast. Indeed, this kind of vocational training was rare in Europe, since there was no fishing industry in Austria and Germany, with some exception on the northern Baltic Sea. The Fishing Center in Fano was described by the JDC as «the most unique of our projects»⁸⁹. The School was situated in the small fishing town of Fano, and the refugees was housed in a section of a former fish canning factory put at the disposal of the refugees by the Fano community at no cost. In February 1946, 25 girls and 53 boys were attending the school and by the end of the year, there were 131 students aged 18 to 27 years, of Polish, Hungarian, Rumanian, Yugoslavian and Lithuanian origins, all survivors of concentration camps⁹⁰.

The Fishing School of Fano operated as a *hachsharah* – also known as *Hachsharah Yamit* (Hebrew for “Marine Hachsharah”) – thus functioning under the auspices of OJRI and the financial support of the JDC and UNRRA. For this project, which had a capacity of 150 trainees, the students were selected during 1945 from various UNRRA camps by the *Merkeaz He-Halutz*. The group attending the Fishing School lived as a self-administered community

⁸⁷ AJDC, *Letter from Herbert Katzki to AJDC Rome, Re: Ort - JDC Agreement, March, 17 1947*, G 45-54 / 4 / 13 / 14 / IT.107.

⁸⁸ AJDC, *Work Program – Hachsharot – Italy, March 1947*, in Folder: Reports 1946-1947, Reference Code G 45-54 / 3 / 6 / SM.458, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Subject Matter - G 45-54 / 3 | Record Group: DPs/Survivors/Refugees - G 45-54 / 3 / 6.

⁸⁹ AJDC, *Report on the Hachsharah Fishing Centre Fano, April, 26 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁹⁰ AJDC, *Jewish Youths Learn Seamanship, Fishing Arts in J.D.C. - Aided Center, December, 7 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

with a collective economy, «well-disciplined, eager to work and capable»⁹¹. The professional teaching was conducted in Italian by five instructors from the Italian Government Marine School located in Fano and operated by the Italian Agency for Marine Education. This Agency also placed several classrooms and laboratories at the disposal of the refugee group. The training program included ship captain (second-class), ship engineers, ship-building joiners, sailors and fishers. The classes were organised according to the vocational specialities chosen by the students. Theoretical lessons lasted from 3 to 4 hours daily and included subjects such as navigation, electro technics, ship construction, mechanical drawing, etc. These courses were complemented by practical training, though several obstacles had to be overcome⁹². At the end of their visit to the Fishing School in Fano in April 1947, the JDC representatives commented:

«The Fano project offers excellent vocational training in a field which will do credit to the Jewish refugees, the Jewish people and Palestine. The group hopes to establish a fishing village in Palestine. These students have already proved that they are serious-minded and diligent. Without doubt the theoretical training is in a level with other training of its kind given in Italy. The Marine School in Fano is one of the oldest and best equipped in Italy. The certificates granted by this school receive full recognition in Italy. Those recently granted to our boys have a theoretical validity only because of the shortage of labour in the country but the training will be recognised everywhere»⁹³.

In general, post-war humanitarianism worked towards the rehabilitation of the refugees through vocational training or employment. Though the constant movement of the DPs and the precarious economic conditions of Italy did not allow an optimum realization of the work projects initiated in the refugee camps, the very participation in these programs had a positive influence on the trainees, especially considering that many had survived the extreme trauma of concentration camps.

The program of rehabilitation through work positively influenced the DPs' life in the refugee camps, encouraging them to learn new vocational skills as a fundamental step for starting life anew. The possibility of employment or attending a workshop helped in fighting apathy, and instilled dynamism and rediscovered hope for a better future. It also represented the concrete chance to obtain a visa for resettlement.

In the particular case of the Jewish DPs, work inside the DP camps and the *hachsharot* had a twofold further meaning. It represented firstly a process of amelioration of the trauma of the

⁹¹ AJDC, *Report on the Hachsharah Fishing Centre Fano, April, 26 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

concentration camps, where most of the DPs survived forced labour. The words of Jakob Oleiski - who directed the ORT activities among the Jewish DPs in Germany - in an interview with David Boder, are representative:

DAVID BODER: «As a psychologist, I should like to know what are your greatest . . . greatest difficulties; with what kind of people among the refugees, the [ex] prisoners, do you have the greatest difficulties?»

JACOB OLEISKI: «[A pause—In a solemn tone] You must understand, and so the world in general must comprehend, that we were condemned to perish by labor. [...] Only a small part [of the Jews], the healthier ones, were led away to Germany to the concentration camps, and there they were compelled to work hard physically . . . the hardest physical labor; and the largest part has perished. And as a consequence, a certain 'complex' has developed among the 'liberated Jews,' a negative attitude towards work. And for us, the public workers, the responsible people who stand at the head of the Jewish commonwealth in Germany, it is the task to endeavor to extirpate this negative complex, to eradicate it from the soul of the Jewish person, and to enlighten him and tell [him], 'Times are different and conditions are different; and therefore, the attitude towards work must be entirely different.' And that is the most important job which I am doing at the present. We endeavour, by various methods, to rehabilitate the Jewish person towards work. And by means of this we intend to liberate him from the dark past [?] and prepare him for a brighter and clearer future—with faith in people, faith in life, and faith in himself, since this is the most important thing in achieving a healthy personality»⁹⁴.

Sponsoring work opportunity by the Jewish organizations was in line with the Zionist ideology that glorified manual labour. Work activities among the Jewish refugees helped both to rehabilitate the refugees and to prepare them for 'aliyah. The involvement of the Jewish DPs in the economy of the *bachsharot* through work projects or vocational courses was directed towards both ideological and practical training for their imminent future in *kibbutzim* in *Eretz Israel*.

⁹⁴ David Boder (1886-1961) was a psychologist of Lithuanian origins who lived in United States. Upon the end of World War II, Boder conceived of a project for interviewing displaced persons of the war, in order to investigate the psychological effects of war. In July 1946, Boder travelled Europe: he spent nine weeks conducting 130 interviews in 16 locations in France, Germany, Switzerland and Italy. With the support of the National Institute of Mental Health, Boder transcribed the interviews and began working on a book, published in 1949, see: Boder David, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949). Boder's project could be considered as the first collection of oral interviews among the DPs at war's end, available through the website "Voices of the Holocaust", see: <http://voices.iit.edu/> (accessed October, 3 2016). For Boder's interview to Oleiski, see: http://voices.iit.edu/interview?doc=oleiskij&display=oleiskij_en (accessed October, 3 2016).

Chapter 8

A «Creative» Educational and Cultural Program Schools, Theatre, Music and Art

«Revitalizing» the DPs through Cultural Activities

The educational and cultural activities among the Jewish DPs in Italy did not follow a blueprint, but rather they followed the haphazard lines of development of the general situation of the Jewish refugees. The educational and cultural undertakings were an outgrowth of a combination of facts, stemming from the chaos which followed the gradual liberation of Italy and distribution of the DPs throughout the country in refugee camps, assembly centers, *bachsharot*, *kibbutzim*, rehabilitation centers, children's homes, towns and villages.

Almost immediately, educational activities of one kind or another originated either spontaneously or, more often, through the effort of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine serving in the British Forces. Here again, the *hayalim* played a pioneering role, «anxious to bring the message of the *Yishuv* and world Jewry to the pitiful remnants of Europe's Jewish community»¹.

To achieve this goal, the *Merkeẓ Ha-Plitim* established a Central Education Board, directed by two *halutzim*: Jehuda Herzka and Jakov Montilja. The Board's purpose was «organizing and sponsoring schools and *bachsharot*» and its main goal became the '*aliyah* of children and youth. The Board dealt with all aspects of the education and preparation of the DPs for emigration in Palestine².

At their arrival in Southern Italy, the Jewish soldiers put their first efforts into the already existing school at Ferramonti. This would guarantee continuity in the schooling of its young Jewish students and - at the same time – facilitate launching a Zionist-oriented education program. The already mentioned Zvi Ankouri was a promoter of the idea, and had a leading role its implementation. Ankouri said in a 1974 interview:

«it had been the goal of Ferramonti to change the Hebrew program into Israeli Hebrew, away from Ashkenazi Hebrew and away from the native languages [...]. In the school

¹ AJDC, *Various Reports*, September, 17 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

² CZA, *Report on the Jewish Activities in Italy*, January, 8 1945, Folder: S25/5279 Maṭav Yehudey 'Italia 1944-1945, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection: Political Department (1921-48).

we taught the children Hebrew, songs, dances of Eretz Israel, Jewish history, Zionism and its thinkers, history, geography, etc.»³.

Certainly, the *hayalim* aimed at «revitalizing» the younger Jews and at urging and preparing them to make *‘aliyah*. The soldiers made “education” their keyword and devoted their activities to that goal, thus creating a bottom-up training program for the Jewish DPs in Italy.

According to the reports of the *Merkaẓ Ha-Plitim*, already in July 1944 two schools existed in Bari and in Santa Maria al Bagno camps, organized and managed by the Jewish soldiers⁴. In the ensuing months, the Jewish soldiers and chaplains, advancing with the Allied Army in liberating Italy, continued to open schools and provide educational activities both to the Italian and to the foreign Jews in the country. The war continued until spring 1945 and Italy became the ground of a constant but highly fluid wave of refugees, which made difficult if not impossible planning a structured educational program.

The establishment of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI), in November 1945 marked a turning point in this field. The OJRI established a Culture and Education Department with the objective of filling in the cultural and educational gap in the younger Jewish DPs caused by the six-year war. To this end, the Department began to develop *ad hoc* programs, with the emphasis on providing the DPs in Italy a «national education»⁵.

It was not until January 1946 that a systematic attempt was made to coordinate the activities of all the organizations involved in providing educational programs to the Jewish DPs. This period corresponded with the stabilization of the UNRRA mission in Italy and the change in the administration of the DP camps from SHAEF to UNRRA. With the end of the military operations, SHAEF transferred the care of civilian problems to the refugee agencies. Through a series of agreements, the international and voluntary organizations pledged to cooperate in order to plan the educational and cultural rehabilitation of the refugees.

³ OHD, Zvi Ankouri (interview: Jerusalem, 1974), 8 (147).

⁴ CZA, *Situation and activities after the first transport to Palestine, July 8, 1944*, Folder: S25/22512 Tiq Reuven Shiloach. Duḥot Mi’et Reuven Shiloach 1944, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestine/Israel abroad, Collection: Political Department (1921-48).

⁵ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

In 1946, the JDC underwrote the budget of the Culture and Education Department of OJRI, which worked out a preliminary program of activities and a list of needed supplies. In March, the pocket money system introduced by JDC and UNRRA in the southern camps made some funds available for the educational programs in those camps. At the end of April, both UNRRA and the JDC created an Educational Department of their own since «during the enervating period of waiting, the people should be given the opportunity for education and rehabilitation»⁶.

The Jewish DPs' representative institutions in cooperation with the Jewish voluntary humanitarian organizations began planning a comprehensive educational program. Almost all of these activities were made possible by the support of UNRRA, which had the ultimate responsibility for every phase in refugee life. Indeed, the educational programme in Italy could not be carried out without the concerted action of all the organizations involved in the rehabilitation of the DPs, dealing with the entire range of related problems.

The Cooperation Between the Educational Departments of OJRI and JDC

At the end of 1946, in a report related to the first year of activity of the JDC Education Department, its director G. Gelber foresaw the potential of a planned educational program for the Jewish DPs in Italy:

«the educational programme in Italy cannot be confined to administrative routine, it must be a creative one. No other country in Europe affords such opportunities for educational and cultural activities both from point of view of manpower and institutions and of supplies. [...] Compared with the cost of the other phases of our programme, the money spent for educational and recreational purposes is most productive of morale building values and the most appreciated. I have noted with satisfaction that future plans for the educational work in Italy have been on this assumption. It is my feeling that all agencies concerned will continue to give JDC the fullest measure of cooperation in carrying out the many projects which are in varying stages of realization»⁷.

In accordance with the agreements, the JDC Education Department developed programs in the camps, the *bachsharot* and in the towns. Its programs were designed largely to prepare the refugees for emigration, and included general education, cultural and religious activities, vocational training projects, sports and distribution of supplies for educational, religious and recreational purposes. While the educational activities in the *bachsharot* were the responsibility

⁶ AJDC, *Various Reports, September, 17 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁷ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

of OJRI, the JDC gave regular contributions to its cultural programs, fitting out club and reading rooms in the *bachsharot*, taking active part in establishing dramatic groups and sport teams, paying teachers' salaries and distributing reading and writing material, radio sets and sport equipment⁸.

Also the JDC played a direct educational role in the DP camps, where – in collaboration with UNRRA and camp cultural committees – conducted school programs, kindergartens, Hebrew and English classes, dramatic and choral groups, bands and orchestras, public meetings and lectures, reading rooms, libraries, physical training and sports activities. In 1946, JDC spent 13 million lira for its educational programs, i.e. 2.7% of the total budget of its mission for that year⁹.

From its establishment, the Education Department of the JDC cooperated closely with the corresponding department of OJRI. In 1946, it consisted of a director, an assistant and a librarian and its functions were to recruit and train teachers, both for children and adults; prepare and supervise curricula; distribute school supplies and edit and publish school materials such as textbooks, syllabi; etc.

Though its powerful influence in providing educational opportunities to the Jewish DPs in Italy from the beginning, the Culture and Education Department of OJRI acquired a more organized structure at the end of 1947 when it approved two related institutions. First, the *Va'ad La-Hinukh* (Hebrew for “Educational Committee”), made up of the director of the OJRI Culture and Education Department, and representatives from the *Yishuv* and from the JDC. Second, the *Mo'atze La-Hinukh ve-La-Tarbut* (Hebrew for the “Council for Education and Culture”) which was made up of the director of the Culture and Education Department of OJRI and his corresponding colleague from the *Merkez He-Halutz*, the heads of the *'Aliyat Ha-No'ar*, of the Zionist Federation, of OJRI and representatives from the *Yishuv*¹⁰.

Guided by the representatives of the Yishuv and with the help of the humanitarian organizations, OJRI managed to develop an extensive educational program. Its target was the younger generation among the Jewish DPs and its goal was to strengthen their Jewish identity and to arouse their new national consciousness.

⁸ AJDC, *J.D.C. Program in Italy – 1946, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Mahleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Plitim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duah Šel Ha-Mahleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Plitim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community in Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

Schools and Kindergartens

The Culture and Education Department of OJRI – supported by the JDC- provided all Jewish DPs in Italy aged 3 to 18 years old education in kindergartens, schools and gymnasia. For reasons related to the demographic composition of the Jews in Italy, children until the age of 10 usually attended classes suitable for their age; whereas the older ones were divided into mixed-aged classes¹¹.

In carrying out the children's schooling, the OJRI and JDC met with several recurring problems and obstacles, including difficulty of enlisting teachers, lack of educational materials and the fact that the students did not speak Hebrew in most cases.

In 1947, there were only 100 teachers in Italy working in schools in refugee camps, *bachsharot*, *kibbutzim* and towns. This teacher corps was reported not uniform, too meager and not experienced. Realizing the burning need for more teachers, OJRI attempted to find a solution but this problem continued to plague the Culture and Education Department¹².

Between 1945 and 1948, in cooperation with the JDC and UNRRA, OJRI organized six teacher-training seminars. The courses lasted 2-3 months, with intensive study programs that included Hebrew language and literature, history of Zionism and the Jewish people, geography of Palestine, Bible, and general subjects such as history, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, biology and hygiene, etc. For example, approximately 70 students attended a seminar in Santa Maria di Leuca between the 4th of June and the 15th of July 1946. Nevertheless, even this attempted solution did not produce the hoped-for teachers and instructors for the camps, since many of the seminar students emigrated. Thus, at the end of the seminar, a JDC worker claimed:

«We have not yet decided whether it is worthwhile, under these circumstances, to organize another institute, perhaps on a different basis. It is obvious that, notwithstanding the incontestable value of such an activity for educating young people, it would not in any way help to solve the problem of supplying teachers for our installations»¹³.

On another front, the problem of lack of supplies improved with time, thanks above all to the invaluable help of the JDC. Its Education Department supplied books, including

¹¹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duaḥ Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

¹² Ibid.

¹³ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

textbooks, reference books and novels in Hebrew, Yiddish, German, Polish and many other European languages. Supplies were furnished - according to OJRI specific request - by the JDC, and arrived from the United States, Palestine and Europe (Italy included). For example, in July 1946 the JDC received and distributed a shipment of 8,000 Hebrew volumes arrived from Palestine, in accordance with a list submitted in February from OJRI to the JDC. The shipment included dictionaries, Bibles, children's books, grammars, and textbooks in history, mathematics, chemistry, physics, and geography. This shipment temporarily alleviated the shortage of books in Italy, which continued to made all educational activity extremely precarious. Another problem was that many adult students who were not able to read books in Hebrew; thus Yiddish textbooks were still needed in great quantities. Such books were ordered from JDC New York Office, together with some Yiddish movies and according to the JDC Education Department worker who wrote the report for the first semester of 1946: «the building morale value of this project is inestimable»¹⁴.

Furthermore, JDC supplied all the camps and *bachsharot* with Hebrew newspapers from Palestine, Yiddish newspapers from the USA, England, France and – for a short period – even daily and weekly Swiss newspapers in German. UNRRA contributed stationary and other school supplies and furnished each camp with a Hebrew typewriter. The JDC distributed large quantities of recreational supplies, especially sports articles, radio sets and musical instruments, in accordance with the needs of each camp and *bachsharah*¹⁵.

To enable the professional people among the DPs, such as doctors, dentists, engineers, etc. to catch up with developments in their respective fields – from which they had been estranged by the war – AJDC acquired in Switzerland a technical library of books and periodicals in German. The library was housed in Rome, but books were loaned to every qualified DP anywhere in Italy¹⁶.

In 1947, one year after the establishment of its Culture and Education Department, the OJRI was managing schools and kindergartens in 10 refugee camps in Italy. As reported in APPENDIX 14, in the Northern Region there were schools in Milan Area at Adriatica (114 students), Scuola Cadorna (129 students), Cremona (56 students) and Chiari (98

¹⁴ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628; AJDC, *Various Reports, September, 17 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628; CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Mahleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Plitim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duah Šel Ha-Mahleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Plitim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

¹⁵ AJDC, *Various Reports, September, 17 1946*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

¹⁶ Ibid.

students) as well as those in Turin area, such as Rivoli (120 students) and Grugliasco (60 students). In the Southern Regions, where several DP camps were closed already in early 1947, the number of schools was reduced, at least in the camps. As detailed in APPENDIX 15, OJRI administered schools at Fermo (near Ancona, with 56 students) and in Bari Area at the Transit Camp (14 students) and at Barletta (130 students). In Rome Area there were several educational facilities which served DP in camps and *bachsharot* as well as Italian Jews. Cinecittà DP Camp had its own school, which in 1947 numbered only 7 students since many children of the area attended the school in Rome. This school – named for Haim N. Bialik, considered the national poet of Israel – was managed entirely by OJRI and served DP children of elementary and high school age. At the end of November 1946 there were 30 students, but this number increased with time¹⁷.

OJRI planned an educational program even for children up to five years old. In fact, in 1947 it administered 8 kindergartens in the Italian DP camps. In particular –as reported in APPENDIX 16 - kindergartens were set up at Cremona (16 children), Adriatica (38 children), Scuola Cadorna (35 children), Rivoli (34 children), Grugliasco (25 children), Barletta (33 children), Fermo (21 children), and Chiari (50 children)¹⁸.

Because of the high degree of movement of the refugees in Italy, the number of schools, students and teachers varied constantly. Nevertheless, the main goal of OJRI was to prepare the younger DPs for resettlement in Palestine. For this purpose, OJRI organized special study programs based on the educational system developing at the same time in the *Yishuv*. The study programme was thus an intensive one; most of the lessons were given in Hebrew and students were encouraged to discuss topic related to life in Eretz Israel. The Culture and Education Department of OJRI organized study programs for the schools. Subjects were divided into three main groups – as detailed in APPENDIX 17 - and the management of the education system among the Jewish DPs in Italy was similar to that in *Eretz Israel*. The first group of studies in the curriculum was “Jewish studies” - i.e. Bible studies and Hebrew language and literature which were the subjects the Jewish DP students devoted most of their time to. The second group was “general subjects”, i.e. mathematics, history, geography, geography of *Eretz Israel*, and sciences that were added to the curriculum

¹⁷ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut ‘al-yedey Merqaz ‘Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-’Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duaḥ Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut ‘al-yedey Merqaz ‘Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-’Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

¹⁸ Ibid.

from age 8-9. The third group of studies, termed “artistic subjects” included drawing, music, gymnastics and handcrafts, to which several hours a week were devoted¹⁹.

In some schools, children studied both in the morning and in the afternoon. Usually during the afternoon, they prepared homework or attended cultural, recreational or sport activities. Moreover, in order to stimulate group spirit among the young DPs, several schools ran a *mo'adon* (a Hebrew word meaning “club”). It was a shared space – usually opened between 3 and 6 p.m. - where the students were able to study together in the afternoon or socialize during their free time²⁰.

