REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

studies

IN 20TH CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY

Holocaust/Shoah

The Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy

Holocaust Commemoration in Present-day Poland

Ways of Survival as Revealed in the Files of the Ghetto Courts and Police in Lithuania

EUROPEAN NETWORK
REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

NUMBER 5

www.enrs.eu

ISSUE
NUMBER 5
DECEMBER 2016

REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

STUDIES IN 20TH CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY

EDITED BY
Dan Michman and Matthias Weber

EUROPEAN NETWORK
REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY
STUDIES IN 20TH CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY

PUBLISHER:
European Network Remembrance and Solidarity
ul. Wiejska 17/3, 00–480 Warszawa, Poland
www.enrs.eu,
studies@enrs.eu

COPY-EDITING AND PROOFREADING: **Caroline Brooke Johnson**
PROOFREADING: **Ramon Shindler**
TYPESETTING: **Marcin Kiedio**
GRAPHIC DESIGN: **Katarzyna Erbel**
COVER DESIGN: RZECZYOBRAZKOWE.PL

ISSN: 2084–3518

Circulation: 500 copies

Funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media upon a Decision of the German Bundestag.

In cooperation with the Nordost-Institut (IKGN e.V), Lüneburg.

Front cover photograph: The Hall of Names in the Holocaust History Museum at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem. Courtesy of Yad Vashem.

REMEMBRANCE AND SOLIDARITY

STUDIES IN 20TH-CENTURY EUROPEAN HISTORY

ISSUE NUMBER 5

DECEMBER 2016

Holocaust/Shoah

CONTENTS

MEMORY – STUDIES ON REMEMBRANCE

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE JEWISH REFUGEES IN ITALY: CULTURAL ACTIVITIES AND ZIONIST PROPAGANDA INSIDE THE DISPLACED PERSONS CAMPS (1943–48)

Chiara Renzo
Universities of Florence and Siena (Tuscany), Department of History, Archaeology, Geography and Arts

ABSTRACT
The Second World War caused millions of displaced persons (DPs), who were uprooted from their own country and needed international protection. Among the DPs, there were also the Jewish survivors who – despite being a minority in the great ocean of refugees – deeply influenced the post-war political landscape in Europe and in the Mediterranean. This article focuses on several aspects of the Jewish displacement in Italy (1943–48), highlighting dynamics of self-understanding and self-representation experienced by the Jewish DPs in the refugee camps. These mechanisms are analysed by examining the tension between the Zionist activity among the Jewish DPs and the wider international humanitarian programme for rehabilitating post-war refugees.

Introduction

The 20th century was characterized by an endless movement of people across the unstable boundaries of Europe, caused mainly by conflicts and political issues. Since the early 1900s, migrations became a mass phenomenon and began even to interfere with the European state system.

The refugee problem reached international dimensions during the First World War that for the founding of specific organizations to manage it were required for the first time. These organizations were created by

intergovernmental committees as provisional solutions for particular national groups who were considered in need of temporary assistance. From the time that humanitarianism became part of a shared agenda within the League of Nations, it required another thirty years to define refugee status at an international level: from 1921, the year of the foundation of the High Commission for Refugees of the League of Nation, to 1951, the year of the Geneva Convention. During this period, millions of men, women and children in Europe were uprooted from their towns, villages and cities, and forced to seek refuge elsewhere or deported to forced labour or concentration camps. These migrations challenged the fundamental concept of the nation state: citizenship. Thus, the refugees – viewed by contemporaries as 'the scum of the earth' (Arendt 1951, 267) – found themselves outside the protective network of the national frameworks and were thus totally deprived of the guaranties inherent in this membership, becoming instead increasingly dependent on the refugee-rescue organizations. Moreover, the European states system were in a state of collapse as a result of the two world wars, with new redrawn borders that further altered the demographic composition of states (Judt 2010, 13–40).

After the Second World War, refugee camps were established by the Allies throughout Europe, in which the uprooted found a temporary refuge, waiting for ultimate repatriation or resettlement. According to Malcolm Proudfoot, who was director of the Operational Analysis Section at the Prisoners of War & Displaced Persons Division (PW&DP) of the Supreme Headquarter Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF), by May 1945 the refugee problem involved more than forty million civilians from twenty-one countries (Proudfoot 1956, 32). In order to identify them, the Allies coined the term 'displaced persons' (DPs), a formula that defined those who were forced out of the boundaries of their own countries because of the conflict, requiring international assistance, and awaiting repatriation or resettlement. According to the Allies' policy, international assistance was to be granted only to persons uprooted from Allied countries, whereas refugees coming from enemy countries received a different treatment (Woodbridge 1950, vol. 3, 43). The social workers of the UN agencies – i.e. the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) and then the International Refugee Organization (IRO), which provided assistance to the post-war European refugees (Woodbridge 1950; Holborn 1956) – carried out millions of individual interviews with the displaced persons, determining who and to what extent each refugee was eligible for international protection.[1] Although this

