Jewish American Relief Organizations in the Aftermath of WWII: Media, Commemoration, Memory, and Acknowledgment of the Holocaust

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ABSTRACT

From 1945 to 1948, prominent Jewish relief organizations in the United States (Hadassah, the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal, and the United Jewish Appeal) launched worldwide Zionist media campaigns to support the rehabilitation and resettlement of Holocaust survivors. The campaign, which was based on short documentaries the organizations produced and newsletters they published, influenced attitudes towards the Holocaust and the survivors. This essay analyzes the representation of the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors in these films and newsletters. It discusses the narratives promoted by these organizations, the ways their media campaigns commemorated the Holocaust, and the identities they crafted for Holocaust survivors. It contributes to the ongoing debate as to whether American Jews marginalized the Holocaust until the 1960s. It shows that Jewish relief organizations produced films and published newsletters that dealt directly with the Holocaust and the survivors' pleas in the three years immediately following World War II.

In the three years after World War II, prominent Jewish organizations in the United States, led by Hadassah, the JDC (Joint Distribution Committee), the UPA (United Palestine Appeal), and the UJA (United Jewish Appeal), launched worldwide Zionist media campaigns for the rehabilitation and resettlement of Holocaust survivors.[1] These campaigns, which were based on short documentaries[2] the organizations produced and newsletters they published, influenced attitudes towards the Holocaust and the survivors. Even though this campaign reached millions of people and helped raise hundreds of millions of dollars for the Zionist movement, they have received scant attention in research. Studies examining perceptions of the memory of the

Holocaust in the USA in the aftermath of WWII have addressed other angles, or only discussed small parts of a few films.[3]

This article analyzes the representation of the Holocaust and Holocaust survivors in Jewish organizations' films and newsletters in the United States between 1945 and 1948. It discusses the narratives promoted by these organizations, the ways their media campaigns commemorated the Holocaust, and the identities they crafted for Holocaust survivors. It is argued that despite the political differences between these organizations, they created similar narratives that represented the Holocaust, dealt with horrific stories, and stressed that the survivors' sufferings had not ended with the Liberation: the vast numbers of refugees and the British refusal to allow immigration to Palestine meant that more money was needed to help them.

Hadassah, the JDC, the UPA and the UJA

Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization in the United States, developed out of a small women's movement called "Bnot Zion" (daughters of Zion). It was founded by 15 volunteer women in New York, in February 1912, and was headed by Henrietta Szold. By the end of the 1940s, Hadassah had 240,000 members in its 701 chapters throughout the United States.[4] The goals of the organization in the 1940s were to stress the urgency of helping Holocaust survivors to the American public, foster sympathy among both Jews and those of other faiths towards Zionist objectives, and spur the American government to support the Zionists' struggle.[5] Hadassah published two major periodicals during this time: the *Hadassah Newsletter* and *Hadassah Headlines* monthly.[6] Hadassah also produced films, such as *The Forgotten Children* (1945), *They Live Again* (1947), and *Do You Hear Me*? (1947)[7] that deal with the Holocaust, Holocaust survivors' efforts to start their lives anew in Europe and Palestine, and Hadassah's programs to help them.

The Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), one of the world's largest Jewish aid and relief organizations, was founded in November 1914 by German Jews. In World War II, the JDC was the most active Jewish-American organization to operate in Europe. Starting in June 1945, the JDC operated in the Displaced Persons (DP) camps in Germany, Austria, and Italy, as well as in refugee camps in Cyprus. The organization provided food, clothing, and medical aid. Its members also helped locate survivors' relatives, recreate the foundations of religious life, and set up employment and memorial projects, publishing houses, newspapers, and other activities. The JDC defined itself as an apolitical relief organization,[8] but because of the position and influence of Joseph J. Schwartz, who headed the European branch in the 1940s, the organization took a pro-Zionist political stance and actively supported Jewish illegal immigration from Eastern Europe to Mandate Palestine [*Habricha*]. The funds allocated for what was then illegal immigration were described euphemistically in the organization's financial reports as "Relief in Transit."[9]

As of 1938, the JDC's campaigns were conducted within the framework of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), a unified annual fundraising campaign platform for the development of a Jewish national home in Israel.[10] The main partners of the UJA were the JDC and the United Jewish Appeal (UPA), an American fundraising organization. The UPA was founded in 1925 as an umbrella organization for several Zionist organizations [Keren Hayesod, Jewish National Fund (JNF), Hadassah, the Hebrew University, and the Mizrachi Fund]. These organizations engaged in independent propaganda campaigns across the United States that confused many American donors and ultimately caused financial losses since there were too many organizations and too many campaigns serving the same purpose. As of 1935, only Keren Hayesod and the JNF operated under the auspices of the UPA. After World War II, these organizations were able to raise tens of millions of dollars for Holocaust survivors. The JDC published two monthly magazines during that time: the *JDC Digest* and *JDC Review*. [11]

The UJA and the JDC also produced films, such as *Battle for Survival* (JDC, United Jewish Appeal, 1946), *Make It Real!* (UJA in cooperation with Columbia Pictures, 1948), *The Future Can be Theirs* (JDC, 1948), *The Will to Live* (UJA, 1947), *We Must Not Forget* (UJA, 1947), and *Where Do You Get Off* (UJA, 1948). These films dealt with the Holocaust, the plight of survivors in Europe, and JDC's and UJA's range of programs to support them.