The scholastic programs activated by the OJRI in collaboration with the JDC in the refugee camps represented an important step towards cultural, educational and moral rehabilitation of the Jewish DPs. They were part of that system of self-government allowed by the international refugee agencies. However - thanks to the autonomy acquired by the Jewish refugees in Italy in the management of camps and *hachsharot* - the educational program became an important vehicle for the spreading the ideology of Zionism and the principle of the *Yishuv*.

Culture and Education in the *Hachsharot*

According to the basic agreement between JDC and OJRI, cultural activities in the *hachsharot* was the responsibility of OJRI. JDC contribution was limited to the furnishing of books and general supplies and the equipping of *mo'adon* rooms. In a 1946 report regarding educational rehabilitation among the Jewish DPs, a JDC worker expressed his disappointment of the cultural situation of the *hachsharot*:

«The present situation in the *hachsharot* seems to suggest that JDC had failed to make any educational or recreational supplies available. The truth is, however, the supplies were made available to the *hachsharot*, but due to the rather fluid nature of the *hachsharot* population, most of the supplies have now disappeared»²¹.

As already stressed, the main obstacles for the successful realization of an educational program within the *hachsharot* were linked to the mobility of the residents and to these collective farms' location, often isolated and far from the main population centers. Another

¹⁹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duaḥ Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

serious problem in the hachsharot was the small number of children of school age in any one installation and JDC recommendation to concentrate families with school age children in a few selected hachsharot - where reasonable educational institutions could be set up – was difficult to carry out.

The OJRI attempted to solve this situation by supporting small schools organized in some *bachsharot* by the DPs themselves. For example in the Turin area, the youth movement *Ha-'Oved* organized two schools for the children residing in its hachsharot: in Nichelino, with 18 students and 2 teachers, and at Villa Margherita in Turin, with 15 students and 2 teachers. Another *bachsharah* associated with *Ha-'Oved* in Cusano Milanino (near Milano) had a school for 8 students taught by one teacher. In the Roma area, in *bachsharot* in Ladispoli, Ostia and at Monte Mario, members of several youth movements organized schools for small groups of 8-9 children; whereas in Anzio *bachsharah* (associated with the Partisans movement) there was a school for 22 children with two teachers²².

The JDC addressed the problem of education in the Rome area *bachsharot* by founding in 1946 the “Hachsharah Institute”, intended to provide an opportunity to those Jewish DPs living in hachsharot to be re-introduced to normal studies. The institute (listed as a JDC “special installation”), was approved by UNRRA and managed in the form of a *bachsharah*. Members of other collective farms would be transferred temporarily to the Institute, and after the completion of the courses, would be transferred to their original *bachsharot*. The educational program of the “Hachsharah Institute” addressed those young Jewish DPs who were eager to study and could not take advantage of Italian institutions because of the language barrier. The JDC Institute curriculum did not stress Palestinian studies to the point of excluding broader aspect of education, though it was considered desirable to conduct classes in Hebrew. The institute operated in cycles of two month terms and served as a first step in the educational and intellectual reawakening²³.

Academic Education

In order to help the Jewish survivors acquire an academic education, the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) established in 1946 a local branch in Italy. This was made possible

²² CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 *Duaḥ Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948*, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

²³ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

thanks to the commitment of Italian Jewry as well as of several international organizations, such as the JDC and the Union Mondiale des Ètudiants Juifs de France. Among the members of the Italian section of the WUJS were both Italian and DP students. However, the Italian students received funding in the beginning only from UCII, and often complained of the lack of support from the JDC²⁴.

In the matter of DP students' assistance, the JDC entered into a cooperative effort with the European Fund for Student Relief (FESE), UNRRA, the Vatican, the Italian Government and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), with the purpose of selecting deserving students and aiding them in handling their complex legal, financial and other problems. However, the financial burden was handled exclusively by JDC. In 1946, approximately 30 students were receiving assistance from the JDC, some at the rate of 6,000 Lira (if they were not receiving UNRRA assistance), others from 1,000 to 3,000 Lira in addition to special grants for books, tuition and supplies. Moreover, the JDC maintained for the academic DP students a "special installation" in Turin, i.e. the Student Hostel (in Hebrew, *Beit Ha- Talmid*). In September 1946, UNRRA agreed to recognize this project as a *bachsharah* for young people, who would receive their academic training in the various institutions of higher learning in Turin. The Student Hostel was opened in December 1946 and during the first years accommodated approximately 50 students (boys and girls). Admission to the Student Hostel was limited to those who were eligible for UNRRA assistance and who were receiving JDC students' assistance²⁵.

The *Beit Ha- Talmid* as well as the above-mentioned special grants guaranteed – to a certain extent - to re-establish the Italian tradition of welcoming foreigner Jewish students in Italian Universities, abruptly interrupted by the Racial Laws and anti-Semitic persecutions²⁶.

²⁴ On this issue see the correspondence between UCII and JDC in: Archivio dell'Unione delle Comunità Ebraiche Italiane (hereafter, AUCEI), Folder 44C Attività assistenziale, Files 21-22: Unione Mondiale degli studenti ebrei 1946-1947, Collection: Attività dell'UCII dal 1934, Series: Enti Vari.

²⁵ YIVO, *The first Anniversary of the Students Home Beyt Hatalmid at Turin, 1947*, Folder 242, Roll 20, Frame 363, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 4: Central Committee Cultural Department, Sub-series: The central cultural conference in Rome, July 1945: Exhibits; AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

²⁶ About the situation of the Jewish students in Italy during the anti-Semitic persecutions, see: Pavan Ilaria and Pelini Francesca, *La doppia epurazione: l'Università di Pisa e le leggi razziali tra guerra e dopoguerra*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009); Signori Elisa, "Una «peregrinatio academica» in età contemporanea. Gli studenti ebrei stranieri nelle università italiane tra le due guerre", in *Annali di storia delle università italiane*, 4 (2000), 139-162; Id., Signori Elisa, "Contro gli studenti: la persecuzione antiebraica negli atenei italiani e le comunità studentesche", in Galimi Valeria and Procacci Giovanni (eds. by), *«Per la difesa della razza». L'applicazione delle leggi antiebraiche nelle università italiane*, (Milano: Unicopli, 2009), 173-210; Id., Signori Elisa, "La gioventù universitaria italiana di fronte alle leggi antiebraiche", in Menozzi Daniele and Mariuzzo Andrea (eds. by), *A settant'anni dalle leggi razziali. Profili culturali, giuridici e istituzionali dell'antisemitismo*, (Roma: Carocci, 2010), 267-303.

Theatre, Music and Concerts

Early in the establishment of OJRI in 1945, the Jewish DPs' leaders constituted an Artists' Ensemble, in order to unite all the Jewish DP artists in Italy for the purpose of spreading the «Hebrew word and song» to all Jewish refugees in Italy²⁷.

At the beginning of summer 1946, the OJRI founded also an Art Department, which dealt with dramatic and musical activities, individual as well as groups of artists. A “special installation” - supported by JDC and coordinated by the Art Department of OJRI - hosted only Jewish artists displaced in Italy: it was the *Kibbutz Omanut* (“Art”, in Hebrew) in Castel Gandolfo, near Rome. The institution had a capacity of 35 residents, and accommodated painters, sculptors, musicians, singers, dancers, writers and journalists. Their task was to prepare material, train instructors, stimulate and organize activities in the field of art as well as to conduct a dramatic group, orchestra, choral groups, etc. that toured the camps and the *bachsharot* at frequent and regular intervals²⁸.

The Jewish DPs in the refugee camps revitalized the long tradition of the Jewish theatre and music after the end of the war. Everywhere, the Jewish survivors managed to organize dramatic circles, orchestras, concerts etc. while they were still displaced in Europe²⁹. In Italy, the Education Departments established by both the JDC and the OJRI gave a great impetus to the development and the expansion of the theatre and music in DP camps and *bachsharot*. Several small acting companies were created at the initiative of DP actors themselves or other DPs interested in learning to act. According to the archival sources collected for this investigation, it appears that the first companies were established in south Italy. A JDC document relating to educational and recreational activities in 1946 reported:

«There are very good theatre group in southern region. One in Santa Maria di Bagni that has performed “Golem” by Leiwik, and other in Santa Maria di leuca that has performed two classic comedies by Shalom Aleichem. Both of these groups are on a quite high level, and are very important for the camp life. UNRRA and JDC are very much interested in encouraging the other camps to follows this example»³⁰.

²⁷ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May, 2 1946*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69.

²⁸ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

²⁹ About the revival of the Yiddish theatre in the DP Camps in Germany, see Ella Florsheim, “Yiddish Theatre in the DP Camps”, *Yad Vashem Studies*, 40/2 (2012), 107-135.

³⁰ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

Some months later, in January 1947, another JDC worker who visited the southern region wrote :

«A Jazz Band was started in Cesarea this month [...]. During the month Santa Maria di Bagni Dramatic Club put on two performances of “Ha-‘Adamah Hazot” by Ashman and the choir held a musical evening. Leuca theatre group was also active, giving a performance of “Shikerte” and “Tuvya the Milkman” by Shalom Aleichem».³¹

Some performances dealt with life in *Eretz Israel* and were inspired by the heroism of the pioneers, as for example the above-mentioned *Ha-‘Adamah Ha-zot* by Aaron Ashman which depicts the sacrifices of the founders of Hadera (near Haifa). Other performances – such as the works of Shalom Aleichem - were indeed operas of the traditional Yiddish theatre that celebrate life in the *shtetl* of Eastern European, as for instance *Tuvya the Milkman* (set in the *shtetl* of 1905 Tsarist Russia).

Dramatic circles sponsored by the JDC and OJRI were active in 1947 in Rivoli DP Camp (near Turin) and Scuola Cadorna (near Milano). Concerts were performed in almost every DP Camp and gramophones and record libraries of classical music were provided. On the 14th of December 1948, *Kibbutz Omanut* organized a concert in Piazza San Macuto, Rome. It was played by an orchestra composed and directed by Jewish DP musicians in Italy at the time, and included both classical music and Yiddish and Chassidic folksongs³².

Theatre and music performances played by the Jewish DPs in refugee camps represented the expression of a sort of “nostalgic” heritage of Diasporic life in Eastern Europe. These helped in strengthening bonds among the DPs and in elaborating the trauma of the *Shoah* also through recreational activities.

Literary Contest, Cultural Congress and Art Exhibition

A group of Jewish refugees founded the Society of Writers, Journalists and Artists, affiliated to OJRI. Members carried a card certifying their membership in the Society. In the period of

³¹ AJDC, *Report for the Month of January 1947*, March 15, 1947, Folder: Italy, Refugees 1947, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 662, Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Refugees - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9.

³² YIVO, *Concert by Omanut, 1948*, Folder 372, Roll 26, Frame 968, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations; YIVO, Expenses for Cultural Activities in Camps during April 1947, Folder 238, Roll 20, Frame 288, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series: Central Committee Cultural Department, Sub Series: The central cultural conference in Rome, July 1945: Exhibits; About the Yiddish music in refugee camps, see: Gilbert Shirly, “«We long for a home»: Songs and Survival among Jewish Displaced Persons”, in Avinoam and Berkowitz, *“We are here*, 257-287

1946-1948, the Society organized two cultural events, which involved the entire Jewish DP population in Italy at that time.

In summer 1946, the Society of Writers, Journalists and Artists launched a literary contest, which called for prose, poetry and theatrical writings about life experiences during the war. The contest took place in June-August 1946 and the board of judges – formed of OJRI members – received approximately 40 works, of which 12 were deemed worthy of a JDC-sponsored prize.³³

Two years later in 1948, the Society of Writers, Journalists and Artists organized the First Cultural Congress of Jewish Refugees, held on the 27th and 28th of July, at the Jewish School in Rome. According to the photo archives of the JDC, the Congress was inaugurated by the Director of the Culture and Education Department of OJRI, Eliezer Yerushalmi, followed by the leader of the Jewish DPs in Italy, Leo Garfunkel. Besides conferences and lectures, several DP organizations had the opportunity to exhibit their works and publications, such as ORT, the *He-Halutz*, the Jewish Partisans League and several artists³⁴.

Both intellectuals and artists displaced in Italy managed to create an active and stimulating group, who proved that the creative spirit was much alive among the Jewish DPs in Italy. In February 1948, the DP artists in Italy organized an exhibition in Rome with the support of OJRI and sponsored by the JDC. For the first time after the war, these young artists had the chance to display their works in a public venue. In that occasion, thus opened the catalogue:

³³ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; YIVO, *Member Card of the Society of Writers, Journalists and Artists, 1948*, Folder 335, Roll 25, Frame 575, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations; AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy, February, 18 1947*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

³⁴ YIVO, *Program of conference, July 27-28, 1948*, Folder 338, Roll 25, Frame 697, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations; AJDC (Photo Archives), First Cultural Congress of Jewish Refugees meeting held at a Jewish School, 1948, Item ID: 572157, Reference Code: NY_53346; AJDC (Photo Archives), *Dr. Yerushalmi, Dir. OJRI, opens the 1st Cultural Congress of Jewish Displaced Persons, 1948*, Item ID: 572169, Reference Code: NY_53349; AJDC (Photo Archives), "Hechalutz" exhibition at the Cultural Congress of Jewish Refugees, with JDC assistance, 1948, Item ID: 572159, Reference Code: NY_53348; AJDC (Photo Archives), ORT exhibition booth at a Cultural Congress of Jewish Refugees showing trainees work products, 1948, Item ID: 572158, Reference Code: NY_53347; AJDC (photo Archives), *Delegates of 1st Cultural Congress of Jewish Refugees examine publications at Jewish Partisan League stand, 1948*, Item ID: 572156, Reference Code: NY_53345; AJDC (Photo Archives), *Haym Khalef shows his carved wood paintings at the OJRI First Cultural Congress in Rome, 1948*, Item ID: 572162, Reference Code: NY_53351.

«This exhibition is being sponsored in order that the directorate and other interested bodies may have an opportunity of seeing the work of the refugee artists and also to bring to public notice the abilities of these students and artists»³⁵.

This exhibition of works by 18 DP artists was organized by OJRI and JDC in Rome at Palazzo Barberini and was open from the 7th until the 10th of February 1948. Originally, it was planned as a two day exhibition, but due to the interest shown by the public, it was extended for a further two days. All of the artists displaying were DPs, 10 residing in hachsharot, 3 in Cinecittà Camp and 5 living in Rome. Eleven of them were studying at the Art Academy (in Italian, Accademia delle Belle Arti) of Rome, seven of the artists were professionals and some had already received international recognition. The artists were of various nationalities, most of them Hungarian and Polish. Among the works exhibited were paintings, drawings, sculptures, postcards, ceramics, wood carvings, dress designs and interior decorations, as reported in APPENDIX 18³⁶.

The exhibition was inaugurated by the Chairman of the JDC Education Department, Mr. Martin Germandof, at an event attended by approximately 130 persons. In all it was estimated that almost 1000 persons visited the exhibition at Palazzo Barberino, amongst whom there were representatives of IRO, ORT, the Italian Jewish Community, Zionist organizations, the US Embassy and the press³⁷.

The success of the exhibition was testified to by the fact that the entire exhibition was bought by the Los Angeles Delegation of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), who were in Rome at the time and visited the exhibition. Thus the works of the Jewish DPs arrived in the United States, where they again shown in public at an exhibition organized by UJA at the Beverly Fairfax Jewish Community Center in Los Angeles, from the 15th of December 1948 until the 15th of January 1949. At the end of this exhibition, the UJA donated the works to two local Jewish institutions³⁸.

³⁵ YIVO, *Art Exhibition of Works by Refugees Artists, 1948*, Folder 373, Roll 26, Frame 996, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations.

³⁶ AJDC, *Letter from A.J.D.C. Rome to A.J.D.C. New York, March, 13 1948*, Folder: Italy, Refugees: Art Exhibition, 1948-1949, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 665, Folder Number: 665, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Refugees - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9; YIVO, *Art Exhibition of Works by Refugees Artists, 1948*, Folder 373, Roll 26, Frame 996, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations. .

³⁷ AJDC, *Letter from A.J.D.C. Rome to A.J.D.C. New York, March, 13 1948*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 665.

³⁸ Except one drawing, all the other works had been acquired by the Los Angeles Delegation of UJA which had paid \$ 2,000,000 to the artists as well as transportation expences, see: AJDC, *Letter from A.J.D.C. Rome to A.J.D.C. New York, March, 13 1948*, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 665; AJDC, *Letter from Benjamin B. Goldman*

Sport

In 1946, OJRI created a Recreational Department and appointed regional supervisors in order to stimulate interest in sports and other recreational activities. Moreover, OJRI, JDC and UNRRA, decided at a meeting during the same year to set up an institute for training physical education instructors³⁹.

According to the JDC delegates, sport was «on a quite high level in camps»⁴⁰. The Jewish DPs demonstrated great interest for sport life. Several sport team was established at the initiative of the refugees themselves, as for example the football club of Santa Maria al Bagno Camp called “Makabi”. The most beloved game was football, but other sports were also played in camps and *bachsharot*: such as volleyball, basketball, athletics, swimming.

Also this kind of recreational activities were a vehicle to strengthen relations among DPs coming from different countries as well as to develop a sense of agonistic-national feeling, stressed by singing the *Tikvah* (future Israeli national anthem) at the end of each match.

Conclusions

The flourishing of such a «creative» and wide-ranging cultural and educational program emphasized the fact that Italy was not only a place where the Jewish DPs passively waited for their resettlement. The above-depicted situation testified to the active and enthusiastic role of the Jewish DPs and their representative institutions in organizing a suitable cultural and educational rehabilitation plan, in collaboration with the *Yishuv* and the Jewish voluntary organizations. Furthermore, it is an evidence of the fact that the refugee camps and the *bachsharot* were indeed a powerful meeting place for the Jewish DPs, which gave birth to a vibrant “community in transit”.

In the marginality produced by the displacement, the multilingual Jewish DPs attempted to speak the same language: Hebrew, the language of the *Yishuv*. The extraterritoriality of the refugee camps, the yearning for a new life as well as the fundamental support of the Jewish voluntary organizations and the influence exercised by the *Yishuv* contributed to the creation of a successful environment where the “surviving remnants” elaborated their personal experiences and shaped a new collective national identity.

to Mr. Leo Gallin, May, 12 1948, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 665; AJDC, *Memorandum from S.H. Bucholtz to Wm. Katz*, February 9, 1949, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 9 / 665.

³⁹ AJDC, *Various Reports*, September, 17 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

⁴⁰ AJDC, *Contents: Country – Italy*, February, 18 1947, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

The DP camp became a dynamic place where its inhabitants shared a common past and actively strove to secure themselves a better future. Thus, the Jewish displacement marked the “slow transition” from a diasporic environment to a normal life in an expected national context.

Part Four

**JEWS IN POST-WAR ITALY
FROM A SHARED PAST TO A COMMON FUTURE?**

Chapter 9

Jewish DPs and Italian Jews

Connections and Goals

Parallel Paths...

This investigation would not be complete without considering the relationship between Italian Jewry and the Jewish refugees in post-war Italy. The post-war Italian Jewish communities were far from being a monolithic entity sharing the same ideals and goals and therefore the term “Italian Jewry” could lead to a misunderstanding. Thus, in talking about “Italian Jewry” in this chapter, it will mostly refer to its representative institution: the Union of the Italian Israelite Communities (UCII).

The intention is to shed light on those elements and events that linked the history of Jewish DPs in Italy to that of Italian Jews, immediately after the liberation. The question running through this last chapter is what was the impact on Italian Jews of the passage through Italy of thousands of foreign Jews en route to Palestine? Both the local Jews and the DPs underwent a rehabilitation process after years of persecution and forced migration and, with the help of the *Yishuv* (*hayalim*, *shlibim* as well as underground organization) and humanitarian associations, they adopted a new organization and new goals.

In re-shaping their identity after the Shoah, both the Italian Jews and the displaced Jews who passed through Italy aimed at involving the younger generation, encouraging the establishment of Zionist-orientated associations and enhancing cultural activities. However, notwithstanding these similarities, the vast majority of the Italian Jews remained firmly rooted in their homeland, whereas most of the Jewish DPs in Italy chose to join *hachsharot* and prepare themselves for *‘aliyah*.