might imply that the displaced persons were passive in post-war Europe, the men and women who lived in the refugee camps were extremely active. They developed different feelings of belonging and membership, in which there were evident elements of continuity with the past as well as elements of a radical change (Holian 2011; Cohen 2012). By analysing this process, this article will show that while the network of organizations responsible for the administration of this humanitarian emergency had an innovative approach to how they supervised and managed, at the same time it became involved in dynamics of self-determination by the DPs, often in opposition with the ultimate goals of the Allied mission.

The Jewish displacement across Europe: DP policy vs. DP politics

In order to examine the development and the consequences of the management of the post-war refugee crisis, this article will analyse a specific case study: the Jewish displacement. In particular, it will focus on the Italian case, which has been investigated less than the German and the Austrian ones (Brenner 1995; Königseder and Wetzel 2001; Lavsky 2002; Patt and Berkowitz 2010). It highlights, on the one hand, the limits and concerns of the Allies' policies and, on the other, it shows how the sense of marginalization found typically in the DP camps accelerated the dynamics of community aggregation, a process sometimes similar to that of other refugee groups and sometimes peculiar to the Jewish refugees.

The crux of the Jewish displaced persons problem revolved around their rejection, in the wake of their experiences during the Shoah, of repatriation as well as their request to be recognized as Jews in the national sense and not according to their original nationalities. This approach led to a heated debate. At the time, Great Britain was the mandatory power in Palestine and, in accordance with the provisions of the British Mandate White Paper of 1939, vigorously limited the *aliyah* (Jewish immigration to Israel).[2] Thus, the British authorities – fearing the consequences of a massive Jewish emigration to Palestine – justified their negative response to the Jewish DPs' requests for national recognition or for any special treatment that would lead to pressure on the British Mandate to open Palestine for immigration.

Nevertheless, in the United States zone of occupation, the Jews were already recognized as a separate collective subject as witnessed in the Harrison Report, published in the summer of 1945. It was an inquiry that took the

name from its author: Earl G. Harrison (a United States representative of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees), who was appointed by President Harry Truman to investigate into the conditions of the surviving Jews in Europe in the DP camps. In his report, Earl G. Harrison described the alarming situation of the Jews and denounced the policies of the authorities responsible for that situation, putting into question the work of SHAEF and stressing that *aliyah* was the only suitable solution to the problem of the Jewish survivors.[3] President Truman, embracing Harrison's views and conclusions, positioned himself in completely opposition to his British ally (Lavsky 2002, 51–55; Kochavi 2001, 89–133).

Moreover, the publication of the Harrison Report brought to the attention of world public opinion the fate of the victims of the Nazi persecution and further sharpened the controversies between Great Britain and the United States on Middle Eastern policy. The Jewish DPs therefore – though representing a minority in the huge number of post-war refugees – became a major challenge for the general management of the large humanitarian crisis and the international political arena.

The post-war Jewish diaspora was not a uniform and homogenous group. Not all of them were Zionists who wished to immigrate to Palestine, but – regardless of the country where they were planning their future – the Jewish DPs were highly motivated by a powerful national feeling, defined by the historian Zeev Mankowitz as 'proto-Zionism'.[4] In fact, Zionism was fundamental in the experience of displacement of the Jewish survivors and indeed the urgent need for an ideology is a common feature of almost every group of refugees at that time in Europe (Wyman 1989, 106–30).

The idea of national independence was already widespread in the Jewish diaspora before the Second World War, but among the Jewish DPs it developed in a transnational context, becoming purely pragmatic and acquiring characteristics of political, cultural and military resistance. The return to the Promised Land meant a clean break with the past of the diaspora, which is summed up by the use of the word 'return' itself and the actual refusal to remain in Europe. These feelings were in part the result of the actions of a decisive Zionist leadership (in general, but specifically in the DP camps) as well as the controversial involvement of the refugee agencies in those mechanisms promoting the self-understanding of the DPs themselves.

Zion's Gate: Italy 1943

For obvious reasons, research into Jewish displacement generally takes as its starting point spring 1945. Nevertheless, in analysing the Italian case, this paper adopted summer 1943 as the starting point. In June 1943 the Allies landed in Sicily and the newly liberated southern Italian regions soon became the first assembly centres for the Second World War refugees, among whom a great number of non-Italian Jews had already reported.[5] In the spring of 1943, about 9,000 foreign Jews lived in Italy of whom 6,386 had been interned by the Italian authorities. These were the so-called 'old refugees', who were mainly German and Austrian Jews who had found refuge in Italy in the 1930s, and Polish students or Yugoslavs interned in Italy since 1940 (Voigt 1993).