Representations of the Holocaust

Until the 2000s, there was a general consensus among historians specializing in American Jewry that after the end of World War II and through to the 1960s, the Holocaust was rarely mentioned in American Jewish public discourse. In their view, because Jews were eager to integrate, they did not want to be identified with victimization. Most scholars considered that the silence began to break in the 1960s and 1970s due to the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem (1961) and the Six-Day War (June 1967). The projection of Israel's strength helped American Jews feel more confident about their identity. This enabled them to deal with their absolute helplessness during the Nazi era and to begin publicly confronting the Holocaust. [12]

Since the 2000s, however, new research has challenged this myth of silence and the argument that American Jews did not start to acknowledge the Holocaust until the 1960s. Studies have now addressed the ways the Holocaust as a whole, as well as the survivors and the issues they faced, were presented in Jewish-American and Zionist culture and public discourse since the late 1940s.[13] The controversy, however, is far from over. Two recent studies have returned to the notion of silence and make claims that Holocaust marginalization continued until the 1960s. According to Beth Cohen, in the aftermath of World War II, the vast majority of American Jews (outside the survivors' circles) were unwilling to listen to or comprehend the extent of the atrocities and instead insensitively urged the survivors to

leave their traumatic memories behind.[14] Similarly, Daniel Navon suggested that the Holocaust was marginalized because the community's leadership and its flagship organizations primarily sought the complete integration of the Jewish community into American society in the period up to the 1960s.[15]

An analysis of the print media and cinematography produced by Hadassah, JDC, and UJA paints a different picture. It shows that within Jewish American relief organizations' media the Holocaust emerged as one of the main themes from 1945 to 1948. These organizations did not turn away from very traumatic stories. Instead, the Holocaust was discussed, and the victims and victimhood were addressed over and over again through depictions of the genocide but also through numerous personal stories. The media tell a story of commemoration and sympathy. Even if these texts were these organizations' way of grappling with the public's unwillingness to deal with the Holocaust, the end result was that American Jews discovered the Holocaust through these media efforts.

In the articles and in the films, these organizations needed to combine the topic with their efforts to be an integral part of American society. This led to a dualistic description of the Holocaust not only as a unique Jewish event but also as a universal catastrophe that violated the basic principles of freedom, justice, and equality that constitute the bedrock of the American nation. [16] By extension, Americans were cast as the champions of the democratic spirit of the world who must lead the struggle to help the survivors.[17] The relief media also emphasized the importance of preserving the memory of the Holocaust as part of the Jewish identity in the present and for future generations. For example, in *Report on the Living*, while the camera pans over dozens of survivors at a memorial service, the narrator states, "Jews cannot ever forget the six million that were murdered." The choice of the term "Jews" and not "European Jews" is deliberate. In other words, the murdered millions are part of every Jew's collective memory. "If we forget, we become unconscious partners of Hitler's war on innocent people," proclaims the narrator in *We Must Not Forget*. The survivors are repeatedly called "fellow Jews in need" in *The Future Can be Theirs.* The survivors are referred to as "brothers" in *The Will to Live*, and the film makes it clear that all Jews have an obligation to them.

The journalists writing for these organizations' print media grappled openly with the unimaginability of the scope of the Holocaust or the survivors' stories, stating what happened to children in Europe is beyond comprehension: "I find myself again horrified by the brutality that a person can demonstrate towards another person."[18] Another reporter who met with survivors in Eretz-Israel told her readers that "the stories that are heard from the survivors are hard to put on paper because they are beyond human perception [. . .] It was hard to believe these stories even when they came from the survivors themselves."[19]

These media constantly remind the audience of the murder of millions. In *They Live Again* , the camera follows the Nazi army pummeling through Europe and the heaps of corpses. JDC publications present the tortured Jews

of Europe being led to their deaths. *The Will to Live* shows horrific images of corpses and the *Muselmann*[20] who were discovered when the camps were liberated. In the film *Battle for Survival*, the camera zooms in on the crematorium. A door opens to show charred bodies. The narrator tells of the six million who were starved and burned while the camera pans across the shriveled bodies of the survivors.