After the Liberation of Rome in June 1944, Italian Jewry was «torn by dissensions and factions», as reported by JDC representative Max Perlman after his visit in Italy¹. In fact, on the 7th of July 1944, Colonel Charles Poletti, the Allied Governor of Rome, disbanded the

¹ AJDC, *JDC Representative Describe Conditions in Italy, December, 13 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

Jewish Rome Community Board and replaced the president Ugo Foa with a special commissioner, Silvio Ottolenghi. Several months later, the military authorities recalled Israel Zolli to the post of Chief Rabbi of Rome. These appointments were highly criticized by Italian Jews for several reasons. Ottolenghi, nationalist and anti-Zionist, was known for his fascist connections; and Zolli, besides being close to fascist circles, was seen by the Roman Jews as the one who abandoned his community in its darkest period and took refuge in the Vatican. Both the above appointments lasted until the elections held in February 1945, during which Vitale Milano was elected President of the Jewish Community of Rome. At the same time Zolli resigned, revealing his conversion to Catholicism. The new president appointed as Chief Rabbi David Prato, who returned from Palestine, holding that position until his death in 1951. These events led also to the resignation of Dante Almansì, President of UCII, who was replaced by a special commissioner, Joseph Nathan, appointed by the Italian Ministry of Interior. Nathan was unpopular within Italian Zionist circles, and was accepted not because of any consensus among the Italian Jews, but rather because of his diplomatic relations with the Allies. Nathan's term of office lasted until the election of Raffaele Cantoni in March of 1946².

Hence, with the Liberation of Rome, the Jewish Community sought a radical and deep change in its leadership. Italian Jewry, strongly assimilated before the war, experienced during the years of the war and afterwards a serious identity crisis. Italian Zionism, which before the war mainly took the form of religious rediscovery rather than a Palestine-oriented political movement, underwent a deep transformation by the end of the war³. The presence of the soldiers from the Yishuv, the Jewish Chaplains within the Allied Armies and the support of the Jewish organizations were instrumental in this process of identity renewal. The combined activities of these people and organizations spread new ideals among the Italian Jews, inspiring a new sense of community and an active participation in the cultural, social and political life of the community itself.

² AJDC, *JDC Representative Describe Conditions in Italy, December, 13 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720; for an analysis of the Italian Jewry after the Liberation of Rome see: Guri Schwartz, *Ritrovare se stessi. Gli ebrei nell'Italia postfascista*, (Bari: Laterza, 2004), 28-35; Id. "The Reconstruction of the Jewish Life in Italy After World War II", *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 8:3 (2009), 360-377

³ A relevant role towards a "national rediscovery" among the Italian Jews was played by Dante Lattes, see: Marzano Arturo, *Una terra per rinascere. Gli ebrei italiani e l'emigrazione in Palestina prima della Guerra (1920-1940)*, (Genova-Milano: Marietti, 2003), 19-23; About the peculiar features of the Italian Zionism see: Cavaglion Alberto, "Tendenze nazionali e albori sionistici", in Vivanti Corrado (ed. by), *Gli ebrei in Italia. Dall'Emancipazione a oggi*, *Storia d'Italia*, Annali, vol. 11/2, (Torino: Einaudi, 1997), 1293-1319.

From the beginning, the activities and the programs first of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine and then of the Jewish organizations were directed both towards the Jewish refugees in Italy and the Italian Jews. The aid-givers guided and supported all the “surviving remnants” in their “return to life”, aiming at the reconstruction of the Italian Jewish institutions as well as at the rehabilitation of all the Jews in Italy at that time.

As described in the previous chapters, the first actions of the Jewish soldiers focused on screening and estimating the number of Jews on Italian soil and on establishing a plan for their immediate relief⁴. For this purpose, the soldiers established the *Merkeẓ ha-Plitim* in Bari, later transformed into the more generic *Merkeẓ la-Golah*, which coordinated Zionist activities directed both to the refugees and to the local Jews.

After the liberation of Rome the *Merkeẓ* - managed by Jewish soldiers acting on behalf of the Jewish Agency – was moved to Rome, in order to centralize the relief work in Italy. Gradually, the institutions and services that had been established by the *Plugot* and then by the Jewish Brigade in order to respond to the refugee emergency became more structured, guaranteeing both material and ideological support to all Jews in Italy.

«The work of those soldiers is an important chapter, perhaps the most important of contemporary Jewish history», wrote Umberto Nahon in his memorandum to the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry. Beyond the words of praise by the Jewish Agency representative in Italy, the encounter between the Jewish soldiers and the Jews in Italy was without doubt the first impulse towards the organization of the community of Italian Jews as well as that of the Jewish DPs⁵.

With the end of military operations, the Jewish voluntary organizations continued working for the same goals, following the guidelines of post-war humanitarianism. The mission of the main Jewish organizations that worked in Italy after the war (especially, JDC and ORT) combined financial aid with organizational and ideological support. Their activities aimed at rehabilitating individuals in order to make them again self-sufficient, responsible and involved in social life. The words of Max Perlman (JDC representative), released at the press conference following his return to the United States at the end of 1944, are sufficient to give an idea of the involvement of these organizations had in rehabilitating the local Jewish community:

⁴ See Chapter 2.

⁵ About the first actions undertaken by the *hayalim* in order to rescue Italian Jews, see: Porat, “One Side of a Jewish Triangle in Italy”.

«When JDC entered liberated Rome, we felt that it was important that the Jewish Community there begin to reconstitute itself and reopen its institutions. With the help of AMG [Allied Military Government], we gathered a group of 25 of the leading Roman Jews together for purpose of getting them to assume as much financial responsibility as possible for their own communities. [...] Rome's Jewish cultural, religious, welfare and educational institutions have reopened and will shortly be functioning on a pre-war scale. Finally plans for reopening the hospital and orphanage have been completed. Already in operation are a nursery, kindergarten, home for aged, schools, synagogues, a hostel and a soup kitchen»⁶.

This process of reconstruction of the Jewish institutions, synagogues, schools, hospitals, etc. (in part illustrated in the previous chapters) was expanded to all the Jewish communities in Italy. It took a long time and continued even after the DPs' departure from Italy.

Italian Jewry could count on the assistance of Jewish voluntary organizations even after the post-war refugee problem in Italy was almost totally resolved in the fifties. In particular, ORT continued to offer its vocational training courses to the youngest generation of Italian Jews above all in Milan and Rome areas, «in the name of the Jewish tradition»⁷. Although the focus of the JDC mission moved to North Africa in the '50s, the JDC continued to provide basic financial support to UCII. Moreover, after the signing of the Luxemburg Agreements in 1952⁸, the Federal Republic of Germany was required to pay 450 million German Marks for the relief, rehabilitation and resettlement of Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, and the JDC was charged with the distribution of this fund. Thus, between 1954 and 1964, the JDC was still supporting the UCII, providing it with 7.271.884 dollars⁹. As stated by Italian historian Guri Schwarz, the collaboration with the JDC helped in centralizing and in strengthening the role of UCII to the detriment of the single communities¹⁰.

The same process occurred among the Jewish refugees, who were encouraged to centralize their leadership in one institution, which from 1945 became the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI). Although UCII already existed and OJRI was established as the result of a series of factors – both organizations proved to be the answer to the international

⁶ AJDC, *JDC Representative Describe Conditions in Italy, December, 13 1944*, NY AR193344 / 4 / 36 / 2 / 720.

⁷ CAHJP, IT/IT 852.

⁸ The Luxemburg Agreements, also known as “Reparations Agreements” called for the enactment of laws that would compensate Nazi victims directly for indemnification and restitution claims arising from Nazi persecution. They were signed by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (also known as Claims Conference), which represented 23 major Jewish national and international organizations. For the history of the Claims Conference, Zweig W. Ronald, *German Reparations and the Jewish World: A History of the Claims Conference*, (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

⁹ Zweig, *German reparation*, 67-ff.

¹⁰ Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 44.

relief organizations' desire of to deal with only a few representative institutions of the local and the displaced Jews. Supported by the JDC and other international relief organizations, UCII and OJRI played an important role in leading their own community.

Being the first European country to be liberated in World War II, Italy was the first area where Jewish survivors came in contact with representatives of the Yishuv as well as of the Jewish humanitarian organizations. With this encounter, both Italian Jews and DPs received immediate relief and started on the road of rehabilitation, reorganizing their lives as individuals and as communities and planning their future goals. In this historical conjecture, Italian and displaced Jews in the peninsula walked on parallel paths in the attempt to begin anew after years of persecutions and forced migrations. Taking into account the particularities of these two groups, several questions arise. Did their final goals coincide? Did they collaborate at some point? Did they help each other? If yes, when and how? If not, why?

...Towards a Crossroads?

The previous chapters described and analysed the administrative, political, social and cultural organization of the Jewish DPs in Italy. In summary, the DPs managed and governed themselves through a hierarchical system, and with the aid of a network of organizations, institutions and agencies, they were able to take part in their own administration, to live in *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim*, to attend schools, workshops and vocational training courses, to publish journals and magazines, and to organize theatrical performances, literary contests, concerts and art exhibitions. All these activities - often Zionist-oriented - strengthened the unity of the Jewish DPs in transit through Italy and instilled a sense of belonging to *Eretz Israel*. The educational activities and the goals of the new education program of UCII followed a similar path.

The purpose of this chapter is not to trace here the history of Italian Jewry in the post-war era, since many outstanding historians already analysed this topic. Instead, it will highlight those similarities in the path towards a new beginning undertaken at the same time by the Italian Jews and the Jewish DPs in Italy that eventually met at the crossroads, at least in terms of affiliation to Zionism and emigration to Palestine.

Taking example from the projects initiated by Jewish soldiers and the Jewish organizations, the UCII centralized its authority, established stronger contacts with the *Yishuv* as well as with the World Jewish Congress, and aimed above all at providing a "Jewish education" to the younger generation of Italian Jews.

In 1946, after the election of Raffaele Cantoni as president of UCII, a renewed Jewish leadership began debating the political, social and cultural position of Italian Jewry in the aftermath of the war. The minutes of the meetings of the UCII Board are evidence of the uneven attitude of the Italian Jews, who – after the *Shoah* - tended towards a “Jewish regeneration” confronting their assimilation in Italian society¹¹.

In general, the minutes of UCII demonstrate that the debate among the Italian Jewish leaders was deeply connected to the socio-political development of post-war Italy. From the first meeting after the election of the new president of UCII, the discussion among the members of UCII concerned above all the role that Judaism would play in the newly established Italian Republic. In the period of 1946-1947, the Constitution Assembly was preparing the Italian constitution and the UCII Board avidly debated questions such as secularism and state religion¹².

While most Italian Jews still perceived Italy as their homeland, the UCII had to deal with widespread assimilation. In the words of Rabbi Prato, UCII attempted «swimming upstream in the river of widespread assimilation»¹³. The first step in “fighting” assimilation was the establishment of the Cultural and Education Department of UCII, entrusted to Dante Lattes who – after making ‘aliyah in 1939 - had returned to Italy. In similarity to the parallel department of the OJRI, the UCII department was charged with guiding the educational and cultural programs of the Italian Jews’ representative institutions. Its main goal was the reorganization of the schools and the preparation of a suitable study program. The “schools for Jews” of the fascist era would become “Jewish schools”, institutions where the pupils would receive a “Jewish education”¹⁴. Another major goal of UCII after the war was the renewal of its editorial activities. The weekly newspaper *Israel* became the official press organization of UCII. Between 1944 and 1948, this weekly newspaper devoted much

¹¹ In particular, see Ottolenghi’s intervention at the meeting of the UCII Board on July 14, 1947, in CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell’UCII del 14 Luglio 1947*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell’Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verballi del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

¹² See in particular the minutes of the UCII Board between July 1946 and March 1947 in CAHJP, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell’Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verballi del Consiglio, 1946-1952

¹³ These words were written by Rabbi Prato in the editorial article of the *Echo* of the Jewish Education published in June 1946, in CAHJP, *La voce dell’educazione ebraica di giugno 1946*, Archivio U. S. Nahon P239, File 16 Missione in Italia di Umebrto Nahon, rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

¹⁴ Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 62-70; Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 189-192; Piussi Anna Maria, *E li insegnerai ai tuoi figli: educazione ebraica in Italia dalle leggi razziali ad oggi*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 1997); see also: CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell’UCII del 23 e 24 Luglio 1947*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell’Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verballi del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

of its articles to the activities of the *halutzim* in the Yishuv as well as to the newly established Italian Jewish youth associations¹⁵. The revival of Jewish life in Italy gave birth also to the *Eco dell'Educazione Ebraica* (Italian for “Echo of the Jewish Education), a journal affiliated with the Cultural and Educational Department of UCII¹⁶. This journal functioned as a sort of newsletter directed in particular to teachers of the Jewish schools in Italy, with the purpose of updating them about innovative teaching methods, study programs and seminars.

It is important to point out that, contrary to OJRI, UCII - though recognizing the pioneering work of the Jewish soldiers – decided to stress different priorities in the education plans initiated by the Jewish soldiers. In fact, the Cultural and Educational Department aimed at «correcting their mistakes», as declared in the first edition of the *Eco dell'Educazione Ebraica* published in June 1946:

«The hayalim [the Jewish soldiers], almost everywhere, have completely abandoned the field where they had worked so fruitfully. There is a tendency to accentuate the mistakes they had committed in their enthusiastic work, in order to return to the dark pre-war situation whose results are now evident in the ignorance, not to say the Jewish illiteracy, of the adults today. It is clear that the hayalim have achieved admirable results, rejuvenating the teaching spirit and creating an enthusiastic atmosphere among the younger Jews. Their mistakes resulted from two factors. On the one hand, because of their lack of knowledge of the [Italian] environment, they were not able to prepare suitable programs and books for the Italian schools and for the knowledge of the younger generations [of Italian Jews] in the field of Jewish studies. On the other hand, because of their ideological stance, they have not taken into due account the subjects relating to “religion” which are the backbone of the Jewish school. These mistakes must be corrected, and we need to continue their work towards the creation of a Jewish consciousness, bearing in mind that the living Hebrew language is the essential factor of Italian Jewry»¹⁷.

Thus, while OJRI viewed the work of the Jewish soldiers in the field of education as models to be reproduced and improved in refugee camps and *bachsharot*, the Cultural and Educational Department of UCII gradually changed and adapted the educational program of the *hayalim* to the needs of the Italian Jewish Community. UCII recognized the teaching of Modern Hebrew as fundamental, but at the same time gave more importance to subjects relating to

¹⁵ Marzano Arturo, “«Prisoners of Hope» or «Amnesia»? The Italian Holocaust Survivors and Their Aliyah to Israel”, in Laura Brazzo and Guri Schwarz (eds. by), *Jews in Europe after the Shoah. Studies and Research Perspectives, in Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of Fondazione CDEC*, 1 (April 2010), 99.

¹⁶ Moreover, another newspaper of UCII was published again from 1948, i.e. *La Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, directed by Dante Lattes until 1965.

¹⁷ From the first issue of the Echo of the Jewish Education published in June 1946, in CAHJP, *La voce dell'educazione ebraica di giugno 1946*, Archivio U. S. Nahon P239, File 16 Missione in Italia di Umebrto Nahon, rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

the Jewish traditions and to the recent history of the Jewish people. With this in mind, UCII planned a uniform study program to be applied by all the Jewish communities in Italy. Moreover, it prepared and published special textbooks for the educational needs of Italian Jews. Nevertheless, in similarity to the Cultural and Educational Department of OJRI, the main difficulty of UCII was the lack of teachers who knew Hebrew and who had an education in line with the curriculum proposed in the new Jewish schools. To meet this challenge, the UCII organized seminars with the purpose of training young teachers. To this end, UCII established in 1946 the *Histadrut Ha-Morim Italkim* (Association of Jewish Teachers in Italy). In another step to provide for the lack of teachers, the *Histadrut Ha-Morim* asked for the help of its corresponding association in *Eretz Israel*, requesting the *Yishuv* to send teachers not only to the Jewish DPs but also for the schools attended by Italian Jews¹⁸. The effort by UCII to “downplay” those aspects of education relating to *halutzism* and the preparation for ‘*aliyah*’ was probably criticized by the *He-Halutz* movement, to whom only a small number of Italian Jews were affiliated.

It appears that the UCII sought to provide Italian Jews with a Jewish education, to facilitate a rediscovery of roots in order to strengthen the Jewish identity of Italian Jews. As the historian Guri Schwarz pointed out:

«With the small group of people who worked in close harmony with him and counting also on the support of the rabbinate, Raffaele Cantoni could develop an active intervention policy within the Italian Jewish life. This policy was intended to guide the Community towards the achievement of a different and stronger self-consciousness. This included the idea that Jewish identity as an element should no longer be relegated to the intimacy of individual consciences; rather it should manifest itself in a more cohesive and shared community life, according to a model inspired by traditional ideals and aspirations of the Italian Zionism. The support for Israel was linked to the recovery of Jewish roots and the creation of a most vivid and intense community bond, in a comprehensive cultural pattern in which the memory of the extermination played a key role»¹⁹.

Assuming that *Shoah* and Zionism were two fundamental aspects in the redefinition of the Italian Jewish identity, did the presence of thousands of Jewish DPs in Italy further influence this process?

¹⁸ See AUCEI, Box 44C Attività Assistenziale, File 23 Associazione insegnanti ebrei di Italia 1946 and File 24 Associazione insegnanti ebrei in Italia 1947, Series: Enti Assistenziali, Collection: Attività dell'UCII dai 1934.

¹⁹ Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 54.

Surprisingly, the local Jews and the Jewish DPs in Italy acted as “separate” communities walking on parallel paths, in spite of sharing both the trauma of the *Sboah* and the need for rehabilitation in the aftermath of the war. In fact, exploring the relationship between the two communities, it appears that their contacts were limited to the institutional level. As we will see in the next section, the political support of Italian Jewry as mediator between the Italian Government and the Jewish DPs was crucial. However, the sense of unity and the feeling of belonging in *Eretz Israel*, which moved the Jewish DPs and their leaders to fight for the right to make *‘aliyah*, did not equally affect Italian Jewry. Thus, the Italian Jews supported the Jewish DPs’ demonstrations for *‘aliyah*, though implicitly excluding themselves from the refugees’ claims. On the other hand, it should be emphasized that «Zionist activities» initiated by the Jewish soldiers appealed also to a small number of Italian Jews, who decided to join *bachsharot* in order to make *‘aliyah*.

The Relationship Between the Italian Jews and the Jewish DPs

The involvement of Italian Jews in rescuing non-Italian Jewish exiles, refugees and DPs who found temporary shelter in Italy, began at least two decades before the post-war refugee emergency. In particular, the activity of the DELASEM testified the fundamental role of Italian Jews in this field.

As already described in the previous chapters, the committee of the DELASEM made continuous efforts to support Jewish refugees, even when its leaders were forced to go underground. When the Allied Army liberated the southern regions, DELASEM became the basis upon which the network of humanitarian assistance for the Jewish DPs was built up. In spite of its own precarious situation, the DELASEM was the first Italian Jewish institution that the Jewish soldiers from the *Yishuv* encountered in the country and to whom they referred to in order to structure a plan for the relief of Jewish survivors in Italy.

After the end of the war and the reorganization of the leading Italian Jewish institutions, what was the attitude of Italian Jewry – in particular, of UCII – towards the Jewish DPs in Italy? Did UCII collaborate with or support OJRI? If so, when and, why? The minutes of the UCII Board - as well as the institutional position undertaken by Raffaele Cantoni while he was President of UCII - are interesting sources that can help to answer these questions.

After the end of World War II, Cantoni was among those Italian Jews who supported the relief activities for the Jewish refugees, attempting to reconcile it with his new institutional

responsibilities. Between April 1945 and March 1946, he was appointed Special Commissioner of the Jewish Community of Milan, actively participating in the organization of the facility in Via Unione 5, which became the core of Jewish activities directed to the DPs in Northern Italy²⁰. Moreover, when Cantoni was elected President of UCII, this Italian Jewish representative institution began to deal also with problems related to the Jewish DPs in Italy.

In the period of 1946-1947, the Jewish DP emergency in Italy was debated by UCII as a matter of «responsibility» and in close relation with the redefinition of the position that Italian Jewry acquired in post-war Italy. In order to understand the situation in the proper frame, it is important to note that, in general the discussions of the UCII Board revolved mainly around issues relating to the reorganization of Italian Jewry itself rather than to the refugee emergency. Deliberations relating to the presence of the non-Italian Jewish refugees in Italy were linked to specific circumstances: such as arrivals and departures of Jews from other countries, the general management of the refugees, and above all incidents occurring in the refugee camps.

The minutes of UCII meetings point out that the Union of the Communities functioned as a sort of mediator with the Italian Government in order to obtain permission both for the arrivals and the departures of Jewish DPs in/from the country to Palestine or overseas. For example, during a meeting of the UCII Board in July 1946, Raffaele Cantoni informed the members about the ongoing negotiations with the Italian Government for obtaining approval for the entry of 3,000 Jewish refugees from Poland. He reported the support of both the JDC and American Jewry as well as he expressed the hope that UNRRA would undertake assistance of this group of refugees so as not let this burden fall upon the Italian Government²¹. The fleeing of the Polish Jews occurred in consequence of the Kielce pogrom in Poland, when on the 4th of July 1946 soldiers, police officers, and civilians murdered 42 Jews and wounded over 40. UCII and other representatives of Italian Jewry were called upon to intervene with the Italian government in several similar cases and – as Mario Toscano had already pointed out – were involved in part even in the organization of the *Mossad le-‘aliyah Be’*²².