At the end of 1945, according to the Anglo American Commission of Inquiry (AAC), the Jewish DPs of non-Italian origin in Italy numbered 16,000,[6] but this number continued to increase in the months and years immediately after the war due to the arrival of the Sherith ha-Pletah. This term, of biblical origin, which means literally 'the surviving remnant', was used for the first time in the ghetto of Kaunas in Lithuania at the end of 1944 to indicate the Jews who escaped Nazi deportation; the Jewish DPs used it later to refer to themselves (Mankowitz 2002, 24 ff.).

The Sherith Ha-Pletah arrived mainly from Eastern Europe through a spontaneous escape movement, known as Brikhah [flight, in Hebrew], which involved approximately 250,000 Jews (Bauer 1970). Brikhah was soon linked to the underground movement of the Mossad le-âliyah Bet (in short: Mossad), which from 1945 organized the illegal immigration of Jews from Europe to Palestine on behalf of the Jewish Agency. This transnational community of Jews who crossed Italy on their way to Palestine contributed to make Italy 'Zion's Gate', the last stop before the *aliyah*. Between August 1945 and May 1946, fourteen ships of the Mossad left from Europe, including ten from Italy with 5,586 passengers; an additional twelve ships sailed between June and September 1946, including six from Italy, with 10,408 people (Toscano 1990, 91; Sereni 1973; Zertal 1998).

The first encounter between the Allies and a large group of Jewish DPs in Europe took place on 14 September 1943 at Ferramonti Tarsia Camp (Calabria, south-west Italy). Since summer 1940, it had served as a Fascist internment camp until the Allies converted it into a refugee camp in 1943.

According to various sources, there were about 2000 refugees in Ferramonti when the Allies arrived, almost all Jewish 'old refugees' (Urbach 2008, 210; Capogreco 1987, 143–152).[7]

The Jewish refugees in Italy rapidly established an organized rescue network. Beyond temporal and numerical data, a question arises spontaneously in order to fully realize this accelerated development: who were the leaders of the Jewish DPs in Italy?

This examination should first take into consideration the composition of the British Army, which occupied Italy between 1943 and 1947 (Ellwood, 1985). In its ranks, there were a significant number of soldiers enlisted from the Middle Eastern territories, at that time under British control, including Mandatory Palestine. Almost 7,000 Jewish soldiers from the Yishuv (Hebrew term for the Jewish community in Palestine before 1948) voluntarily joined the Allies in the invasion of Sicily, though only in September 1944 were the Jewish volunteers constituted in separate units. Thus, the Jewish Brigade – as the Jewish Units of the Allied Army are known from late 1944 – inevitably represented the first contact between the diaspora and Eretz Israel and thereafter played a prominent role in the clandestine activities of the Brikhah and the Mossad.

Therefore, the profiles of the Jewish DPs' leaders in Italy came from the ranks of the Jewish Brigade, the Brikhah and the Mossad. Some of them arrived from the Yishuv and were members of paramilitary organizations (such as the Haganah and the Palmach) or delegates of the political parties of the Yishuv. Still others were those who had led the resistance in East European ghettos, or outstanding personalities who were leaders in the Zionist youth movements in pre-war Europe.

The official documentation of the Allied Control Commission (ACC) reveals that the Zionist groups, with their strong leadership, had replaced the Palestine Office immediately after the liberation of Ferramonti. They were in charge of recording those who wanted to make *aliyah* and providing them all the necessary documents for emigration.[8] In addition, the soldiers of the Brigade had been providing irregular rescue services to the Jewish DPs that they encountered since September 1943. By February 1944 they had established, inside their barracks in Bari, a facility for DPs that included a canteen, a hospital, a synagogue, a dormitory, a school for children and

a meeting room for youth movements. This facility was known as the Merkaz la-Plitim [the Centre for Refugees], an organization that assisted and supported all the Jews who were waiting for an entry certificate to Eretz Isreal. After the liberation of Rome, delegates of the Jewish Brigade, meeting in Fiuggi (near Rome) in September 1944, decided to give a more comprehensive and well-organized form to the Merkaz la-Plitim, which changed its name to the Merkaz la-Golah be-Italia, the Centre for the Diaspora in Italy (Urbach 2008, 286–91; Markowitzky 1997, 16).