²⁰ About Via Unione, see: Villani, “Milano, via Unione 5”.

²¹ CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell’UCII del 23-24 Luglio 1946*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell’Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verbali del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

²² See, Toscano, *Porta di Sion*.

In light of the archival sources examined for this investigation, the role played by UCII of mediator with the Italian authorities, in conjunction with the entrance and exit of Jewish refugees in the country, can be understood as a balance of several factors. First, there was the traditional attitude of Italian Jews welcoming Jewish refugees, confirmed by at least two decades of philanthropic activities. Second, the tragic experience of the war had united the Jewish communities of the Diaspora in a common fate. Third, it appears that UCII was able to provide this vital contribution to the refugees in Italy by taking advantage of the temporary readiness of the Italian Government to welcome foreign Jews as means of redeeming Italy from its recent Fascist past. Fourthly, the Italian Government was nevertheless anxious to allow the DPs to leave the country, and thus reduce their number, out of concern that their rehabilitation would be an economic burden on the government, as well as out of fear that they would ultimately demand citizenship. This of course made the task of liaising with the new Italian Government easier, and facilitated the UCII's desire to establish cooperative relations with the Government.²³

In this context, it should be noted that it was also in the interest of UCII to seek solutions in cooperation with «representatives of the refugees» in order to stem the tide of riots and incidents in which some Jewish refugees were involved between 1946 and 1947. In fact, especially since 1946, a series of incidents occurred in the assembly centers, and some refugees – obviously, not only Jews - were charged with crimes such as theft, black marketeering, and possession of weapons. To halt this situation, the Ministry of Interior decided to temporarily reactivate the former concentration camp in Fossoli (near Modena) and use it as a detention camp for “unwanted” refugees, including some Jews. This development was discussed in the meetings of the UCII Board between 1946 and 1947. Cantoni often endorsed intervention by UCII since

«[though] the organization in the camp is not that bad[...] the concentration camp of Fossoli was the departure point to the death camps for those Jews captured by Nazis and Fascists in Italy. Thus, from a psychological point of view, it appears as the least suited place for the internment of Jews, who miraculously escaped the death camps. [...] Criminals should be punished according to the rules of the Criminal Code, not illegally²⁴».

²³ CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell'UCII del 23-24 Luglio 1946*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell'Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verbali del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

²⁴ Ibid.

UCII repeatedly debated the subject of Fossoli detention camp; one member even called for the intervention of the World Jewish Congress. Cantoni, however, firmly believed that solving the problem from the bottom, in cooperation with the OJRI, would be more decisive²⁵:

«Due to the difficulties with the Italian authorities, it is necessary to establish a constant contact with the refugees since they are constantly in circulation and create incidents. It is necessary that communities maintain close contact with the refugees to make them understand what is the right behaviour and to help them when it is necessary, since, in most cases, more favourable solutions are determined by the intervention of the community and their representatives²⁶».

The activation of the detention camp of Fossoli – where in 1947, 138 of the 400 interned were Jews – shocked public opinion. Like in Germany, where several former concentration camps became refugee camps, the Jewish survivors were often compelled to live with the very perpetrators of their persecution. In fact, among those interned in Fossoli, were refugees accused of minor crimes as well as Nazi and Fascist criminals. Several institutions (such as UCII and the JDC), individuals (both Italian and foreigners) and the international press called for the immediate closure of the camp. Nevertheless, Fossoli camp was dismantled only in 1952 and, during those years, other Jews continued to be interned there²⁷.

In analysing the archival sources, it appears that interactions between UCII and OJRI were rare, and linked mainly to public events. This is also evident from the fact that Raffaele Cantoni himself, talking to members of the UCII Board, often called for closer contact with the representatives of the refugees. In fact, there is no evidence of direct contact between Raffaele Cantoni and Leon Garfunkel (President of OJRI), with the exception of few formal occasions and occasional correspondence. Indeed, the minutes of the UCII Board demonstrate that the Italian Jewish leaders monitored the refugee emergency through the more constant and enduring relations with the representatives of JDC.

The only public event planned by UCII in collaboration with OJRI was probably the demonstration against the policy of the British Mandate, which took place in Rome on the

²⁵ In particular, see Treves' intervention during the UCII Board of July, 23-24 1946, in CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell'UCII del 23-24 Luglio 1946*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell'Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verbali del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

²⁶ CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell'UCII del 24-25 Marzo 1947*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell'Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verbali del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

²⁷ Villa, *Dai Lager alla terra promessa*, 252-258; Minerbi, *Un ebreo*, 242-244.

2nd of July 1946. The demonstration was organized in order to «invoke the immediate cessation of the Jewish people's pains», following the British military operations in Palestine on the 29th of June 1946²⁸. During that Saturday, also known as “Black Shabbat”, the British authorities – in an attempt to halt the escalation of violence in Palestine - conducted a military operation which led to the mass detention of several representatives of the Yishuv and the Jewish Agency. On the 30th of June 1946, after news of the operation was broadcast, «the Jews of Italy» established an Emergency Committee composed of the presidents of UCII, OJRI and the Italian Zionist Federation:

«This Committee had decided – among its other deliberations - that on the next Tuesday [July, 2 1946] the Jews of Italy will participate in a fast, from sunrise to sunset. On the same day, from 10 AM to 12 PM the Jews will not work in any field and will close their commercial activities. Moreover, on Tuesday all the larger Communities will organize meetings during which the Jews will express in clear words their disapproval and protest. Thus, the Jews will manifest by seriousness and composure the mourning for the people affected by the action of the British Mandate, even after the suffering endured during the years of Nazi barbarism and despite the contribution they gave to victory on all battlefields, with their work and blood»²⁹.

The speech delivered by Raffaele Cantoni during the demonstration of July 2nd was symbolic of Italian Jewry's position, at least the institutional one, towards the Jewish refugees in the country. On the one hand, he expressed his utmost support and solidarity with the Jewish DPs who – despite the sufferings of the past years – were prevented from migrating to Palestine because of the White Paper. On the other hand, the speech of the UCII President revealed a greater affinity of Italian Jewry with the Italian people themselves, rather than with the Jewish people of the Diaspora unified by the tragic event of the *Shoah*. To a certain extent, Cantoni focused more on the position of the Italian people after the war than on the “Jewish problem”. In the attempt to shed light on the image of a new Italy redeemed by its «mistakes», Cantoni said:

«[...] Italy has paid the price of their mistakes and, from September, 8 [1943] to the liberation, has suffered so much as to think that – despite being a co-belligerent country – it would deserve another treatment. Instead, the chance to live freely in our fathers' land is denied both to the Italian and the Jewish people. Italian people are deprived of their native soil [by the British Army]; the Jewish people are prevented from reaching

²⁸ CAHJP, *Manifestazione di protesta degli ebrei in Italia, June, 30 1946*, P239 Archivio U. S. Nahon, File 16 Missione in Italia di Umberto Nahon, rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

²⁹ Ibid.

what has been the object of struggle for several generations and has been pledged won with hundreds of thousands of deaths and immense suffering».

Cantoni, placing himself on the side of the Italian people and not of the "surviving remnant", views the reception of the Jewish DPs in Italy as a «propitiatory atonement». Finally, the president of UCII demonstrated in his speech his solidarity with the *Yishuv* especially in light of the events of "Black Sabbath". He strongly criticized the policy of the White Paper and made reference to the «broken promise» of the Balfour Declaration that had supported a Jewish national home in Palestine. Nevertheless, he saw the problems relating to the *Yishuv* and the difficulty of making *'aliyah*, as obstacles that involved almost exclusively the refugees, rather than Italian Jews.

Cantoni devoted a great part of his life to help all those Jews who – being forced to leave their home countries because of antisemitism– passed through Italy in the Thirties and the Forties. Along with his authentic commitment to assist the Jewish refugees in all the stages of their journey in Italy, it could be said that Cantoni's attitude towards the non-Italian Jewish DPs in the country is representative of that of the Italian Jewry.

Over two decades, Italian Jewry developed a network of agencies, organizations and individuals that worked to assist the Jews of the Diaspora affected by the waves of anti-Semitism in Europe in the first half of the twentieth century. Quoting the titles of the books of two historians who explored the role that Italy played in saving foreign Jews before and after the Second World War, in the course of a few years Italy developed from a "*Precarious Refuge*" and became the "*Gate to Zion*". In fact, at the end of the war, when many Jewish refugees realized the impossibility of returning to their countries of origin, Italy became the main port of embarkation for Palestine.

In the struggle of the Jewish survivors for *'aliyah*, Italian Jewry tenaciously sided with the Jewish DPs on several occasions. Nevertheless, it is especially on the subject of emigration to Palestine that the gap between Italian Jews and foreign Jewish DPs became evident. While for Jewish refugees, the Shoah was a decisive motivation towards the choice of *'aliyah*, the same drive occurred only among a minority of Italian Jews.

The reasons why the majority of Italian Jews chose to remain in Italy have already been the subject of historical debates; but for the minority of Italians who chose to resettle in Palestine, was their choice affected by the presence of Jewish DPs in Italy?

'Aliyah from Italy: Individual vs. Collective Choice

In similarity to OJRI, UCII also decided to devote special attention to involving the younger Italian Jews in the renewed activities of the Italian Jewish Community. UCII viewed the youngsters as the most effective vehicle for spreading “Jewish ideas” and the topic was often debated by the post-war Italian Jewish leadership. For example, during the meeting of the UCII Board in March 1947, Raffaele Cantoni said:

«Young people should devote themselves to follow the press and to respond, since they could liven up the Community. Especially those communities that lack young elements would benefit from the presence of these young people who perhaps should disseminate ethics and Jewish culture to all. UCII would enhance and give value to [Jewish youth] clubs, especially those related to culture, as common heritage to all»³⁰.

For these reasons, UCII supported editorial projects and cultural programs, but in particular, it encouraged young Italian Jews to join Zionist associations and to set up youth clubs within the Jewish communities in order to attract other young people.

Essentially, what happened immediately after World War II in Italy was the encounter – and, to a certain extent, the mediation – between two generations of Italian Jews. On the one hand, there was the post-war Jewish leadership (mostly deeply assimilated), formed by those Jews who embraced Zionism between the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century. They espoused Zionism as a result of a gradual personal journey, based in particular on the rediscovery of the religious aspects of “Jewish life”³¹. On the other hand, there were the younger Italian Jews who came to Zionism abruptly in consequence of the Racial Laws, the tragic experience of the deportation as well as the uplifting encounter with Jewish soldiers and emissaries of the Yishuv after the conflict. This led them to embrace Zionism in reaction to the ostracism during the Fascist Government and the atrocities of the war³².

Notwithstanding the frenetic attempt by the Italian Jews to redefine their identity in post-war Italy, only few Italian Jews decided to make *'aliyah* in the aftermath of the war. However, looking at the general migration trend of the Italian Jews to Palestine in the

³⁰ CAHJP, *Verbale del Consiglio dell'UCII del 24-25 Marzo 1947*, P218 Collezione Sergio Minerbi, File 8 Fotocopie di documenti riguardanti R. Cantoni, da: Archivio dell'Unione delle Comunità Israelitiche Italiane, Delibere del Commissario, 1945-1946, Verbali del Consiglio, 1946-1952.

³¹ For an analysis of the affiliation to Zionism by the Italian Jews before the promulgation of the Racial Laws in 1938, see Marzano, *Una terra per rinascere*.

³² For an in-depth analysis of the attitude of these two generations towards the reintegration in Italy, see Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 76-85.

previous decades, it should be pointed out that the number of Italian Jews who made *'aliyah* after the war was significant.

Between 1920 and 1938, only 100 Italian Jews migrated to Palestine, followed by other 400 between the promulgation of the Racial Laws and 1945³³. Prior to the persecutions, the Italian Jews numbered about 47,000 but, between September 1943 and March 1945, 4,148 Italian Jews were deported. Of these, only 312 survivors returned to Italy³⁴.

Notwithstanding the small number of deportees from Italy (in comparison with other Eastern European countries), the population of Italian Jews was greatly reduced by the war, and in its aftermath the Italian Jewish Community compromised only around 30,000 members³⁵. This drastic change was the result of a variety of causes (such as migration, conversion, persecutions, deportation, etc), but among them *'aliyah* was an irrelevant one³⁶.

It is quite difficult to obtain an exact estimation of the Italian Jewish migration to Palestine in the post-war era. The main reasons can be clearly deduced from the previous chapters. There was the general difficulty of monitoring migration movements at the end of the conflict; but in the Jewish case, given that much of the migration to Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel was of an underground nature, especially from Italy, there are no hard figures.

With regard to the specific case of Italian *'aliyah*, since an in-depth investigation on this topic is still lacking, different figures are claimed. According to Angelo Fano, between 1945 and 1948, 420 Italian Jews made *'aliyah* (of whom 72 came back to Italy) and other 621 migrated to Israel between the establishment of the State of Israel and 1955 (of whom 89 decided to return to Italy). Deducting those who made *yeridah*³⁷, the total number of Italian *'olim* between 1945 and 1955 was 880³⁸. However, according to the demographer Sergio Della Pergola, 2,084 Italian Jews made *'aliyah* between 1944 and 1951³⁹. Moreover, it is interesting

³³ Marzano, "Prisoners of Hope", 101.

³⁴ See, Picciotto Fargion Liliana, "La ricerca del Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea sugli ebrei deportati dall'Italia", in Momigliano Levi Paolo (ed. by), *Storia e memoria della deportazione*, (Firenze: Giuntina, 1996), 51; Id., *Il Libro della memoria*, 27.

³⁵ The Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry (ed. by), *Report of the Anglo-American Committee of Enquiry regarding the problems of European Jewry and Palestine*, Lausanne, 20th April, 1946, Appendix III, 58.

³⁶ See: Schwarz, "The Reconstruction", 360.

³⁷ Hebrew for "descent;" the term refers to emigration of Jews from Israel. Opposite to *'aliyah*.

³⁸ Fano Angelo, "L'aliah dall'Italia dal 1928 al 1955", in *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 7 (1955), 268-70.

³⁹ Della Pergola Sergio and Tagliacozzo Amedeo, "Gli Italiani in Israele", in *Rassegna Mensile di Israel*, 1 (1978), 43-69.

to note the fact that out of the 312 Italian Jews who survived deportation, only five decided for resettlement in Palestine⁴⁰.

The Italian *'aliyah* was particularly encouraged by Italian Jews who migrated to Palestine before the war broke out. Some of them, such as Enzo Sereni (until his death in 1944) Leo Levi, Marcello Savaldi, and Jonathan Prato came back to Italy at the end of the war and played active roles in the reconstruction and reorganization of the Italian Jewry. Others were appointed to official tasks by the Jewish Agency such as Umberto Nahon, who was the emissary of the Jewish Agency for Italy, and Ada Sereni, who was active in the underground movement of the *Mossad le-'aliyah Bet*.

Besides these individual cases, the already-existing associations of the Italian *'olim* also mobilised to help those Italian Jews who decided to make *'aliyah*. One example was the Irgun 'Olei Italia, founded between 1938-39 by a group of Italian *'olim* with the purpose of organizing facilities which would assist *'aliyah* from Italy and would support the *'olim* on their arrival in Palestine⁴¹. At the end of the war, the Irgun 'Olei Italia was primarily engaged in obtaining visas for migration to Palestine as well as in reopening the “summer camps”, where young Jews were introduced to the principles of Zionism and prepared themselves for possible *'aliyah*⁴².

Furthermore, there were also the newly established Zionist associations. The Italian Zionist Federation was founded after the First Zionist Congress that took place in post-war Italy in January 1945, carrying on the UCII intention of involving young people in the management of the Italian Jewish communities⁴³. The Italian Zionist Federation was active in supporting Italian *'aliyah* and in organizing cultural events related to Zionism. Besides the Federation, several youth clubs were established in various Italian Jewish communities⁴⁴.

Nevertheless, the «Zionist activities» initiated by the Jewish soldiers from Palestine who arrived in Italy along with the Allied Army should be regarded as a fundamental step in the “faint” success of Zionism among the traditionally assimilated Italian Jews.

⁴⁰ Marzano, “Prisoners of Hope”, 93

⁴¹ For the Statute of the Irgun 'Olei Italia, see CAHJP, P252 Archivio Leo Levi, File 11. About the foundation of the Irgun 'Olei Italia, see Marzano, *Una terra*, 161-186

⁴² About the “summer camps” for young Jews before World War II see, Marzano, *Una terra*, 48-59; whereas, about the organization of “summer camps” after 1945 see, AUCEI, Box 44B Attività svolta da enti ebraici, File 12 Campeggi e Sport 1945-46 and File 13 Campeggi 1946-48, Series: Enti Assistenziali, Collection: Attività dell'UCII dai 1934

⁴³ Marzano, “Prisoners of Hope”, 100.

⁴⁴ See, AUCEI, Box 44B Attività svolta da enti ebraici, File 14 Circoli Giovanili Ebraici, Series: Enti Assistenziali, Collection: Attività dell'UCII dai 1934

The first *bachsharah* which accommodated mainly Italian Jews was established soon after the liberation of Rome. In June 1944, the Jewish soldiers set up a hachsharah in Ponte di Nona (near Rome), later closed in January 1947⁴⁵. It was named *La-Negev* (Hebrew for “to the Negev”) referring to the original project to join Kibbutz Revivim in the Negev, a secular *kibbutz* linked to the *Kibbutz ha-Meuhad* (the United Kibbutz Movement, linked to Ben Gurion’s Mapai Party). Nevertheless, from 1945 the *bachsharah* was opened also to religious Jews and the project to settle in Revivim was abandoned in favour of Kibbutz Degania Alef in Galilee, which was linked to the *Hever ha-Kvuzot* that accepted both religious and non-religious Jews.

It was with the establishment of the above-mentioned *He-Halutz* movement that the presence of the Italian Jews in the *bachsharot* increased. Like the Italian Zionist Federation, the *He-Halutz* Movement was also founded in January 1945 after the First Zionist Congress of Post-War Italy. The Movement underwent a restructuring in 1946⁴⁶.

He-Halutz was in charge of selecting young Jews - both Italians and DPs for the *bachsharot*, where they would train themselves for living in Palestine. Moreover, it was linked to the *Merkaz la-Golah* and, in agreement with the Zionist youth movements, managed and lead the *bachsharot* ⁴⁷.

He-Halutz attracted not only DPs but also Italian Jews, so much so that between 1945 and 1946 two *He-Halutz* Centers were opened, one in Rome and another in Milan. Each Center included an official local press: the *Dapei Hechalutz: Information Bulletin of Hechalutz in South-Central Italy* and the *Dapei Hechalutz: Newspaper of Hechalutz for Northern Italy*⁴⁸.

At the end of 1945, another *bachsharah* for Italian Jews who decided to make ‘*aliyah*’ was set up in Brivio (near Como, Lombardy). Called *Abdut* (Hebrew for “Unity”), it accommodated

⁴⁵ Marzano Arturo, *The Italian Jewish migration to Eretz Israel, and the birth of the Italian Chalutz movement (1938-48)*, «Mediterranean Review», 3 (2010), 10-12.

⁴⁶ CZA, *Executive of the Hechalutz for Italy, January 16, 1945*, Folder: S6/2514, Record Group: Central Offices of the World Zionist Organization and of the Jewish Agency for Palestina/Israel abroad, Collection: S/6 Immigration Department (1919-80); for the statute of the He-Halutz movement, see: CAHJP, P 239 Archivio U.S. Nahon, Box 16 Missione in Italia di Umebrto Nahon, rappresentante della Jewish Agency (1946).

⁴⁷ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Pliṭim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69; CZA, *The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, May 1946*, Folder: L16/100, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-45.

⁴⁸ Della Seta Simonetta and Carpi Daniel, “Il movimento sionistico”, 1367-68; Schwarz, *Ritrovare se stessi*, 86; Marzano, “Italian Jewish Migration”, 12-16.

both secular and religious Jews. In spring 1947, the *bachsharah Abdut* was moved to San Marco (near Pisa), changing its name to *Tel Broshim* (Hebrew for “Cypress Hill”)⁴⁹.

For a small group of Italian Jews therefore, the combination of the propaganda of the Jewish soldiers and the emissaries of the *Yishuv*, the support and encouragement of veteran Italian *‘olim*, the relative weak bond with Italy in contrast to the generation of their parents – all these made *‘aliyah* a concrete possibility for a new start. The Italian historian Arturo Marzano, who analysed the attitude of this minority, affirmed:

«The “victory” of Zionism explains why a relevant number of Italian Jews – clearly a minority, yet significant – decided to leave Italy and to settle in Israel. It is as if a sort of “fever” had spread throughout Italian Judaism, in particular among its younger members. It was mainly these who migrated; because of their age, they had not experienced the successful Jewish integration into the Italian civil, political, socio-economic and cultural context in the decades preceding the Racial Laws. Unlike the older generations, it was much more difficult for them to consider the 1938-45 years as a parenthesis in an experience of full equality of rights, integration and identification with the Italian nation. While their parents and grandparents had experienced those earlier years, and did remain “prisoners of hope”, the younger generations could not. Zionism – which they joined thanks to the *hayalim* who arrived along with the American and British liberators – represented the ideological framework they needed in order to escape from such a “prison”, and *‘aliyah* was the main tool for this»⁵⁰.

In comparison to the rather collective *‘aliyah* of the non-Italian Jews who were displaced in post-war Italy, the Italian *‘aliyah* appears as an individual or a minority group choice.

Though being individual choices, the decision to migrate to Palestine was most probably influenced by the presence of Jewish DPs and of the representatives from the *Yishuv* who came to Italy in order to take give aid and support to post-war Jewry.

Nevertheless, we can identify several similarities between the two groups, such as the young age of the *‘olim* and their readiness to turn over a new page, playing an active role in building their own future. On the other hand, there are other aspects that explain the different attitude of the DPs and the Italian Jews towards *‘aliyah*.

An interesting source for this analysis is the data of a survey conducted by the Central Committee of OJRI among the Jewish DPs in Italy. It was published in February 1946 with the title *We Jewish Refugees in Italy*.... By means of a Yiddish questionnaire distributed to all the DPs in the refugee camps, the *bachsharot* and the *kibbutzim*, OJRI sought to trace a demographic profile of the Jewish DPs in Italy (country of origin and age) and, in particular,

⁴⁹ Marzano, “Italian Jewish Migration”, 14-16

⁵⁰ Marzano, “Prisoners of Hope”, 101.

to shed light on their background and experiences during the war as well as the reasons why they wished to resettle out of their countries of origin⁵¹.

According to OJRI, out of about 12,000 Jewish DPs in Italy at the time of the survey, 9,174 answered the questionnaire. Some important factors should be taken into consideration in examining the results of the OJRI inquiry. The purpose of the inquiry was to demonstrate that the vast majority of DPs wished to make *'aliyah* and in this way to press for the free migration of Jewish DPs to Palestine. Which indeed was the goal of OJRI. In fact, out of 9,174 answers to the questionnaire, only 98 refugees did not wish to make *'aliyah*. It can be safely assumed that there were more than 98 Jewish DPs in Italy who did not long to reach Palestine, since many refugees aspired to join relatives in other countries such as USA, South America, Canada, Australia, etc. Thus, we can surmise that the Jewish DPs who agreed to answer the OJRI inquiry were among those who were closer in agreement with OJRI ideology and felt themselves represented by OJRI. Therefore, in using this source, we will take into account that it did not represent the voice of all the Jewish DPs in Italy in 1946, because of the reasons explained above and because of the fact that they were more than 12,000.

Though linked to a particular period of time (1946), the inquiry helps us in tracing a demographic profile of the Jewish DPs in Italy over several years. APPENDIX 20 shows that almost all the Jewish DPs in Italy who took part in the OJRI survey were in the age brackets of 17-25 years (57%) and 26-50 (37%). These two groups - who represented the 94% of the sample – were characteristic of the general demographic structure of the adult Jewish refugees in Italy (children did not participate in the inquiry because of their age). The same can be said for the countries of origin of those who participated in the survey: the large majority of DPs came from Poland (72%) and the remainder 28% from other countries, such as Rumania (9%), Czechoslovakia (8%), Hungary (5%), Lithuania (3%) or Latvia, Greece, Germany, Yugoslavia, Austria, France and Turkey (3%)⁵².

APPENDICES 21 and 22 present the results of the questions relating to personal experiences in wartime and the family situation of the refugees. Since many refugees came from the Eastern European countries (mainly Poland), it emerges that a large part of the Jewish DPs in Italy had experienced internment in ghettos and subsequently in concentration

⁵¹ See APPENDICES 20-25.

⁵² YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy... The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946), 9-10 and Table I.

camps, fought as partisans, went on the so-called “Aryan side” or survived in hidden places. 76% of the Jewish DPs had lost their family during the war, but 67% of the Jewish DPs in Italy declared they had relatives in country outside Europe: 54% in Palestine and 13% in countries overseas⁵³. The situation of the DPs from Poland was dramatic: out of 6600 Polish refugees who took part in the inquiry, only 526 affirmed to still have relatives in Poland.

Indeed, the destruction of Polish Jewish communities could probably be viewed as the symbol of the Nazi attempt to annihilate European Jewry. What happened in Poland during the war made it impossible for the surviving Jews to return to their home country. Moreover, outrages and pogroms against the small number of Jews remaining in Poland continued even after the end of the war, thus forcing even this small group to migrate elsewhere. This is shown in APPENDIX 25, which outlines the causes and reasons why the refugees refused repatriation. The DPs furnished several reasons for this refusal that could be categorized as political, cultural, national, psychological, moral, economical, religious, etc. Answering the questionnaire, the DPs gave witness to their fear of being surrounded by the very people who took part in their massacre and whose antisemitism was still alive, of the psychological effort to live in the country where everything reminded them the war, of the economical difficulty to resettle there, of the impossibility to create a national and cultural life there, etc⁵⁴. According to the OJRI inquiry, 98% of the DPs who answered the questionnaire declared the wish to make *‘aliyah*. In numbers, 9,034 would have migrated to Palestine, 112 to the USA, 5 to Canada, 11 to Argentina and 12 to other countries, as reported in APPENDIX 24. The reasons why the interviewed Jews longed to reach Palestine are itemized in APPENDIX 25. Among the arguments of those 98% of refugees who wanted to immigrate to Palestine, 33% declared to be Zionist and to think about Palestine as the only solution for the Jewish problem.

In the introduction to the publication of the inquiry, the Central Committee of OJRI added:

«It is obvious and clear, but one must read the answers to see with how much pride the Zionist youth speak about their ideological identification with those who drained the marshes, who built the new Jewish life and who proved by their acts of heroism that they are ready to sacrifice everything in order to save from ruin their brothers who remained, and to receive them. Speaking about emigration, those young Zionists give their answers with true enthusiasm, deep sincerity and clear consciousness»⁵⁵.

⁵³ Ibid., 9-10 and Table I.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 28-30 and Table II.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 29-30 and Table II.

The second arguments for *'aliyah* – which represented 16% of the answers – came from Jews who, though emphasizing that they were not connected to Zionism, desired to resettle in Palestine

«because the catastrophe they went through revealed before their eyes the tragically abnormal situation of the Jewish Nation among other people. Because during the catastrophe, when principles of normal mutual relationship between people seemed to disappear, these men saw the nations in their real regard to Jewish life and Jewish property. Because it had become clear for them that a new place must be found for a secure and productive Jewish life. Because after all they went through they came to the conclusion that there is only one place for them and this place is Palestine»⁵⁶.

Among the interviewees, 20% declared that *'aliyah* was linked to the wish to live among their own people; another 22% to the longing for a national-cultural Jewish life; and only 8% to the fact that their relatives lived in Palestine. It is interesting that only 1,139 refugees give this last reason as the main one of their wish to migrate to Palestine, though the number of refugees who had relatives in Palestine was much greater (4,935 according to APPENDIX 22)⁵⁷.

In light of the above-mentioned results of the survey, it is clear that the presence of the Jewish DPs in Italy after the war had only a partial influence on the long process of redefinition of the identity of Italian Jewry begun in 1944. In spite of the fact, that the number of Jewish DPs in the country held constantly at approximately 15,000 during the years 1945-1948, and that about 90 hachsharot were established throughout Italy, and that Italian ports were the jumping-off points for reaching Palestine - the Italian Jews were only slightly affected by this Zionist drive. This was due in part to the assimilation of Italian Jews and to the fact that the anti-Semitism experienced by Jews in Italy is not comparable to the virulent form experienced by the Jews in Poland, from where the majority of the refugees originated⁵⁸.

From the archival sources explored for this research, it emerges that several other “external factors” could have influenced the general attitude of the Italian Jews causing them to stay in Italy. After examining the documents related to Umberto Nahon’s mission in Italy, it appears that the Jewish Agency decided to set aside a large part of the certificates obtained from the British Mandate for Jewish DPs in Italy, rather than for Italian Jews. This probably did not encourage Italian Jews to *'aliyah*. It is evident above all in the period 1944-1947, which

⁵⁶ Ibid., 30.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 30-31 and Table III.

⁵⁸ See in particular, Marzano, “Prisoners of Hope”.

were indeed the years of the Jewish refugee emergency in Italy. The Irgun 'Olei Italia complained of the fact that only a reduced number of certificates were reserved for Italian Jews, and Umberto Nahon was compelled to justify this policy of the Jewish Agency.

Other factors explain the interesting “resistance” to *'aliyah* of Italian Jewry after the Holocaust, as compared to the Jewish DPs' enthusiasm for *'aliyah*. As stated, what happened to the Italian Jewish Community after the liberation of Rome can be described as an encounter between two generations: the “old Jews”, who were strongly assimilated or who had espoused Zionism only after a long individual inner journey; and the “young Jews”, who embraced Zionism in reaction to the ostracism experienced under the Fascist regime, that had not allowed them to develop a strong bond with Italy. Instead, the population of Jewish refugees in Italy was rather more homogeneous in terms of age, but in particular it was led by leaders deeply imbued with the idea «of the Jewish independence in *Eretz Israel* as the only hope for the rescue and rehabilitation of the remnant of European Jewry»⁵⁹. These were ex-partisans of the Ghettos or leaders of Zionist organizations in their countries of origin, who with the help and support of the Jewish soldiers and the other Jewish organizations, strove to realize their final goal: *'aliyah*.

As Zeev Mankowitz had pointed out during the first international conference on the *She'erith Ha-Pleilah* held at Yad Vashem in 1990, it was the acute need for an ideology that let Zionism became the central permeating force in the culture, politics and education of the *She'erith Ha-Pleilah*. Indeed, in light of the above-mentioned factors, the post-war affiliation to Zionism of the Italian Jews is not comparable to the powerful «proto-Zionist» potential of the Jewish DPs⁶⁰.

⁵⁹ Mankowitz, “Zionism and She'erith Ha-Plelah”, 211.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 211-230.

Conclusion

The Jewish displacement marked a decisive shift in Jewish history. After World War II, the stay of the Jewish DPs in refugee camps, assembly centers, *bachsharot*, *kibbutzim* and towns throughout Europe represented indeed the last chapter of the *Shoah*, as well as the first chapter of the Israeli history. In the DP camps, the Jews who survived the Final Solution reshaped their collective identity, developing new categories of belonging in order to support their decision not to return home. This condition of marginality pushed the Jewish DPs to reject definitively their relocation in the Diaspora and to create an alternative future through resettlement opportunities.

The DPs' opposition on repatriation gave birth to processes of group making which evolved in different forms, leading to new practises of loyalties, alliances and solidarities in the refugee camps. Nationality, as well as national projects, became the main parameters determining group belonging. The "political factor" also emerged as a fundamental character of the post-war displacement.

For the Jewish DPs, the *Shoah* was recognized as the culmination of centuries of antisemitism, persecutions and outrages, and called for the immediate redefinition of the collective bonds that, until that moment, had kept together the Diaspora. The ideological foundation of the *She'erith Ha-Pleita* – the "surviving remnants" – represented a landmark in that process of self-understanding that developed at a transnational level among the Jewish DPs in the refugee camps of Germany, Austria and Italy.

After the end of World War II, the Jewish DPs identified Italy as a waystation between the past and the new homeland, a depiction that lasts in refugees' memory up to today. For its geographical position on the far shore of the Mediterranean Sea, Italy attracted thousands of Jews who looked at the Peninsula as the last stop before their migration to *Eretz Israel*.

At their arrival in the "European Theatre", the Allies soon managed to find solutions in order to control, take care and resolve the refugee problem in the gradually liberated Italian regions. Advancing in the country, already on the 14th of September 1943, in the newly liberated concentration camps of Ferramonti di Tarsia, the Allied Army faced the first group of around 2,000 non-Italian Jews. They became the first core of Jewish DPs and, at the same time, Ferramonti was the first liberated concentration camp to be transformed into a refugee camp in Italy.

Conclusion

The nationality line followed by the Allies to control and assist the refugees showed soon its limits: the Jewish DPs loudly asserted their identity, demanding their recognition as Jews, victims of persecutions in their home countries, and claimed their right to migrate elsewhere outside Europe. Such opposition to return back home generated diplomatic controversies, enabled different migration strategies and promoted new political/national discourses. In this historical conjecture, the Jewish DPs emerged as active subjects instead of simple and defenceless objects. The Holocaust survivors' issue played an essential role in the political struggle of the Zionist movement and in the international arena.

The Jewish displacement in Italy was the result of different waves of migrations, which began in the 1930's and progressively ended in the late 1940's. Between 1944 and 1948, an average of about 15,000 Jewish DPs per year was housed in refugee camps in Italy. Not all of them finally migrated to Palestine, but almost all of them were – more or less - involved in “Zionist activities” and vigorously contributed in that process of redefinition of the Jewish DPs' collective identity.

The traumatic experience of the war and the *Sboah* culminated with the displacement in the refugee camps, which gathered “the remnant” of the Jewish Diaspora. There – though controlled and managed by military, governmental and intergovernmental authorities -, the Jews were subjected to internal forces of social, political and national aggregation. Nevertheless, the consciousness and awareness of a cultural, political and national distinctiveness among the Jewish DPs was, of course, the result of different dynamics. It did not emerge abruptly in the isolation and marginality of the Italian DP camps: on the one hand, their attitude towards autonomy took root from a long tradition of Jewish separatism in Europe; on the other hand, the successful unity of the “surviving remnants” could count on diasporic bonds which crossed national lines.

The inclination of the Jewish DPs in Italy towards self-organization found also practical and ideological support in several external factors. First and foremost, the involvement of the Jewish soldiers from Palestine in the military and civilian rescue operations of the Allied Army in Europe fostered unity at a transnational level among the Jewish refugees. In particular, their arrival in Italy in 1943 marked a fundamental step in determining the historical agency of the Jewish DPs. Indeed, through the help of the *hayalim* from the *Yishuv* and later of the Jewish Agency delegates, the Jewish DPs managed to organized themselves as a “community” in transit.

Conclusion

Besides being described as an emotional event in the existing literature on the topic, the DPs' encounter with the *hayalim* from *Eretz Israel* represented the first glimmer of hope for the Jews in post-war Europe. At their landing in Italy, the Jewish soldiers serving in the Allied Forces committed immediately to the relief of the Jews in the gradually liberated regions. Hence, they gave birth to the first rescue organization explicitly established for taking care of the Jewish DPs: the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim*. It began its activities already before the beginning of the humanitarian missions of the international refugee agencies, thus playing a leading role in shaping the focus of the future rehabilitation program on behalf of the Jewish DPs. Moreover, the heads of the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* recognized the importance of the Jewish DPs' contribution in the fulfilment of its projects, thus enabling the establishment of committees as well as the election of delegates among the refugees themselves.

The main goal of the emissaries of the *Yishuv* was to bring as many DPs as possible in Palestine, where – however - the Jewish migration was restricted by the policy of the British Mandate. Nevertheless, these limitations on *'aliyah* did not discouraged neither the Jewish survivors nor the *Yishuv* representatives, who managed to create a network of institutions and underground organizations in order to achieve their purpose.

It emerges a sort of escalation in the processes of DPs' self-understanding and self-representation. Such processes developed in parallel with the increased involvement of the *Yishuv* and of the Jewish organizations in the rescue of the refugees, and in conjunction with the inflow of new waves of Jewish DPs into Italy. This is evident from the evolution of the *Merkaẕ Ha-Plitim* into the *Merkaẕ la-Golah*, when the Jewish military units were grouped in the newly established Jewish Brigade in 1944; from the institution of the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* at the beginning of 1945 once the "*hachsharah* movement" was launched; and finally from the foundation of the Organization of the Jewish Refugee in Italy (OJRI) in November 1945 with the arrival of the "new refugees" at the end of the war.

Though the Allies planned for the management of the expected post-war refugee crisis well before their landing in Italy, the administration of mass movements caused by the war required the immediate support of specialized institutions and organizations. Since 1943, long before the V-E Day, Italy became a proving ground for those techniques of civilian management movements and humanitarian practices that eventually led towards a new standard in the definition and treatment of the refugees. Thus, another decisive external factor that deeply influenced the Jewish DPs' aggregation in the refugee camps was indeed the policy adopted by the international refugee agencies, in particular UNRRA and IRO.

Conclusion

Post-war humanitarianism faced the DPs crisis through a completely innovative approach. It combined immediate relief actions with long-term rehabilitation projects, with the purpose of guiding the DPs towards “normalization”. Both for practical reasons and as part of their welfare programs, the refugee agencies advocated the formation of DPs committees and involved the refugees in the administration of the camps. They helped in reducing the workload of the international missions and gave the DPs the chance to renewed their purposefulness. The attitude to encourage self-government guaranteed the DPs a certain extent of independence as well as the opportunity of being spokespersons of their own needs. Moreover, the cooperation between the intergovernmental refugee agencies and the voluntary organizations which devoted their program to specific groups or categories of DPs was a further key factor in strengthening bonds among different groups of refugees in post-war Europe. In the case of the Jewish DPs in Italy, this important role was played by the JDC, which – alongside UNRRA and IRO – considerably improved the living conditions of the Jews in the DP camps. Furthermore, the JDC – acting as a liaison between the Jewish DPs (as well as their representative organizations) and the UN institutions – was the major supporter of the cultural and educational programs proposed by the *Merkaẕ la-Golah*, the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* and OJRI. More structured organization of cultural activities (already started by the *hayalim* at their arrival in Italy) was fundamental to prepare the DPs for ‘*aliyah*. The enthusiastic collaboration among the above-mentioned Jewish organizations gave birth to a flourishing cultural program, which aimed at educating (both ideologically and practically) the Jewish DPs to live as pioneers in *Eretz Israel*. Thus schools, kindergartens, workshops, collective meeting, theatre, music concerts, cultural congresses, literary contests, art exhibitions, journals and magazines became means for strengthening the sense of belonging to a specific community as well as vehicles through which give expression to the Jewish identity.

Essentially, the help provided by the Jewish agencies slanted the general rehabilitative approach of the institutional humanitarianism of that time towards a well-defined direction. The most concrete evidence was the agreement between JDC and UNRRA (then IRO) on the establishment of the *bachsharot*, which represented the actual peculiarity of the Jewish displacement in Italy. Between 1943 and 1951, almost one hundred *bachsharot* were set up throughout the Peninsula with the explicit purpose to prepare the DPs for ‘*aliyah*. The *bachsharot* – seen as «one of the greatest stimulants to re-establishing a normal pattern of human behavior» by the JDC - promoted a community type of living based on the principles

Conclusion

of Zionism. The administration of the *bachsharot* was almost totally entrusted to the JDC, the *Merkaẕ la-Golah*, the *Merkaẕ He-Halutz* and OJRI, according to the attitude of the UN agencies to encourage rehabilitative program and self-government among the refugees. Nevertheless, the DPs' organization into small groups – though allowing also a greater control of the refugees by the rescue agencies – help the Jewish DPs to build more cohesive relationships. Moreover, the fact that the *bachsharot* were formed by groups sharing the same political (and in some cases religious) affiliation contributed to the success of these training farms and to the fulfillment of the goals of their own members.

In post-war Europe, the history of the Jewish DPs developed as a collective history. Notwithstanding the high mobility of the Jewish refugees across Europe, this path towards the re-definition of a Jewish national identity and its values developed at a transnational level among the Jews displaced in Germany, Austria and Italy. Besides the above-listed combination of internal and external factors that made the Jewish DPs a community in transit, the common thread that bound the refugees beyond geographical boundaries remained the shared trauma of the *Shoah* that eventually led most of the survivors to embrace Zionist ideology.

Although this dissertation focuses on those Jewish DPs who eventually made *'aliyah*, this is not to suggest that all of them were willing to reach Palestine/Israel. As demonstrated by the “foundation” of the *Sherith Ha-Pleitat*, Zionist ideals guided mass resistance already in the concentration camps where the leaders of the Jewish committees were generally the leaders of Zionist movements of the Diaspora. Zionism was already widespread among the European Jews, but the attachment of the Jewish DPs to Zionism derived mainly from their rejection of Europe and their demand for resettlement.

After the liberation, Zionism – as depicted by the *hayalim*, the delegates from the *Yishuv* and the Jewish organizations in Italy – represented the most concrete opportunity to rebuild a new life after World War II. Notwithstanding the different ideological tendencies, the Jewish/Zionist movements operating among the DPs promoted peer-group aggregation, cooperation and mutual aid. Furthermore, they emphasized the importance of physical labour as the most relevant factor towards rehabilitation and self-sustainment. All these values, besides being likewise the main features of Zionism, appealed the Jewish DPs for several reasons.