The Fiuggi meeting was attended even by representatives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (better known as JDC or simply: 'Joint'), an American Jewish organization founded in 1914 which was in the frontline of the rescue of the Jewish refugees in Europe before, during and after the Second World War. In Italy, the Joint was active since the late 1930s through the Delegation for the Assistance of the Jewish Emigrants (DELASEM), a branch of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities entrusted with assisting foreign Jewish refugees (Sorani 1983). The Joint and other Jewish organizations financed 40 to 50 per cent of the DELASEM's budget, which from the early 1940s was forced to operate clandestinely until it was finally replaced by the Joint itself in 1944–45 (Handlin 1965; Bauer 1974 and 1981).

The organization of the Jewish refugees in Italy: self-understanding and self-representation

The Jewish DPs in Italy could rely upon a network of well-structured organizations and institutions, which gradually spread throughout the country. These services – reserved for the Jews – were in addition to those provided by the Allied Control Commission (ACC) and by UNRRA from 1945. From the time of the Allied landing in Italy, the ACC was responsible for directing the humanitarian programme for the refugees and the DPs. The ACC entrusted the task to the DPs Sub-Commission (established in October 1943), which assisted foreign refugees and stateless persons, whereas the Italian Sub-Commission assisted Italian refugees in cooperation with the Italian authorities. About a year later, in September 1944, the two DP branches were merged into a single unit: the Displaced Persons and Repatriation Sub-Commission. It provided accommodation for the refugees by transforming detention camps into refugee camps, as well as by confiscating schools, hospitals, barracks and private houses and designating them as refugee centres. In 1945 many of these structures were transferred to the administration of UNRRA.

With regard to housing, the Jewish refugees in Italy were often organized in *kibbutzim* [communes] and *hachsharot* [training collectives], attached to small agricultural colonies within the refugee camps themselves or nearby, where the refugees lived the typical communal life-style of the Yishuv while preparing themselves ideologically and practically for *aliyah*.

Hence, Italy became the place where the *halutzim*, the pioneers of Eretz Israel, met the survivors of the Jewish communities of Central and Eastern Europe. With the arrival of the Sherith Ha-Pletah, the identity of this transnational community of Jewish refugees became increasingly defined politically and culturally.

In the months immediately following the end of the war, the Jewish DPs in the refugee camps in Italy, as those in Germany and Austria, began to establish committees of self-representation. The first call for the unity of the Jewish DPs in Italy came with the circulation within the refugee camps of a leaflet, announcing a national conference that would open in Rome and continue in Ostia (near Rome) between 26 and 28 November 1945. Its purpose was the creation of an organization that would represent the 15,000 Jewish DPs at that time in Italy.[9]

The leaflet explained the goals of the Organization of Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI), namely:

1. to re-educate them for life in civilized society and develop their sense of social responsibility;
2. to sponsor the creation of an organization for mutual aid;
3. to educate them for productive work;
4. to satisfy their cultural and spiritual needs;
5. to fight against the problem of demoralization among them, caused by the terrible persecution and their fight for survival in ghettos and concentration camps;
6. to reawaken their sense of human dignity, their self-confidence and generally to give them guidance as they return to a normal way of life;
7. to promote agricultural and professional training in view of emigrating to Palestine.[10]

Prior to the conference of Rome, elections had taken place all over Italy on 8 November 1945 in order to democratically select one delegate for

Group portrait of members of the Kibbutz Mekor Baruch, a Poal Mizrachi fishing ***hachsharah*** (training farm) in Bacoli (near Naples, Italy), 1945–46. The banner on the right states 'Who will build the Negev?', while the banner on the left: 'We will build the Negev'. Photographer unknown, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

each hundred DPs, for a total of 140 representatives who participated in the meeting.[11]

The first session of the conference was organized in the hall of a hotel in Rome, where a stage was set up for the presiding chairmen. The hall was decorated with blue and white banners as well as the flags of the USA, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France and Italy. Banners proclaimed the slogan: 'Open the gates of Palestine. We have no way back to our previous homes'.[12]

The declared purposes of the conference, attended also by delegates of the Italian Jewish Community, of the Jewish Agency as well as of Italian authorities and representatives of the rescue agencies, were basically two. First, it aimed at giving a permanent organization to the network of Jewish groups that had risen soon after the Allies' arrival in Italy and was further expanded at the end of the war with the official establishment of the UNRRA mission. Secondly, the organizers hoped that the wide participation in the conference would resonate throughout the world and emphasize the condition of the Jewish DPs in Italy, thus raising public awareness about their situation and

their request for emigration to Palestine. Leo Garfunkel, afterwards elected OJRI president, stressed these points in his opening speech:

> 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 [...]. 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. The hospitable Italian country is apparently to be temporary refuge whence we should proceed to another place which we may deeply root in for ever [...]. Whether there is any spot on earth to find rescue for our tortured and tormented body and soul – it is the only Eretz Israel.[13]

The result of this three-day assembly was the official establishment of the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy (OJRI), which thenceforth was recognized as the sole organ of political representation of the Jewish refugees in Italy.