From a strictly individual point of view, most of the Jewish DPs in Italy had lost their families, relatives and friends, thus the collective living encouraged first by the emissaries

Conclusion

from the *Yishuv* and then supported by JDC became a tangible possibility to restart anew. Moreover, in the particular case of the Jewish DPs who arrived in Italy mainly from Poland, it is important to highlight the fact that many of them approached Zionism also as the result of the protracted anti-Semitic pogroms occurred after the war. Living in *bachsharot* and *kibbutzim* was also an effective economic solution. Many DPs had no means to sustain themselves and the Jewish organizations – which stressed the attention on “productivization” – granted them the chance to attend vocational training and workshops in order to learn a trade, which enabled priority in resettlement. From the social point of view, another factor to be reckoned with is the young age of great part of the Jewish DPs. Youth indeed could be considered as a shifting condition that led the DPs’ need for an ideology to revolve around Zionism. After years of ostracism, that particular contest empowered the “remnant” Jews of Europe to claim loudly their identity as well as to “regenerate” and “revitalized” it from the cultural, social and political perspectives. Hence, Zionism represented for the Jewish DPs the most powerful answer to those urgencies caused and raised by the *Shoah*: unity and independence.

However, the transnational dimension of the Jewish displacement, the “refugee camp” – by its nature – fostered isolation from the surrounding population. This is evident from the Italian case, where the passage of thousands of Jewish DPs en route to Palestine only slightly influenced the orientation of the local Jews. Other circumstances burdened the relationship between Italian Jews and Jewish DPs, but the weakness of their contacts are the evidence of the marginality enabled by the Jewish displacement.

Thus, the refugee camp became an extraterritorial setting wherein people from different nationalities and with different experiences of integration, assimilation, discrimination and resistance met in a place that did not belong to any of them and with whom they did not intend to create any kind of bond. In redefining themselves and in reconstructing their identity during this period of marginalization, the Jewish DPs used the traditional categories of membership and recollection to a given national place. Though embracing this element of continuity with the past, several aspects of discontinuity emerged as it is evident from the features acquired by Zionist ideology among the Jews displaced in post-war Europe.

The Jewish displacement became a sort of space and time *between* the past of the Diaspora and the yearning for a future new homeland in *Eretz Israel*. This intermediate space/time turned into a venue where the different experiences of its temporary inhabitants were mediated and even became a springboard for a new identity. It was the place where the DPs

created a new self-perception and developed a new sense of national belonging through the “negotiation” of personal and collective experiences.

Facing with the historiographical lacuna on the Jewish displacement in Italy, this dissertation approaches this topic shedding light on its leading aspects. In order to fill this substantial gap (especially in comparison with the existing studies on the German case), this investigation has privileged the “institutional point of view” in the analysis of the archival sources collected in archives in Israel, United Kingdom and Italy. Hebrew, English and Italian were the language spoken by the actors that managed and guided the Jewish problem DPs in post-war Europe: that of the Allies, of the country that offered them temporary refuge, of the emissaries of the *Yishuv* and also of the representatives organizations established by the Jewish DPs themselves.

Moreover, this research – for its wide complexity and dimension – treated the history of the Jewish DPs as a collective history, emphasizing those elements that strengthened unity among persons who shared the same trauma, but experienced different backgrounds. Starting from the results of this study, which put the basis for further research on the Jewish displacement in Italy, many other perspectives of investigation can be covered.

For instance, this investigation represents a fundamental step that now allows intertwining the general “plot” of the Jewish displacement with personal memories and testimonies. It enriches the reconstruction of the history of the Jewish DPs, which indeed resulted from the sum of the individual stories of each DP. It answers several questions related to the individual motivations that led many Jewish DPs to approach Zionism; to the elaboration of the trauma of the war in the refugee camps; to the relationships and the concrete contacts between the emissaries of the *Yishuv* and the DPs; to the DPs’ ability to adapt to life in refugee camps and *bachsharot*; to the DPs’ perception of Italy and Italian people, to the experiences of those DPs who did not make ‘aliyah as well as their relations with Zionist organizations and Palestine-oriented DPs.

Furthermore, this dissertation allows now an in-depth analysis of specific categories among the Jewish DPs, such as the children and the policy of the ‘*aliyat ha-no’ar*’ (the youth migration to Eretz Israel); the religious Jewish DPs and the involvement of the Rabbinate as well as the religious movement of the *Yishuv* in assisting their special needs; the situation of the elder and sick Jewish DPs who eventually became hard-core cases because of their weak conditions. It opens, moreover, the way towards a gender perspective that can explore the

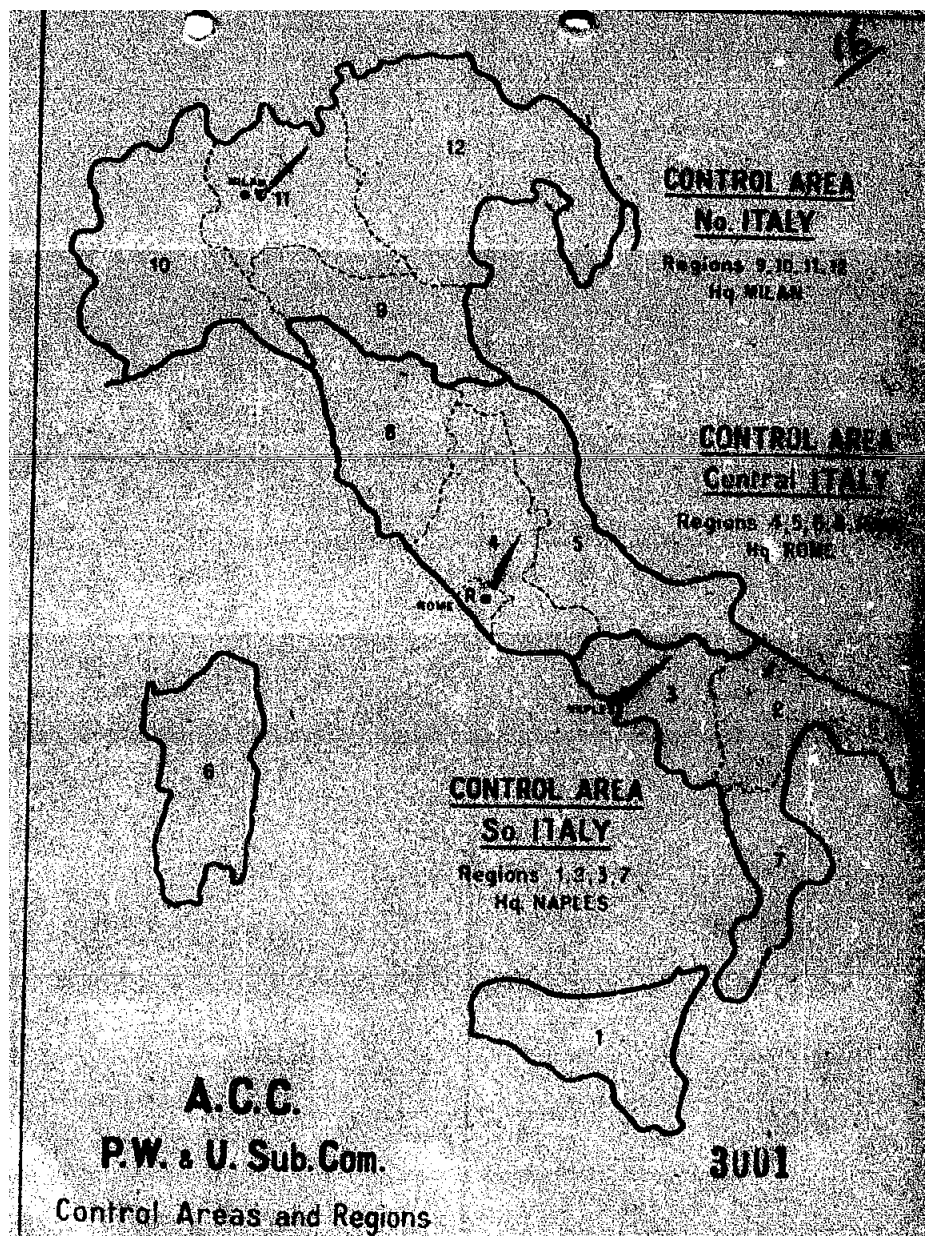
Conclusion

role of women DPs in the refugee camps, whether they were charged with specific tasks or emerged as leaders in any particular circumstances.

The history of the Jewish DPs in Italy after World War II provides countless insights. Nevertheless, after more than seventy years, only recently this topic rouse the interest of Italian historiography. This dissertation traces a direction for the study of the path undertaken by the DPs from the destruction of their communities to the refugee camps in Italy, where the DPs managed to recreate themselves as a community in transit and transition, longing to reach *Eretz Israel*.

**APPENDICES,
DOCUMENTS & MAPS**

APPENDIX 1: ACC CONTROL AREAS IN OCCUPIED ITALY



Source: ACS¹.

¹ ACS, A.C.C P.W. & U. Sub. Com. Control Areas and Regions UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel n. 5B, Displaced Persons Sub-Commission, October 1943 – February 1944.

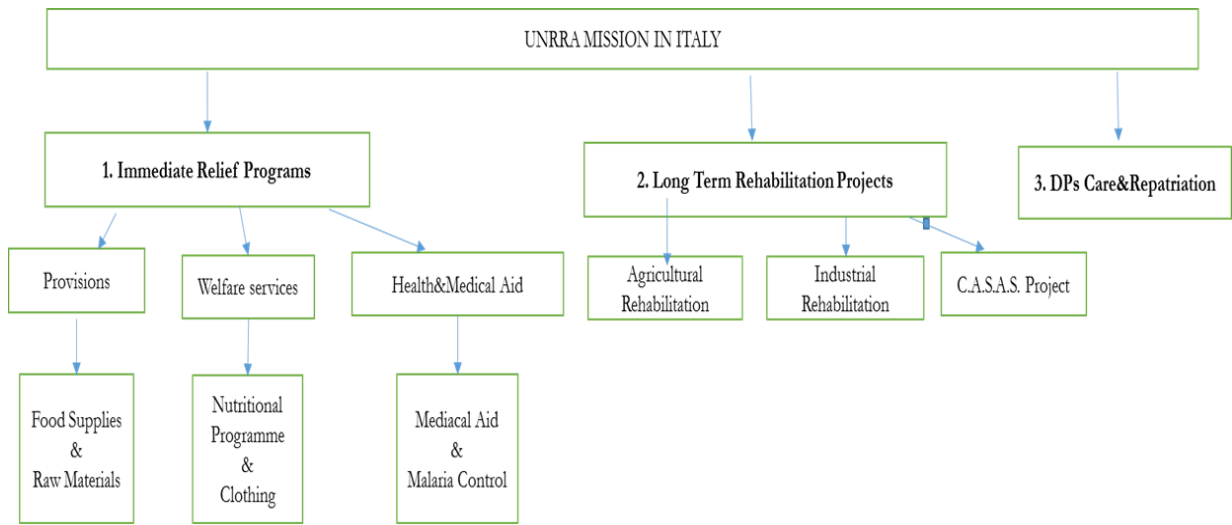
APPENDIX 2: UNRRA REGIONAL OFFICES IN ITALY

REGION	LOCATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE	DIRECTOR
Piemonte & Liguria	Geneva	L. Koenigsbert
Lombardia	Milan	A. L. Raffa
Emilia & Toscana	Florence	A. L. Ellison
Veneto	Venice	J. L. Jones
Central Region (i.e. Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise (Campobasso province excluded), Umbria and Molise	Rome	P. C. Borrè
Southern Region (i.e. Campania, Basilicata, Puglia, Calabria and Campobasso province)	Naples	C. Hanson-Abbott
Sicily	Palermo	C. B. Moses
Sardinia	Cagliari	F. Collins

(source: UNRRA)²

² UNRRA (ed. by), *L'Unrra aiuta l'Italia*, (Roma: Unrra, 1946), 15.

APPENDIX 3: UNRRA MISSION IN ITALY



**APPENDIX 4: UNRRA EXPEDITURES IN ITALY FOR IMMEDIATE RELIEF
SUPPLIES 1945-46**

COMMODITY GROUPS	MARCH 1945 - JUNE 1946	JULY-DECEMBER 1946	TOTAL
Food	\$ 108,935,900	\$ 86,754,000	\$195,689,900
Clothing, Textiles And Footwear	\$ 54,396,000	\$ 1,450,000	\$ 55,846,000
Medical And Sanitation	\$ 16,420,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 16,470,000
Total	\$ 179,75,190	\$ 138,204,000	\$ 268,005,000

**APPENDIX 5: UNRRA EXPENCES FOR LONG-TERM PROGRAMS IN
ITALY, 1945-46**

PROGRAM	MARCH 1945 - JUNE 1946	JULY-DECEMBER 1946	TOTAL
Agricultural Rehabilitation	\$ 22,293,500	\$ 7,245,000	\$ 29,538,500
Industrial Rehabilitation (Including Supply of Coal and Petrol)	\$ 78,387,600	\$ 49,068,000	\$ 127,455,600
Total	\$ 100,681,100	\$ 56,313,000	\$ 157,039,100

(source: UNRRA)³

³ WL, UNRRA (ed. by) *Unrra in Italy*, (London: European Regional Office, 1946), 5, Reel 317/S36

APPENDIX 6: CATEGORIES OF DPs ACCORDING TO UNRRA POLICY

	CATEGORIES OF DISPLACED PERSONS
Group I Green	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. UN national displaced 2. Stateless and “other”, active in favour of Allies 3. Persecuted because of race or religion 4. Cat. 1,2,3 unsuccessful attempt at repatriation 5. Italian mixed families
Group II Red	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Allied military and ex-military persons 7. UN ex-POW 8. UN national enemy soldiers 9. Enemy nationals, ex-soldiers 10. All categories, not displaced 11. All categories, not in financial need 12. All categories, left home country after liberation of their country 13. Other and stateless, not displaced because of race, religion or activity in favour of UN. 14. Italians
Group III Blue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 15. All categories, suspected of collaboration with enemy
Group IV Black	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 16. All categories, willing to be repatriated 17. All categories, awaiting emigration 18. All categories, desiring to reside in Italy

(source: UNRRA) ⁴

⁴ WO, *Eligibility Survey, May, 1 1946, Attachment IV: Colour scheme*, Unrra Policies with regard to DPs and situation in Italy, 3.1.1946, WO 204/10837, The Enriques Collection, The Wiener Library, London, UK, and selected files from FO, HO and WO, the National Archives, Kew, UK.

APPENDIX 7: DISTRIBUTION OF THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN ITALY, 1945

AREA/ REGION	CENTRE	TYPE OF CAMPS	CAPACITY	GROUPS INSIDE THE CAMPS	DESTINATION BETWEEN 1945/1946:	DESCRIPTION OF ACCOMMODATIONS
Venezia- Giulia	Trieste	Transit	2000	Mixed Nationalities	Reduced in capacity (1000)	Fair
Venezia	IT4 Udine	Transit	2000	Mixed Nationalities	Reduced in capacity (1000)	Fair
	IT1 Padua	Static	3000	Jews and Istrians	The Jews would be moved to Cremona in November 1945. Handed over to the Italian Authorities and the camp reserved for Istrians and statistic dissidents.	Good
	IT 53 Verona	Transit	800	UN Nationals	Closed in November 1945	Good
	IT 52 Verona	Transit		Transit Italian Germans, Hungarians, Czech and Western Austrians	Handed over to the Italian Authorities.	
	IT 54 Pescantina	Transit	2500	Mixed Nationalities	Reduced in capacity (1000) in 1946	Poor (Huts And Tents)
	IT 23 Bolzano	Transit	800	Germans and Austrians	Reduced in capacity (500) in 1946	Good
Lombardia	IT 77 Milan	Transit	1000	UN Nationalities	Retain until 1946	Very Good
	IT 76 Milan	Transit		Transit Italians	Handed over to Italian Authorities	
	IT 78 Como		3000	Statics and Dissidents	Reduced in capacity (2500) and reserved for Jews in 1946.	Excellent

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

Piemonte	IT 18 Domodossola	Transit		Italians	Handed over to Italian authorities	
	IT 19 Novara	Transit		Italians	Handed over Italian authorities	
	IT 17 Turin	Transit	1000	UN (mostly French)	Handed over to Unrra*	Excellent
	IT 21 Montecalieri	Transit		Transit Italians	Handed over to Italian Authorities	
Liguria	IT 72 Genoa	Transit		Transit Italians	Handed over to Italian Authorities	
	IT 73 Bordighera	Transit		Transit Italians	Handed over to Italian authorities	
	IT 71 Genoa	Transit	550	UN Nationals (French, Dutch, Belgians, Luxembourgers, Danes, Norwegians, Swedes)	Retain until 1946 Handed over to Unrra*	Excellent
Emilia	IT 87 Riccione	Static	1000	Statics Dissidents (Yugoslavs families)	Reduced in capacity (500) and handed over to Unrra*	Good
	IT 41 Forlì	Static	3000	Statics Dissidents	Closed	Bad
	IT 42 Forlì	Static		Statics Dissidents	Closed	Bad
	IT 46 Modena	Static	3000	Statics Dissidents (Serbs)	Handed over to Unrra*	Good
	IT 43 Reggio Emilia	Static	3000	Statics Dissidents except Poles, Yugoslavs, Jews, Russians, Rumanians, Albanians, Hungarians, Baltics.	Reduced in capacity (2500) and reserved for Jews overflow from Lecce area	Good

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

	IT 44 Reggio Emilia	Static		Poles desirous of going home	Reduced in capacity (2500)	Good
	IT 82 Cremona	Static	1500	Static Jews	Handed over to Unrra*	Good
	IT 47 Bologna	Transit	400	UN Nationalities	Handed over to Unrra*	
	IT 48 Bologna	Transit	3000	Transit Italians	Handed over to the Italian Authorities	
Ancona Area	IT 92 Fano	Static	2000	Statics dissidents (Yugoslavs)	Closed	Bad
	IT 91 Jesi	Static	1500	Statics dissidents (Croats)	Handed over to Unrra*	Good
	IT 88 Senigallia	Static	500	Static Slovenes	Handed over to Unrra*	
	IT 89 Fermo	Static	2500	Statics dissidents (Croats)	Handed over to Unrra*	Fair
	IT 90 Servigliano	Static	1000	Statics dissidents (Slovenes)		Fair
Indipendent Centers	IT 33 Cinecittà Reception Center	Transit	1500	Collection and transit	Handed over to Unrra*	
	IT 32 Aversa Reception Center	Transit	2000	UN (British, American, Abissinians, Turks)	Handed over to Unrra*	
	IT 31 Bari	Transit	2000	UN (Greeks, Albanians, Yugoslavs for reception by sea)	Handed over to Unrra*	

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

	Barletta and Trani	Static	9000	Static Poles not desiring repatriation	Reduced in capacity (7000)	
Unrra Camps	IT 36 Santa Cesarea IT 39 Tricase IT 35 Santa Maria di Leuca IT 34 Santa Maria al Bagno		7000	Yugoslavs, static Jews not desiring to return to their countries of origin, stateless, including ex Russians	Reduced in capacity (6000)	
Unrra	Ferramonti		1000			
Unrra	Maglie hospital		250			

(source: AC)¹

¹ WO, *Allocation of Centres to Non-Italian Nationals, September 19, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504; WO, *Notes on "Centres" in Italy with estimated winter capacity at 11 October 1945, October 12, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504; WO, *Reduction of Displaced Persosn Accommodations in Italy, November 2, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504; WO, *Reduction of Displaced Persosn Accommodations in Italy, November 10, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504; WO, *Reduction of Displaced Persosn Accommodations in Italy, November 16, 1945*, Internment And Refugee Camps In The Mediterranean Theatre: Organisation, Administration, Movements And Reports, 01.08.1945, WO 204/3504.

APPENDIX 8: ESTIMATED JEWISH REFUGEES IN UNRRA CAMPS, ITALY 1946

	MAY, 15	OCTOBER, 5	NOVEMBER, 1	DECEMBER, 1	DECEMBER, 31
SOUTHERN CAMPS	5, 474	4,875	4,652	4,629	4,472
Santa Maria al Bagno	2,312	1,825	1,865	1,840	1,788
Santa Maria di Leuca	1,415	1,030	1,133	1,130	1,050
Santa Cesarea Terme	1,082	935	938	932	930
Tricase	665	635	634	640	630
Bari (a)	---	450	73	87	74
ROME REGION					
Cinecittà (a)	200	600	500	396	605
NORTHERN REGION	2,414	1,677	2,664	4,144	5,187
Milan (a)	200	450	800	1,064	1,190
Turin (Grugliasco)	1,085	330	731	895	1,581
Cremona	987	867	869	993	1,027
Rivoli	---	30	264	1,192	1,389
Genoa (a)	142	---	---	---	---
TOTAL TRANSIT CAMPS (a)	542	1,500	1,375	1,547	1,870
TOTAL ALL CAMPS	8,088	7,152	7,816	9,169	10,265

Sources: UNRRA¹

(a) Transit Camps

¹ AJDC, *Estimated Jewish Refugees in UNRRA Camps, February, 18 1947*, Folder: Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

**APPENDIX 9: NATIONALITIES OF JEWISH DP_s RECEIVING UNRRA CARE
IN TOWNS, HACHSHAROT AND CAMPS,
ITALY 1946**

NATIONALITY	NUMBER IN TOWN	NUMBER IN HACHSHAROT	NUMBER IN UNRRA CAMPS	TOTAL	%
Austrian	569	23	214	796	4.1
Czech	212	624	589	1,425	7.3
German	368	63	92	523	2.7
Greck	110	24	115	249	1.3
Hungarian	259	768	763	1,790	9.1
Lithuanina	8	71	186	265	1.4
Polish	1,564	2,960	5,540	9,864	50.4
Rumanian	129	1,042	1,493	2,664	13.6
Turkiesh	180	35	15	230	1.2
Yugoslav	946	50	236	1,234	6.3
Other (a)	283	109	124	516	2.6
Total	4,618	5,769	9,169	19,556	100

Source: UNRRA¹

- (a) Included: Albanian, Argentinian, American USA, Belgian, Brazilian, British, Bulgarian, Chilean, Dutch, Egyptian, Estonian, French, Iranian, Latvian, Luxemburger, Palestinian, Portuguese, Rhodes, Russian, Spanish, Swiss, Tripolitanian, Stateless, and non determined nationalities.

¹ AJDC, *Estimated Jewish Refugees in UNRRA Camps, February, 18 1947*, Folder: Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

**APPENDIX 10: STATISTICAL BREAKDOWN OF UNRRA-ASSISTED JEWISH
DPs IN ITALY, OCTOBER 15, 1946**

	MALE	FEMALE	CHILDREN UNDER 18	TOTAL
Camps	4,475	1,990	687	7,152
Hachsharot	4,160	1, 486	297	5,943
Towns	2,400	1,200	400	4,000
Total	11,135	4,676	1,384	17,095
%	64.6	27.3	8.1	100

Source: JDC²

² AJDC, *Estimated Jewish Refugees in UNRRA Camps, February, 18 1947*, Folder: Italy, General, 1946, NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 2 / 628.

APPENDIX 11: POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTIONS OF OJRI, 1945³

POLITICAL RESOLUTIONS:

1. We have no way back to our previous homes, where graves of our parents and children, brethren and sisters are scattered.
2. The endeavors of our brethren and sisters in their previous homes saturated by Jewish blood to join the whole Jewish nation on his way to his ancient historic home convince us that way is to be the sole and right to lead us out of these present tragic conditions.
3. We decisively reject any experiment spuriously promising us migration possibilities to other countries, those experiments that intend to avert the clear and refined will of the Jewish people from returning to their only home – Eretz Israel (Palestine).
4. We appeal to the whole world and especially to the United Nations with the following request: Let us come to Palestine, to that country that is willing and capable to accept us. The Jewish people was the greatest and the first victim of the Nazism. After the defeat of our and humanity's greatest enemy the Jewish people should be enable to live in his own home, like the other nations.
5. We appeal to the British people and their present government: Don't play with the last hope of the tortured Jewish people.
6. The intention to separate the general Jewry's problem from the Palestine question indicates on the veiled proof to persist on the delinquent white Paper's policy, condemning the Jewish Palestine population to remain an eternal minority among the Arab majorities.
7. With utmost repugnance we reject any suggested delay – the appointment of various commissions – in solving the tragic problem of the homeless, wandering Jewish people. Auschwitz, Treblinka, Dachau and Bergen-Belsen, anti-Jewish outbreaks in Poland and Tripolitania prove the pointlessness of the further investigations on the tragic Jewish problem and of every search for solution. We categorically declare that no power will prevent us from going to Palestine and no shut gates will bar our immigration. Our request is: a free immigration to Palestine to all Jews.
8. The Conference deems it indispensable to ensure the existence of a free and producing Jewish undivided state in Palestine.
9. The Conference enthusiastically greets the struggle of the Jewish population in Palestine for immigration, and declares that organized Jewish refugees in Italy are ready absolutely to join in that struggle.
10. The Conference cordially greets the Jewish Agency, who is struggling for our free future in Palestine, and declares that the survived refugees in Italy will fulfill all the decisions and demands of the Jewish Agency in order to achieve absolute victory.

³ CZA, *Conference of the Jewish Refugees in Italy, November 26-28, 1945, Rome-Ostia*, Folder: L16/521 Sifron Kinus Ha-Plitim Be- Italia Be- širuf ḥovrim Tmunot Proṭokolim Mitkatvim ve-Mavrikim, Record Group: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institution Established by Them, Collection: L16 Palestine Office for Italy, 1944-69

11. The Conference express its heartiest gratefulness and recognition to the Jewish Brigade and all Jewish Military units for their fraternal reception and aid rendered to survived Jewish refugees. Only history will record adequate appreciation to them.
12. The Conference decides to enroll the name of the Jewish Brigade and of the Jewish Military Units into the Golden Book.
13. The Conference charges the newly elected Central Committee with the task of transmitting telegraphically the contents of the resolutions to: President Truman, Prime Minister Attlee , Generalissimo Stalin, the Italian Government, the Jewish National Council of Palestine, the Jewish Agency, the Jewish Brigade and the International Trade Unions.

ORGANIZATIONAL RESOLUTIONS:

1. The Conference requires from all reliable refugees to entertain the extremist strife against deficiency of discipline and liability that prevailed upon a part of our refugees to bridle those who exert demoralization, irresponsibility and despair among us, and to keep them remote off any responsible welfare
2. The Conference decides on creation of a court at the Central Committee. The court is designed to try and punish those Jews who during the years of bloodshed have sullied their hands in innocent blood of their Jewish brethren.
3. The Conference decides that the Central Committee in the unique legal representative and entitled to substitute on behalf of all the refugees in Italy.
4. The Conference forbids to all employees engaged at the refugee organization any personal discernment in treating applicants.
5. The Conference calls on the new Central Committee to undertake measures against those who would act in contradiction to the instructions and directions of the Central Committee.
6. The Conference decides that the Organization of Refugees in Italy is fully subordinated to the Jewish Agency and executed the latter's directives.

APPENDIX 12: LIST OF HACHSHAROT, ITALY 1947**NORTHERN REGION**

MILAN AREA				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
N/1	Torah Ve-‘Avodah - Villa Mayer, Abbiate Guazzone (Varese)]	100	Ha-Po’el Ha-Mizrahi	Youth group
N/2	Ha-‘Oved, Piazza Monte Roma, 4 – Cusano Milanino (MI)	42	Ha-‘Oved	Family group
N/4	Aba Bordichov, Villa Gerosa – Brivio (Como)	30	Ha-No’ar Ha-Zioni	Family group
N/6	Children’s Home Selvino - Casa Sciesopoli, Selvino (Bergamo)	270	Gordonia	Children [c]
N/7	Boffalora – Magenta, Villa Fagiana (MI)	90	Gordonia	Youth Group
N/8	Josef Glasman - Casa Balleati, Cascina Nuova-Battilocca	40	Betar	Youth Group
N/9	Via Unione, 5 - Milano	50		Workers of the Merkaz He-Halutz
N/10	Ceriano Laghetto	30	Italian Zionist	Youth Group
N/16	Colonia Alpina	100	Noham	Youth Group
N/34	Villa Farraggiana, Meina (Arona)	200	Betar	Youth Group

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TURIN AREA				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
N/12	Viale Santa Margherita, 158 - Turin	70	Ha-'Oved	
N/13	Nichelino - Villa Segre, Via Castello, 11	100	Ha-'Oved	
N/15	Luserna – San Giovanni, Villa Viso	55	Ha-No'ar Ha-Zioni	Youth Gruop
N/19	Avignano – Chiari, Castello	250	Zofit	Scouts
N/20	Children's Home, Avigliana	150	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair	Children [c]
N/30 [a]	Bet Ha-Talmid (Student Home), Corso Boncalieri, 167 - Turin	75		Student Home
N/31	Luserna – San Giovanni, Villa “Bello Sguardo”	81	Agudat	Family Group
N/32	Bussoleno, Villa “Ferro”	86	Ha-No'ar Ha-Zioni	Youth Group
N/33	Nichelino, Castello “Vernea”	120	Ha-No'ar Ha-Zioni	Family Group

GENOA AREA				
N.	NAME&ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
N/25	Via dei Gasperi, 27 - Genoa	225	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir	Family Group with Children
N/26	Bogliasco – Pieve Ligure	170	Gordonia	Youth Group

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

OUT OF REGION AREA				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
N/3	Gonivolta, Palazzo Vescovile - Cremona	100	Dror	Youth
N/14	Acqui-Bagni, Alessandria – Albergo Fiorito	125	Adudah	Families with children
N/21	Val Madonna I, Alessandria – Villa Vitale	64	Mizrahi	Youth Gruop
N/11	Mestre – Chirignano, Venice – Villa Bisacco	80	Betar	Youth
N/27	Modena – Fossalto, Villa Prof. Bisbini	60	Partisans (mostly invalids)	
N/28	Reggio Emilia, Villa Terrachini	180	Partisans	Family Group
N/29	Nonantola, Villa Roma	180	Dror	Youth Group

CENTRAL REGION

ROME & VICINITY				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/1	‘Atid Ha-‘Am – Via Camelucci, 86	140	Partisans	Family group with babies
S/2	Havanah – Via Camelucci, 45	120	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair	Youth
S/3	Mordekhai Anielewicz - Via Latina, 41	100	Partisans	Youth
S/4	Yeshivah Maor la-Golah –Parrocchietta (Roma)	90	Agudah	Rabbinical College (orthodox)
S/5 [a]	Rodhi Group, Via Pietralata			Survivors of Rodhi group
S/6 [a]	Ojfbouj (Aufbou), Villa Cassetta Mattei, 12	50	Bund	Bund Cooperative
S/50 [a]	Ha-Tzofè, Via Cortina d’Ampezzo (Monte Mario, Roma)	120	Ha-No’ar Ha-Tzioni	Youngsters [d]

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

OSTIA (ROME)				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/7 [a]	Be-Hazit – Viale Vittorio, 13	100	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir	Family group [d]
S/8 [a]	Sha'ar Yishuv - Viale Vittorio, 11	90	Agudah	Family group (orthodox) [b]
S/9 [a]	Le-Hagshamah, Lungomare Cristoforo Colombo	80	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair	Youth [b]
S/10	Zevulun – Via Rutilio Namanziano, 33	60	Gordonia	Fishing Center
S/11	Netzah Israel – Via Rutilio Namanziano, 25	40	Mizrahi	Youth (orthodox)
S/12 [a]	Ha-'Oved – Lungomare Cristoforo Colombo, 24	65	Ha-'Oved	Youth (orthodox) [b]
S/13	Meshek Po'alot – Viale della Pinetta, 23	54	Agudah	Orthodox girls and women

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

CASTEL GANDOLFO (ROME)				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/14 [a]	Frumka – Via Buoizzi, 32	65	Dror	Youth [d]
S/15 [a]	Omanut – Via Buoizzi, 32	35		Artistical Ensable (special installation)
S/16	Ma'apilim – Via Buoizzi, 2	120	Gordonia	Youth
S/17 [a]	Dror Kadimah – Via Albalenga, 2	122	Dror	Family group
S/18 [a]	Alonim – Via Albalenga, 2		Dror	Youth
S/19 [a]	A. D. Gordon – Villa Pascolare	49	Gordonia	Youth [b]

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

GROTTAFERRATA (ROME)				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/20 [a]	Josef Kaplan – Villa Cicerone	145	Ha-Shomer Ha-Tzair	Youth [d]
S/21	Lamrot Ha-Kol – Villa Cavalletti	60	Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzionì	Youth
S/22 [a]	Betar – Via Veneto, 25	80	Revisionist	Youth (orthodox) [b]
S/23 [a]	Namalah – Via Campo Annibali, 58	56	Mizrahi	Youth (orthodox) [b]
S/24	Barzel – Via del Lago, Rocca di Papa	90	Ha-No'ar Ha-Zioni	Family group

LADISPOLI (ROME)				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/25	Ha-Bonim – Via degli Aldebrandi	60	Ha-Bonim	Family group
S/26 [a]	Betar - Via Abruzzi, 33	55	Revisionist	Betar group
S/27 [a]	Ha-'Oved – Villa Margherita	56	Ha-'Oved	Family group [b]
S/28	Betar – Via Abruzzi	45	Revisionist	Betar group (youngsters)
S/48 [a]	Noham, Villa Moretti	75	Noham	Youth [b]

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FLORENCE AREA				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/29	Ha-'Oved – Villa Selva	120	Ha-'Oved	Family group with small children wishing to emigrate overseas
S/30	Ha-'Oved – Villa Almansi	55	Ha-'Oved	Family group with small children wishing to emigrate overseas
S/31	Givat Ha-Yeled -Via Poggiolino, 16	75	Mizrahi	Children's Home (orthodox) [c]
S/32	Childrens' Home – Campolecciano, Livorno	70	Agudah	Children's Home (orthodox) [c]

APPENDICES, DOCUMENTS & MAPS

MISCELLANEOUS				
N.	Name & Address	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/33 [a]	Yosef Bussel - Villa Gaiana, Genzano (Roma)	125	Gordonia	Youth [d]
S/34 [a]	La-Nitzkhon – Gallicano (Lucca)	90	Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni	Mixed [d]
S/49 [a]	Children's Home – Nemi (Roma)	95	Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni	Children [d]
S/35	Chana Senesh – Soriano del Cimino (Viterbo)	60	Dror	Youth
S/36	Dror – Soriano del Cimino (Viterbo)	160	Dror	Youth
S/37	Bitachon – Bagnaia (Viterbo)	100	Mizrahi	Family group and some babies (orthodox)
S/38 [a]	Ha-Yehudi Ha-Lochem, Anzio (Roma)	135	Partisans	Family group with children [b]
S/39	Zofit – Acquasanta	225	Mixed & Noham	Youngsters
S/40	Migdalor – Fishing Center, Fano	160	Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni	Fishing School, youth

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SOUTHERN REGION

BARI AREA				
N.	NAME & ADDRESS	CAPACITY	POLITICAL MOVEMENT	GROUP DESCRIPTION
S/41	Dror Ba-Ma'ale, Via Salerno, 159 – Bari	75	Dror Ha-Bonim & Borocho	Youth
S/42	Aba Berdiczen, Via Salerno 207 - Bari	84	Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni	Youth
S/43	Eliezer Geller, Via Salerno 213 - Bari	120	Gordonia	Youth
S/44	Nachlat Benjamin, Via Re David, 230 - Bari	76	Agudah	Youth (orthodox)
S/45	Dror Kadimah, Grumo (Bari)	250	Mixed	Youngsters (84 orthodox)
S/46	Positano, Salerno			Meshumadim

Sources: AJDC¹

[a] still active in 1949

[b] non-Palestinian Bound in March 1949

[c] Children's Home

[d] Hachsharot hosting Tripolitanian Jews in March 1949

¹ AJDC, *Letter from Mr. Trobe to AJDC Paris, March, 27 1947*, Folder Italy, Hachsharoth, 1945-1950, Reference Code NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12 / 656, Full Reference Collection: Records of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of the years 1945 - 1954 - NY AR194554 | Sub Collection: Countries and Regions - NY AR194554 / 4 | Record Group: Italy - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 | Series: Subject Matter: Vocational Training - NY AR194554 / 4 / 44 / 12.

**APPENDIX 13: LIST OF VOCATIONAL TRAINING AND WORK PROJECTS,
ITALY 1947**

HACHSHARAH	TYPOLGY OF THE PROJECT	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT
S/2 - Rome, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/3 – Latina, Partisans Group	Industrial Work Project	Women worked under guidance of instructor in hand-knitting, making woollen garments for children.
S/6 – Rome, Bund Cooperative	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/8 – Ostia (RM), Agudat Israel Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/9 – Ostia (RM), Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work); carpentry shop with 5 people at work.
S/10 – Ostia (RM), Fishing Center, Gordonia Group	Vocational Training	Fishermen's training courses with equipment and school program maintained by the JDC.
S/12 – Ostia (RM), Ha-'Oved Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/14 – Castel Gandolfo (RM), Dror Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/16 – Castel Gandolfo (RM), Gordonia Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/17 – Castel Gandolfo (RM), Dror Group	Industrial Work Project	3 blacksmithing branches, with 5 workers each, for 15 persons working.
S/19 – Castel Gandolfo (RM), Gordonia Group	Agricultural Work Project	One-half hectare cultivated with vegetables

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S/20 – Grottaferrata, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Group	Agricultural & Industrial Work Projects	4 hectares cultivated with grain, potatoes, vegetables and some grapes; tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/21 – Grottaferrata (RM), Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work); 8 people worked in shoe repairs for the Italian Ministero Assistenza Postbellica (Ministry of Post-War Assistance).
S/22 – Grottaferrata (RM), Betar Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/23 – Grottaferrata (RM), Mizrahi Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/25 – Ladispoli (RM), Ha-Bonim Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/26 – Ladispoli (RM), Betar Group	Vocational Training	Fretsaw work with 12 trainees making toys from wood
S/33 – Genzano (RM), Gordonia Group	Agricultural & Industrial Work Projects	3 hectares cultivated with vegetables, potatoes; tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/38 – Anzio (RM), Partisans Group	Agricultural Work Project	300 sq. metres cultivated as garden.
S/40 – Fano, Fishing Center, Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni Group	Vocational Training	Training for second class ships captains and ships mechanics, joiners and fishermen; equipment and school program maintained by the JDC.
S/48 – Ladispoli (RM), Nocham Group	Industrial Work Project	Tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/49 – Nemi (RM), Children's Home, Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni	Agricultural & Industrial Work Projects	3 hectares cultivated with potatoes, vegetables; tailor shop operated by UNRRA with sewing machines provided

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		by and work for the Italian Ministero del Lavoro (Ministry of Work).
S/50 – Monte Mario (RM), Children's Home, Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni Group	Vocational Training	Workshops, carpentry, locksmithing, handcraft, upper leather cutting courses, equipment and machinery supplied by and under the guidance of the JDC.
S/51 – Fattoria San Marco "Tel Broshim", Pontedera (PI), Italian Jews	Agricultural Work Project	A real farm, partially self-supported from the products raised.
Grottaferrata (RM) Carpentry Shop	Industrial Work Project	7 employed in producing furniture for Southern installations.
N/4 – Brivio (CO), Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni Group	Industrial Work Project	Shoe polish and toothpaste production.
N/6 – Selvino (Bergamo), Children's Home, Gordonina Group	Vocational Training	A carpentry, locksmithing and toymaking shop were taken over by ORT.
N/12 – Santa Margherita (TO), Ha-'Oved Group	Agricultural Work Project	1 hectare cultivated with vegetables and other 2 hectares cultivated as fruit orchard.
N/13 – Nichelino (TO), Ha-'Oved Group	Vocational Training	Courses in tailoring and knitting taken over by ORT.
N/20 – Avigliana, Children's Home	Vocational Training	A farming school and handcraft course were operated by ORT.
N/21 – Villa Vitale in Valmadonna (CR), Mizrahi Group	Agricultural Work Project	2 hectares cultivated as vineyard.
N/25 – Genoa, Ha-Shomer Ha-Tza'ir Group	Industrial Work Project	Carpentry and tinsmith workshops; production of tables and benches for hachsharot in Northern Region.
N/29 – Nonantola (MO), Dror Group	Agricultural & Industrial Work Projects	A farm of 7 hectares with a very primitive economy; carpentry and tinsmith workshops.
N/33 – Nichelino (TO), Ha-No'ar Ha-Tzioni Group	Agricultural Work Project	1 hectare cultivated with vegetables.
N/34 – Arona (MI), Betar Group	Agricultural Work Project	1 hectare cultivated with vegetables and 2,5 hectares as vineyard and fruit orchards.

Sources: AJDC¹

¹ AJDC, *Work Program – Hachsharot – Italy, March 1947*, in Folder: Reports 1946-1947, Reference Code G 45-54 / 3 / 6 / SM.458, Full Reference Collection: 1945-54: Records of the Geneva Office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee - G 45-54 | Sub Collection: Subject Matter - G 45-54 / 3 | Record Group: DPs/Survivors/Refugees - G 45-54 / 3 / 6.