In order to facilitate the carrying out of services in various fields – cultural, educational, professional training, religious and health – the OJRI was divided into specialized departments. The activities of each department were supported both by the Jewish Agency and funded by private organizations, first of all the Joint (which spent for example in 1946 more than 56 million lira on the assistance to Jews in Italy). It should be pointed out that the programmes of the OJRI, though being part of the wider humanitarian rehabilitation programmes of post-war Europe, had a distinct Zionist slant.

Even though there was a hierarchical organization in the refugee camps, with the Allies at the top, followed by the agencies of the United Nations and finally by the non-governmental organizations, the Allies nevertheless welcomed the drive for self-government by the DPs. The DP self-organization served as a recognized channel for the transmission of official instructions affecting the community in general; it acted as a responsible body able to exercise control over the community and eliminate frivolous and unsubstantiated individual petitions for official consideration; and provided a measure

of control in domestic matters, in the registration of refugees and in the collection of personal data.[14] The UNRRA administration 'even encouraged any reasonable form of self-government on the part of refugees', as pointed out by Umberto Nahon, who visited the refugee camps in Italy as a delegate of the Jewish Agency in January 1946.[15]

Unquestionably, these forms of aggregation on the part of refugees, which were largely supported by the Allies and UNRRA, favoured the ultimate goal of their own mission, which essentially aimed at reintegrating refugees in a national identity framework. On the other hand, this support of self-representation reinforced the DPs' self-determination and promoted the formation of a communal identity that in some cases – as in the Jewish one – did not coincide with British policy.

Zionist activism: political and cultural programmes in the DP camps

'Help the people to help themselves' was the motto of UNRRA, which coordinated and regulated the missions of non-governmental organizations by promoting a shared collective responsibility and an innovative, secular and institutionalized approach in rehabilitating the refugees. The work of UNRRA – subordinated to the Allies' decisions – was also characterized by a system of mandates (some with a high degree of responsibility) to private associations to carry out the work.

For example, the involvement of the Jewish organizations in rescuing and rehabilitating the Jewish survivors represents a paradigmatic case of the contradictions arising from the collaboration between international institutions and private associations. The most evident example is the Joint, which signed an official agreement with UNRRA, ratified by the Allies – under which the Joint acted as an intermediary between the Jewish DPs and the authorities, and financed all the cultural and political activities among the Jewish DPs, making a special effort to obtain certificates for entry into Palestine.

The Joint was the major funder of *kibbutzim* and *hachsharot*, where the DPs were learning agricultural techniques according to the Zionist ideals of a return to the land and to manual labour, and in which emissaries of the Jewish Agency (*shlichim*) promoted political activism and national independence. Each *kibbutz* and *hachsharah* was affiliated with a political party or

movement of the Yishuv. Thus there were *kibbutzim* of socialist orientation affiliated with the Hashomer Hatzair, or religious-oriented affiliated with the Hapoel Hamizrahi Party or of Zionist-revisionist orientation affiliated with Betar. In 1947 about 12,000 Jewish refugees lived in *kibbutzim* and *hachsharot* in Italy (Marrus 1985, 338).

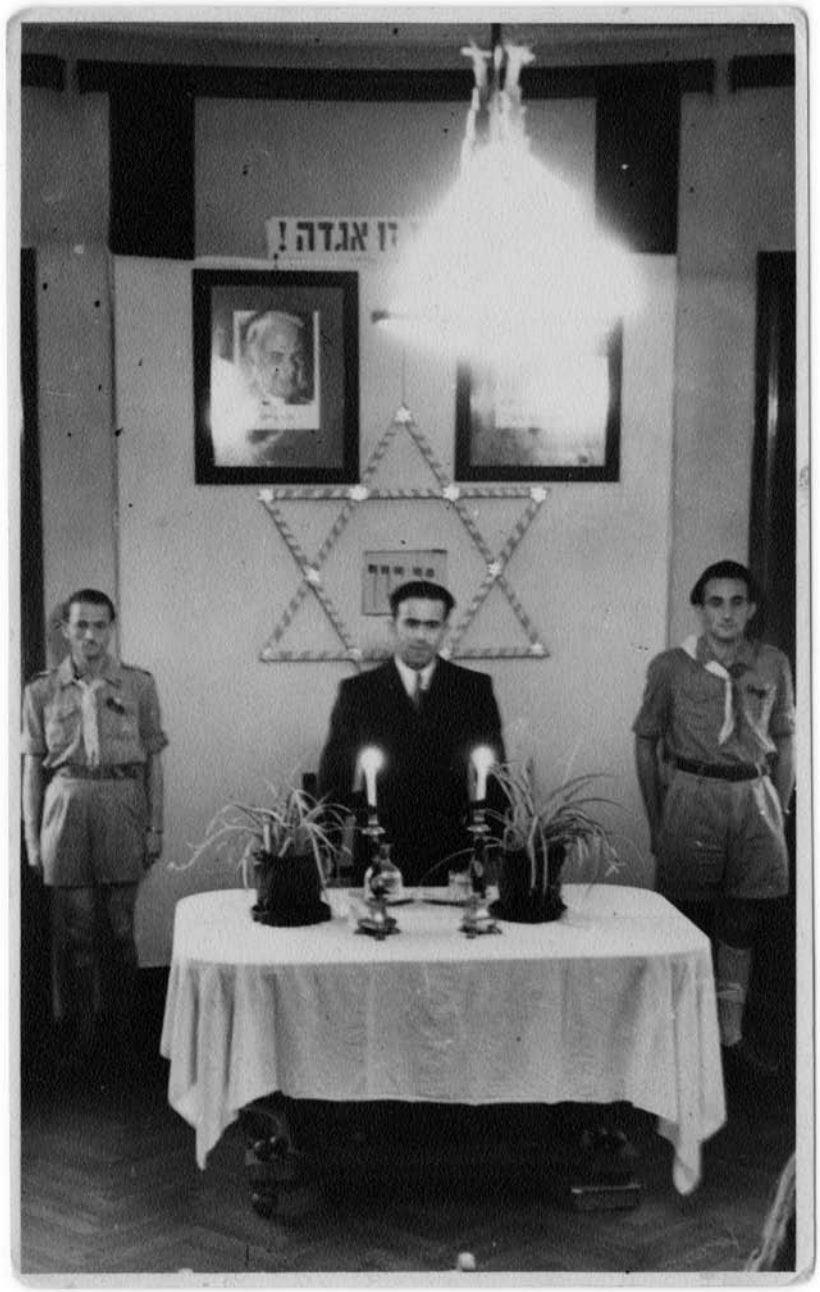
Through the activities of its cultural department, the Organization of the Jewish Refugees in Italy made Zionist education of the younger generation of Jews its main mission, promoting awareness of a new Jewish identity linked to Eretz Israel.

The cultural and educational activities in the refugee camps were central in the rehabilitation of the DPs, and had the purpose of offering them the possibility of a new start in life after resettlement. The programmes included schools for children, vocational courses for adults, circulation of information through the press, and cultural activities as theatre, music and sport. In every DP camps there were schools for children of all ages. The teachers came directly from the Yishuv or were selected and trained from among the refugees by teachers from Eretz Israel. The main subjects were Hebrew language, and those related to Judaism, the history of the Jewish people and Eretz Israel.

Children who arrived in Italy without parents were provided for in orphanages, often supported by the Joint and affiliated with the 'Aliyat Ha-No'ar (the movement of Youth Aliyah). The orphans were divided into groups according to age, each guided by a *madrich* [guide, in Hebrew], who was in charge of their education and preparation for *'aliyah*.

Adults had the opportunity to attend workshops and vocational training, where they learned crafts and trades related to manufacturing (sewing, upholstery, carpentry, bookbinding, plumbing, electricity, carpentry, iron working, etc.). These training courses were also offered in collaboration with UNRRA and the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (ORT), another private Jewish organization that had been involved in rescuing Jews from 1880, which began operating in Italy in 1947.

OJRI also published an official weekly journal in Yiddish: *Ba-Derekh* [on the way, in Hebrew]. It featured a great variety of subjects, focusing on international politics, the condition of the Jewish communities around the



Jewish displaced persons conduct a memorial service for Theodore Herzl and Chaim Nachman Bialik in an JDC convalescent home in Rome, 1947. Photographer unknown, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

world, the British Mandate in Palestine and the political situation in Italy. There were also other sections giving voice to the Jewish leaders of the DP camps, to war testimonies by the refugees on their experiences of persecution or resistance as partisans in the ghettos, and other sections dedicated to the search for lost relatives.

Moreover, the Association of Jewish Journalists, Writers and Artists Refugees in Italy founded the literary and art magazine in Yiddish *In gang: khoydesh-zhurnal far literatur un kunst* [On the move: a monthly magazine for literature and art]. It aimed to promote 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, to reviews about the shows staged in the refugee camps, historical insights, sociological reflections, book reviews and introductions to new artists. The press and the bulletins produced by the Jewish DPs themselves circulated among the refugee camps in Italy. Many DP camps were equipped with libraries and reading rooms, where magazines and books were available to the readers in a number of languages (Hebrew, Yiddish, English, German, Polish, etc.).