APPENDIX 14: SCHOOLS IN DP CAMPS ORGANIZED BY OJRI (ITALIAN NORTHERN REGIONS, 1947)

Name of the DP Camp	Adriatica (static camp)	Scuola Cadorna (transit camp)	Cremona (static camp)	Rivoli (static camp)	Grugliasco (static camp)	Chiari (transit camp)
Residents	2,450	1,400	1,200	2,000	1,000	1,000
Students	114	129	56	120	60	98
Classes	6	5	6	6	5	3
Teachers	8	7	8	8	5	2
Hours of study after school	6	3	5	6	2	2
Students having class in the afternoon	---	aged 10-12 years (kitot hey and vav)	aged 11-12 years (kitah vav)		aged 9-10 years (kitah dalet)	---
Opening hour of the Mo'adon	3 – 6 p.m.	flexible	3 – 6 p.m.	3 – 6 p.m.		---
Artistic subjects	included in the program	not included in the program	included in the program	?	?	---

Source: OJRI, Culture and Education Department¹

¹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 Duah Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

APPENDIX 15: SCHOOLS IN DP CAMPS ORGANIZED BY OJRI (ITALIAN SOUTHERN REGIONS, 1947)

Name of the DP Camp	Fermo (static camp)	Barletta (static camp)	Cinecittà (transit camp)	Bari (transit camp)
Residents	600	2,000	450	700
Students	56	130	7	14
Classes	3	6	2	4
Teachers	4	10	1	2
Hours of study after school	3	6	1	2
Students having class in the afternoon	---	---	evening classes	---
Opening hour of the Mo'adon	---	3 – 6 p.m.	---	---
Artistic subjects	to be included in the program	not included in the program	included in the program	---

Source: OJRI, Culture and Education Department¹

¹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 Duah Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

APPENDIX 16: KINDERGARTENS IN DP CAMPS ORGANIZED BY OJRI (1947)

Name of the camp	Cremona	Adriatica	Scuola Cadorna	Rivoli	Grugliasco	Barletta	Fermo	Chiari
Number of children	16	38	35	34	25	33	21	50
Number of teachers	1	3	2	2	2	3	2	---
Numbers of rooms	1	2	1	---	1	---	2	3
Opening hours of the kindergarten	9 – 12 a.m. 15 -18 p. m	9 – 12 a.m. 15 -18 p. m	9 – 12 a.m. 15 -18 p. m	9 – 12 a.m. 15 -18 p. m	all day	all day	9 – 12 a.m. 15 -18 p. m	---
Children sleeping in the kindergarten	no	no	only the youngest ones	no	yes	no	no	No

Source: OJRI, Culture and Education Department¹

¹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 Duah Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

APPENDIX 17: DISTRIBUTION OF SUBJECTS ACCORDING TO CLASS (KITAH) AND AGE OF THE CHILDREN, 1947

	Subjects	Kitah Aleph (6-7 years)	Kitah Bet (7-8 years)	Kitah Gimel (8-9 years)	Kitah Dalet (9-10 years)	Kita Hey (10-11 years)	Kitah Vav (11-12 years)
Jewish Studies	Bible's studies (Tanakh)	---	5	5	5	5	4
	Hebrew	8	8	6	6	6	6
General Subjects	Mathematics	5	5	5	5	5	5
	History	---	---	---	2	2	2
	Geography	---	---	2	2	2	1
	Geography of Israel (Yedi'at Ha- Aretz)	---	---	---	2	4	3
	Sciences	---	---	---	---	1	2
Artistic Subjects	Drawing	3	2	2	2	2	1
	Music	3	3	2	2	2	1
	Gymnastics	2	2	3	2	1	2
	Handcrafts	3	3	2	2	2	---

Source: OJRI, Culture and Education Department¹

¹ CZA, J17/8443, *Din Ve-Hešbon Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947*, Folder: J17/8443 Duah Šel Ha-Maḥleqet La-Tarbut 'al-yedey Merqaz 'Irgun Ha-Pliṭim Be-'Italia, 1947-1948, Record Group: The Jewish Community In Palestine/Israel (Organizations, Institutions, Localities), Collection J17: Education Department of the Vaad Leumi (1932-1949).

APPENDIX 18: ART EXHIBITION OF WORKS BY THE REFUGEE ARTISTS
(Rome - Palazzo Barberino, February, 7-10 1948)

THE ARTISTS	BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES [a]	WORKS EXHIBITED
Albert Alcalay, painter	Born in Paris, 1917. Attended College in Belgrade and studied in France and Italy. Is an opponent of the conservative school of art. During the war he was interned in a concentration camp in Italy where he met the famous painter Michael Fingestone whose school of thought in painting is somewhat noticeable in Mr. Alcalay works.	<u>Oil paintings:</u> Faro Romano con la torre di Nerone Angolo del ghetto di Roma Dintorni di Roma (Castel Giubileo) Per la via Cassia Monte Mario Montebello Il porto fluviale di Roma Piccolo paesaggio Ebreo orientale Ritratto di vecchio portiere Via di San Lorenzo (Venezia) <u>Drawings:</u> Strada di periferia (Roma) Teatro Marcello Nudo Ponte sul Tevere La dogana di Venezia Piazza di Spagna (Roma) Paesaggio fluviale I senza tetto Gli alberi del Pincio (Roma) I perseguitati Gli erranti
Margherite R. Barta, sculpture student	Born in Miskolc (Hungary) in 1925. Has worked with ceramics. She is now a student at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome.	<u>Sculptures:</u> Testa dal vero Skilled works in ceramic

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Eva Deutsch, student of art-decoration	Born in Zagreb (Yugoslavia) in 1924. Escaped to Italy in consequence of Nazi persecution. She is studying drawing, decoration and skilled works at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome.	Figure cut in wood Sketches for cloth Sketches for placards
Imre Erdely, painter	Born at Neszmély (Hungary) in 1900. After completing College in Hungary he came to Italy in 1926 to further his studies. At the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome he concentrated on classical painting and, after his having obtained his diploma, he returned to Hungary. There his works were particularly portraits and landscapes. During the war he escaped to Italy.	Observatory Castel Gandolfo Self portrait
Maria Farago, painter	Born in 1920 at Győr in Hungary. Her talent for painting was observed in College and she held an exhibition of her works during this period. Fled to Italy during the war.	Still life
Eva Fisch, student of painting	Born in Hungary, 1923. She commenced her studies in Budapest and has continued at Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome.	Drawings with charcoal-pencil Drawing with pen
Istvan Fisch, student of painting	Born in 1922 in Budapest. He attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest and is at present studying at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome.	Still life "Interieur" Sketches
Eva Fischer, painter	Born in 1920 at Daruvar (Yugoslavia) and attended the Academy of Fine Arts at Lyone, France. After receiving her diploma she returned to Yugoslavia and worked in Belgrade until 1941 when she escaped arriving in Italy in 1946. She has held several lone exhibitions in Rome and France and several of her paintings are owned privately in America, France, Italy and Germany.	Figure Easy chair Reading Woman's figure Still life Swiss Landscape Still life with draping Still life with artichoke Figure Self portrait Landscape
Imre Galitzer, painter	Born in Budapest and attended college there. During the war he held several exhibitions in Budapest. His paintings are hung in Budapest and privately owned.	Nine drawings with Chinese ink

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Abraham Kaufman, sculpture student	Born in Romania, in 1924. His talent for sculpture was noticed at an early age but the war interrupted his studies. After liberation he again took up his studies and came to Italy in 1946 to continue his work at the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Rome.	Wood carvings
Mira Kraus, interior decorator	Born in 1914 at Zoprivnica (Yugoslavia) and escaped to Italy during the war, where she continued her studies at the University for Foreigners in Perugia. Is studying cinematographical arrangements in Rome. A number of her projects for interior decoration have been acquired in Italy.	Five designs for interior decoration
Regina Lichter, student of painting	Miss Lichter started her studies in Krakow prior to the war. She was deported to Auschwitz and other concentration camps and after liberation came to Italy and is now studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Turin.	<u>Paintings:</u> Paesaggio di Selvino Paesaggio di Selvino Paesaggio di Genova Paesaggio di Venezia Paesaggio di Saluzzo Seven Xylographies from a concentration camp in Germany
Laszlo Moskovicz, sculptor	Born in 1907 at Erdőbénye near Tokaj, Hungary. Graduated at the Academy of Fine Arts in Budapest. He has been influenced by Hungarian artists. His sculpture, exhibited in Bucharest, depicting the Nazi terror won high praise from Soviet Authorities.	<u>Sculptures:</u> The Jewish Renaissance The Way to the Crematorium The Development of the Culture Study Mother's Care The Jewish Renaissance Motor-cycle Motor-cycle in course
David Pfefer, sculptor	Born in 1909 at Ostrowiec, in Poland. Studied at Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and received a scholarship from the Polish Ministry of Education. He won several prizes in exhibitions in Poland.	<u>Sculpture:</u> Head
Kuno Schilemann, interior decorating and commercial	Born in 1905 in Berlin, where he attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin, specialising in decorative paintings and placards. Escaped from Germany because of persecution and	Sixteen sketched and placards

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	found his way to Italy via Belgium, France and Spain. During this period he adopted modern placarding.	
Arno Stern, painter	Born in 1888 at Lodz (Poland) and attended the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Also studied in Brussels and Paris. Was decorated by the late-King Albert of Belgium and three of his canvasses have been acquired by the National Museum in Brussels. During the war he visited London, Geneva, Zurich and Toulouse and held exhibitions in three cities.	<u>Paintings:</u> Landscape Monte Mario Landscape Campo di Fiore Still life Still life Piazza del Popolo
Abraham Sarubsztan, sculptor	Born in 1915 in Poland. He studied for a short time at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and after the war continued at the Accademia delle Belle Arti, Rome.	<u>Sculpture:</u> Head of a woman
Samuel Zajdensztadt, painter	Born in 1903 in Poland. Attending the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw. After being liberated from German concentration camps he came to Italy and has continued studying at the Academy of Brera, Milan.	<u>Paintings:</u> Elegia ebrea Sabato dopo pranzo Il passato trascorso in Polonia Una visione Tipo del ghetti Testa di vecchio Il giovane scrittore Sposalizio ebraico Melodie di Tchaikovsky Ghetto di Varsavia <u>Drawings:</u> Tipo Caucaso I cavalli

Source: YIVO¹

[a] as reported within the catalogue of the exhibition

¹ YIVO, *Art Exhibition of Works by Refugees Artists, 1948*, Folder 373, Roll 26, Frame 996, Record Group: 294.3, Collection: Displaced Persons Camps and Centers in Italy, 1945-49, Series 6: Organizations.

APPENDIX 19: FAC SIMILE OF THE OJRI QUESTIONNAIREORGANIZATION OF THE JEWISH REFUGEES IN ITALY
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Name First Name
2. Profession
Age
3. Actual Address (private/in a kibbutz/in a camp)
4. Country of Origin
1. Where did you stay during the war? a) In which ghetto? b) In which Partisans' group? c) In which concentration camp? d) In a hidden place (yes or no) e) On the "Aryan side", i.e. under Aryan documents (yes or no) 2. How did you save yourself? 3. Who of your nearest relatives perished (father, mother, husband, wife, brother, sister, children) and how? 4. Who of your family remained in your former home country? 5. Do you have any relatives in Italy 6. Have you any relatives outside Europe who are ready to welcome you and to help you in your establishment there, and in which country are they living?
1. Employed (yes or no – for people who do not live in a kibbutz) 2. If not employed – why? 3. If employed in a kibbutz – in what kind of work? 4. Which profession do you want to learn?
1. Do you want to return to your former home country? 2. If you do not want – what are the reasons?
1. Where do you want to emigrate to? 2. Why do you want to go there?

Place.....

Date.....1946

Source: OJRI¹

Signature.....

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 20: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE JEWISH DPs IN ITALY, 1946

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	AGE OF THE DPS				TOTAL
	UP TO 16 YEARS OLD	BETWEEN 17 AND 25 YEARS OLD	BETWEEN 26 AND 50 YEARS OLD	OVER 51 YEARS OLD	
POLAND	215	3468	2703	214	6600
RUMANIA	40	628	150	14	832
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	29	571	162	---	762
HUNGARY	21	273	102	6	402
LITHUANIA	9	121	104	26	260
GREECE	1	76	42	3	122
YUGOSLAVIA	6	32	31	10	79
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	6	51	48	12	117
TOTAL	327	5220	3342	285	9174

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 21: BACKGROUND OF THE JEWISH DPs IN ITALY, 1946

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	WHERE THE DPs WERE DURING THE WAR							
	IN THE GHETTO, AND AFTERWARDS...				IN A CAMP	WITH THE PARTISAN S'	ON THE “ARYA N SIDE”	IN A HIDDE N PLACE
	IN A CONCENTRA TION CAMP	WITH THE PARTISA NS	ON THE “ARYAN SIDE”	IN A HIDDE N PLACE				
POLAND	3399	848	316	264	1010	685	78	---
RUMANIA	475	7	54	80	169	9	38	---
CZECHOSLOVAKI A	440	76	47	36	163	---	---	---
HUNGARY	218	7	30	10	86	8	42	1
LITHUANIA	190	14	29	4	20	3	---	---
GREECE	87	3	2	12	18	---	---	---
YOUgoslavia	54	7	3	---	12	2	1	---
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	72	2	5	8	30	---	---	---
TOTAL	4935	964	486	414	1508	707	1	1

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 22: FAMILY SITUATION OF THE DPs IN ITALY

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	NUMBER OF DPs WHOSE WHOLE FAMILY AND RELATIVES PERISHED	NUMBER OF DPs WHO HAS ANY RELATIVES IN THEIR HOME- COUNTRY	NUMBER OF DPs WHO HAD RELATIVES AMONG THE JEWISH REFUGEES IN ITALY	NUMBER OF REFUGEES WHO HAD RELATIVES OUTSIDE EUROPE	
				OUTSIDE PALESTIN E	IN PALESTIN E
POLAND	5394	526	679	1002	3543
RUMANIA	476	294	69	81	459
CZECHOSLOVAKI A	492	142	135	90	408
HUNGARY	211	156	61	45	200
LITHUANIA	212	12	21	31	160
GREECE	99	16	9	18	78
YOUgoslavia	38	30	15	17	29
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	86	14	19	31	58
TOTAL	7008	1190	1008	1315	4935

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 23: CAUSES AND REASONS OF THE DPs' REFUSAL TO REPATRIATION

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	DIFFICULTY TO RETURN TO A PEOPLE WHO IN MASSES TOOK PART IN MURDERING OF JEWS	DIFFICULTY TO LIVE IN A PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING REMAINDS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE OF THE WARTIME	THE FEAR OF OUTRAGES AND POGROMS	IMPOSSIBILITY OF RECREATE A NATIONAL- CULTURAL LIFE OF THE JEWS	MORAL IMPOSSIBILITY TO CONTINUE LIVING UNDER ARYAN DISGUISE
POLAND	2693	2520	589	422	337
RUMANIA	141	121	---	314	---
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	105	53	9	348	25
HUNGARY	198	116	7	12	---
LITHUANIA	84	60	---	71	---
GREECE	---	12	---	54	---
YOUgoslavia	---	---	---	13	---
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	35	10	---	37	---
TOTAL	3256	2892	605	1271	362

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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	IMPOSSIBILITY TO SETTLE IN THE HOMECOUNTRY ECONOMICALLY	FEAR OF REPRISALS BECAUSE OF INTERNAL POLITICAL STRUGGLE	IMPOSSIBILITY TO RETURN TO THOSE WHO HAVE ROBBED JEWISH PROPERTY	HOSTILITY THAT THE LOCAL POPULATION DEMONSTRATE AGAINST JEWS AFTER THE WAR	MORAL IMPOSSIBILITY TO LIVE IN AN ANTISEMITIC COUNTRY
POLAND	253	168	168	927	338
RUMANIA	---	11	354	60	10
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	---	---	305	16	9
HUNGARY	---	---	7	30	3
LITHUANIA	---	4	233	9	4
GREECE	---	---	61	---	---
YOUUGOSLAVIA	---	39	27	---	---
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	---	---	53	---	---
TOTAL	253	222	1208	1042	364

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 24: COUNTRIES WHERE THE JEWISH DPs LONGED TO BE RESETTLED

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	COUNTRIES OF EMIGRATION						
	PAL ESTI NE	OTHER COUNTRIES					TOTAL
		US A	CA NA DA	A R G E N T I N A	OTHER COUNTRIES	OTHER COUNTRIES TOGETHER	
POLAND	6507	75	---	9	9	93	6600
RUMANIA	826	6	---	---	---	6	832
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	757	3	---	1	1	5	762
HUNGARY	401	---	---	1	---	1	402
LITHUANIA	258	1	---	---	1	2	260
GREECE	122	---	---	---	---	---	122
YUGOSLAVIA	68	6	4	---	1	11	79
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	95	21	1	--	---	22	117
TOTAL	9034	112	5	11	12	140	9174

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy... The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 25: REASONS ASSERTED BY THE JEWISH DPs IN ITALY FOR EMIGRATION

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF THE DPs	REASONS FOR EMIGRATION					
	TO PALESTINE					TO OTHER COUNTRIES
	WISH TO LIVE AMONG SIMILAR SURROUNDINGS AND FEAR OF STRANGE SURROUNDINGS	POSSIBILITY TO CREATE A NATIONAL AND CULTURAL LIFE FOR JEWS	AFFILIATION TO ZIONISM	WISH TO MAKE 'ALIYAH WITHOUT ANY AFFILIATION TO ZIONISM	RELATIVES IN PALESTINE	RELATIVES IN OTHER COUNTRIES
POLAND	1788	2646	3135	1743	845	93
RUMANIA	231	116	375	166	93	6
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	263	108	382	72	84	5
HUNGARY	127	39	201	65	42	1
LITHUANIA	76	6	126	73	35	2
GREECE	51	6	68	3	16	---
YUGOSLAVIA	32	---	36	6	10	12
VARIOUS COUNTRIES	54	3	32	12	14	21
TOTAL	2622	2924	4355	2140	1139	140

Source: OJRI¹

¹ YVA, The Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (ed. by), *We Jewish Refugees in Italy...The Results of an Inquiry*, (Rome: 1946).

APPENDIX 26: MAP OF THE MAIN LOCATIONS OF REFUGEE CAMPS, ASSEMBLY CENTERS AND HACHSHAROT FOR JEWISH DPs IN ITALY



Transliteration Table

א(alef):	'
ב(bet):	b/v
ג(ghimel):	g
ד(dalet):	d
ה(he):	h
ו(waw):	w
ז(zayin):	z
ח(het):	ḥ
ט(ṭet):	ṭ
י(yod):	y
כ(in fine di parola ק– kaf):	k/kh
ל(lamed):	l
מ(in fine di parola מ– mem):	m
נ(in fine di parola נ– nun):	n
ס(samek):	s
ע(‘ayin):	‘
פ(in fine di parola פ– peh):	p/f
צ(in fine di parola צ– ṣade):	ṣ
ק(qof):	q
ר(reš):	r
ש(šīn):	š
ש(śīn):	ś
ת(taw):	t

*This system of scientific transliteration has been used only for titles of books or sources listed in footnotes and bibliography.

Glossary of Hebrew Terms

‘Aliyah	Litterary “ascent”, Hebrew term which refers to the Jewish migration to Israel.
‘Aliyah Bet	Illegal immigration to British Palestine.
‘Aliyat Ha-No’ar	Youth ‘Aliyah
‘Olim	Jewish migrants to Palestine/Israel (sing. ‘olè)
Brichah	Literary “flight”, a clandestine campaign initiated by the Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe, later directed the the emissaries of the Jewish Agency in Europe. It aimed at bringing as many Jewish survivors as possible to gathering sites for illegal immigration to Palestine.
Hachsharah	Training farm (pl. <i>hachshrot</i>)
Haganah	Litterary “defence”, it was the <i>Yishuv</i> underground armed forces founded in 1920.
Halutz	Pioneer (pl. <i>halutzim</i>)
Hayalim	Soldiers (sing. <i>hayal</i>)
Histadrut	The federation of labour founded in 1920 (it was a combination of trade unions, an owner of economic enterprises and a provider of social services).
Madrichim	Guides (sing. <i>madrichal</i>)
Merkaz ha-Plitim	Center for the Refugees
Merkaz he-Halutz	Pioneers’ Center
Merkaz la-Golah	Center for the Diaspora
Mossad Le-‘Aliyah Bet	In short, “Mossad”. It was the Zionist underground organization in charge of clandestine immigration to British Palestine between 1939 and 1948.
Palmach	Hebrew acronym for “ <i>plugot mahatz</i> ” (striking units), it was a fighting unit of the <i>Yishuv</i> formed in 1941.
Palyam	Hebrew acronym for “ <i>plugot yam</i> ” (naval units), it was the Palmach’s naval division.
Plugot	Union of Jewish Soldiers in the Allied Army
She’erith Ha-Pleitah	This biblical formula - ambivalently translated as “the surviving remnant” and “the saved remnant” - was adopted and updated by the Jewish survivors in the aftermath of World War II in order refer to themselves.
Shlihim	Jewish Agency’s emissaries (sing. <i>shaliah</i>)
Yeridah	Litterary “descent”, emigration of Jews from Israel (opposite to ‘aliyah)
Yishuv	Hebrew for “settlement”, it refers to the Jewish community in Palestine before the establishment of the State of Israel.

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