The rehabilitation programme of the Jewish DPs consisted also of theatre and the music, which were resumed inside the refugee camps. Artists among the refugees, who founded itinerant acting companies and orchestras, often initiated productions. Great classic works of the Jewish theatre were staged, such as those of Shalom Aleichem, which told about life in the *shtetl* (small towns in Eastern Europe with a large Yiddish population before the Holocaust), and Aaron Ashman, which featured the pioneers in Eretz Israel.

In additions to producing cultural events, the Jews in DP camps in Italy began to play sports as an integral part of their rehabilitation. Through the support of the Joint, OJRI organized 'national' competitions, called the Maccabiah Games, which always ended with the singing of *Hatikvah* (literally 'The Hope', which would soon become the national anthem of the State of Israel).[16]

Conclusions

The goal of this brief review of the activities that took place in the Jewish DP camps in Italy is not to express mere praise of the Joint and of Jewish organizations in general, nor to depict the reality of the DP camps in post-war

Europe as free of complications. As in all the refugee camps throughout Europe at that time, those hosting Jews also experienced problems caused by overcrowding, hunger, black marketeering and general disorders generated by the condition of marginalization implicit in the nature of refugee-camp life itself. The goal of this reflection on the Jewish displacement in Italy is rather to shed light on several distinct features of the Jewish displacement, according to the above-mentioned considerations.

In redefining themselves and thus in reconstructing their identity during this period of marginalization, the displaced persons (in general) used traditional categories of membership and recollection to a given national place. Though embracing this element of continuity with the past, there emerged in the specific case of the Jewish displacement several aspects of discontinuity.

The refugee camp became an extraterritorial space 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 in a place they did not intend to create any kind of bond. In this place they were controlled and managed by international institutions while at the same time subjected to internal forces of political aggregation, that often found (practical and ideological) support in those institutions that would have been expected to remain outside these dynamics. Thus, 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 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.

CHIARA RENZO

Chiara Renzo is a PhD candidate in History at the joint doctoral programme of the Universities of Florence and Siena and a Claims Conference Saul Kagan Fellow in Advanced Shoah Studies. Her dissertation focuses on the transit of the Jewish DPs in Italy between 1943 and 1951. In 2015, Chiara Renzo was Visiting Research Fellow at the Hebrew University and at the Yad Vashem International Institute for Holocaust Research in Jerusalem. In 2016 she obtained a fellowship from the European Holocaust Research Infrastructure (EHRI) at the Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust & Genocide in London.

ENDNOTES

1 The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration was an agency founded in 1943 by the Allies in order to rehabilitate Europe after the Second War World. It was active until 1947, when it was succeeded by the International Refugee Organization (IRO).

2 *Aliyah* in Hebrew means literally 'rise' or 'climbing up'. The term is commonly used to refer to the immigration of Jews to Eretz Israel (the Land of Israel, the traditional Jewish term for Palestine). 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. The White Paper of 1939 set out British policy until the end of the British Mandate: it limited the *aliyah* for the following five years to 75,000 individuals, 15,000 per year.

3 Accessed 9 November 2016: https://www.ushmm.org/exhibition/displaced-persons/resourc1.htm

4 Zeev W. Mankowitz, 'Zionism and the Sherith Hapletah', in *She'erit Hapletah, 1944–1948: Rehabilitation and Political Struggle*, ed. Yisrael Gutman and Saf Avital (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1990), 211.

5 The Central Archives of the State in Rome (ACS), Jewish Refugees, 8 October 1943, UA – Headquarters Allied Commission (AMG), Reel no. 599B, Disposal Jewish Refugees, October 1943 – February 1944.

6 The findings of the Anglo-American Commission of Inquiry are available online. Accessed February 2016: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/anglotoc.html

7 Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem (CAHJP), *Reference my visit to your HQ on Oct. 43, 8 October 1943*, E.E. Urbach Archives P118, Fol. 6: Refugees (I) in Ferramonti, October 1943 – February 1944.

8 ACS, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, 30 January 1944*, Reel no. 104F, Jews in Italy, December 1943 – March 1944.

9 The Central Zionist Archives of Jerusalem (CZA), L16/521 *Sifron Kinus ha-Pliṭim be-'Iṭalia.* Record Group 4: Affiliated Office of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency and Institutions Established By Them, Collection L16: Palestine Office for Italy (Ufficio Palestinese), Rome 1944–1969.

10 Ibid., *Pamphlet of Conference of the Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy 26–28 November 1945.*

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid., *Pamphlet of the Conference of the Jewish Displaced Persons in Italy 26–28 November 1945*, 3.

13 Ibid., *Opening Speech by L. Garfunkel at the Conference of Jewish Refugees in Italy, Rome, 26 November 1945*, 4–5.

14 ACS, Reel n. 104F, Jews in Italy, December 1943 – March 1944, *Conditions of the Jews in Italy, Sicily and Sardinia, 30 January 1944*, 3.

15 CZA, *Jewish Agency report on Southern Region Camps*, S25/5243, 2.

16 This summary of the cultural and political activities organized among the Jewish DPs in Italy is an abstract of the result of the author's PhD research project. The primary

sources analysed are available at the Central Zionist Archives, at the Central American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The views or opinions expressed in this article, and the context in which the images are used, do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of, nor imply approval or endorsement by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

LIST OF REFERENCES

Arendt, Hanna (1951) *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Cleveland, OH, and New York: The World Publishing Company.

Bauer, Yehuda (1970) *Flight and Rescue: Brichah*. New York: Random House.

Bauer, Yehuda (1974) *My Brother's Keeper. A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee 1929–1939*. Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society of America.

Bauer, Yehuda (1981) *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939–1945*. Detroit, Wayne State University Press.

Brenner, Michael (1995) *After the Holocaust. Rebuilding Jewish Life in Post-War Germany*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Capogreco, Carlo Spartaco (1987) *Ferramonti. La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo d'internamento fascista (1940–1945).* [Ferramonti: Life and the men in the largest fascist internment camp (1940–1945)], Firenze: Giuntina.

Cohen, Daniel G. (2012) *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ellwood, David W. (1985) *Italy, 1943–1945*. Leicester: Leicester University Press.

Handlin, Oscar (1965) *A Continuing Task. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (1914–1964)*. New York, Random House.

Holborn, Louise W. (1956) *The International Refugee Organization: a specialized agency of the United Nations: its history and work, 1946–1952*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.

Holian, Anna (2011) *Between National Socialism and Soviet Communism: Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*. Ann Arbor, MI.: University of Michigan Press.

Judt, Tony (2010) *Postwar: a History of Europe since 1945*. London: Vintage Books.

Kochavi, Arieh (2001) *Post-Holocaust Survivors. Britain, the United States and the Jewish Refugees, 1945–1948*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

Königseder, Angelika and Juliane Wetzel (2001) *Waiting for Hope: Jewish Displaced Persons in Post–World War II Germany*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Lavsky, Hagit (2002) *New beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945–1950*. Detroit, MI.: Wayne State University Press.

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

Markowitzky, Yakov (1997) *Nitsaney Ha-Teḥiyah: Ha-Merkaz La-Golah Ve-Ha-Péilut, Ha-Yishuvit Be-'Italyah 1944–1948*. Tel Aviv: Merkaz La-Golah.

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

Patt, Avinoam J. and Michael Berkowitz, eds (2010) *'We are here', New Approaches to Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany*. Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press.

Proudfoot, Malcolm J. (1956) *European Refugees: 1939–52. A Study in Forced Population Movement*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Sereni, Ada (1973) *I clandestini del mare. L'emigrazione ebraica in Terra d'Israele dal 1945 al 1948* [The illegal immigrants of the sea. Jewish immigration to Eretz Israel between 1945 and 1948]. Milan: Mursia.

Sorani, Settimio (1983) *L'assistenza ai profughi ebrei in Italia (1933–1941). Contributo alla storia della DELASEM* [Assistance to the Jewish refugees in Italy (1933–1941). The history of Delasem]. Rome: Carucci.

Toscano, Mario (1990) *La 'Porta di Sion': l'Italia e l'immigrazione clandestina ebraica in Palestina, 1945–1948* ['Gate to Zion': Italy and Jewish illegal immigration to Palestine 1945–1948]. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Urbach, Efraim E. (2008) *Reshimot Bimey Ha-Milḥamah: Yomano Shel Rav Eretz-Yisra'eli Ba-Tsava Ha-Briti, 1942–1944* [Report of the days of war. Diary of a rabbi from Eretz Israel in the British Army, 1942–1944]. Tel Aviv: Misrad Ha-Biṭaḥon.

Voigt, Klaus (1993) *Il rifugio precario. Gli esuli in Italia dal 1933 al 1945* [The precarious refuge. Exiles in Italy from 1933 to 1945]. Scandicci: La Nuova Italia.

Woodbridge, George (1950) *UNRRA: The History of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration*. 3 vols. New York: Columbia University Press.

Wyman, Mark (1989) *DPs: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945–1951*. Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press.

Zertal, Idith (1998) *From Catastrophe to Power: the Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel*. Berkley: University of California Press.