The media thus humanized the disaster by shifting the prism from a collective event to instances of individual trauma. Cognizant of the value ascribed to the individual in American society, the organizations concentrated on personal stories and dealt with the Holocaust by focusing on personal tragedy, not mass atrocities. They realized that the stories of individuals were a more compelling way to the hearts of their target audience than a general overview of numbers that defied belief. For example, the Hadassah women's magazine approached the issue of hunger in Europe after World War II as follows: "A well-known writer once said something interesting about the intimacy of numbers. He could identify with the suffering of seventeen people but became indifferent when it was seventeen million. Then the number became just another headline in the newspaper."[21] Similarly, "The catastrophe that the Jews of Europe experienced during the Nazi regime cannot be explained by quoting the numbers of the Jews killed or starved to death, even though they are appalling."[22] In an article about the murder of entire communities that were wiped off the face of the Earth, the journalist added that "these figures cannot encapsulate the tragedy that has no precedent in human history."[23]

Edward Warburg, the Chairman of the JDC, frequently reported the statistics on the situation of the survivors and the organization's efforts to help them in the JDC's newsletters and documentaries. However, he made sure that the film *The Future Can be Theirs* (1948) emphasized the people behind the statistics: "Facts and figures are cold. I remember them only because of certain situations I saw," thus making it clear that audiences relate more strongly to personal stories than anonymous numbers.

The media thus individualized the Holocaust by presenting a variety of personal stories that highlighted their different and complex attempts to survive under Nazism. The documentaries clarify the differences between small and large ghettos.[24] The newsletters repeatedly cover stories of Jews who managed to escape and hide; Jews who lost their entire families in the camps; others who moved from camp to camp and from hideout to hideout; those who managed to survive by hiding deep in bunkers, in fields, or in the woods; those who found shelter with partisan groups; or those who posed as Aryans.[25] Other articles describe Jews who joined the resistance, who were hidden in small towns thanks to the help of the locals, who posed as Catholics, etc.[26] "The children are gathered to the DP camps from hideouts, monasteries and concentration camps," explains the narrator in *The Forgotten Children*, thus showing that there were numerous ways that individuals lived or died during the Holocaust.

This did not stop the Jewish-American media from presenting its audience with horrific depictions. A passage from an article about the refugee children of Buchenwald states that "Jewish children in Europe were murdered or gassed before their mothers' eyes."[27] Another article tells the story of a Jew who was taken ill at Auschwitz and was only saved from death in the gas chambers because he hid under a pile of bodies.[28] Other articles describe a child who saw his parents being murdered before his eyes[29] and an eight-year-old girl who hid with her parents for 20 months in the basement of a Christian Polish family and did not see daylight for almost two years: "only then did she learn how to walk."[30] To elicit audience identification, the articles mention the survivors by name and link survivors' testimonies. For example, 15-year-old Pinhas Judis described the cruel fate of his family: his mother and brothers were murdered in Auschwitz, and his father died in his arms in a labor camp.[31]

The documentaries also deliberately turn anonymous numbers into individual stories. "Have you got a good memory for numbers?" queries Eddie Cantor, the-Jewish-American singer-actor, while he dials a number on the phone in *We Must Not Forget* and immediately replies:

> I always have a hard time trying to remember them [. . .] but there is one number I'd like you to try to remember. That number is 74356. It is not a phone number [. . .] the exchange if you can call it such, is Auschwitz [. . .] it will lead to a young girl, age 14. That number was tattooed on her arm when she and her parents were thrown into the Auschwitz concentration camp. Auschwitz is gone now and so are her parents.

He adds that the rest of the world seems to have forgotten the Holocaust, but American Jews have a responsibility to remember the past and its impact on the present. The past is the Holocaust, and the present is the wretched state of Holocaust survivors in Europe. The number they should also remember is the amount of money the UJA needs to meet its target fundraising campaign: 170 million dollars.

The film *The Forgotten Children* begins with leisurely scenes of an "afternoon in the free world," where children blow bubbles, and if someone cries, says the narrator, it is about the little things in life, such as not wanting to get a haircut. The scenes are bright and open, representing America in all its glory "after a great war." Then the next scene moves "to the other side of the world. Same year. Same generation." The narrator comments on the ruins and talks about displaced families of non-Jews who could be united after the war and returned home, welcomed with open arms. These children returned to normal life and are shown to be well-fed and happy. "There was another kind of child in Europe when the darkest years were done," says the narrator, as a crying child is shown in a dark frame. "This child remembered something that kept him apart from the starved and orphaned," says the narrator, as the camera in superimposition shows the same image of the child blurred against an image of dozens of dead bodies on the ground. "This was a Jewish child," he says as the camera pans to show a mass grave, filled

with hundreds of bodies of murdered Jews: "if he dared to look backward, these are the things he will see again." The camera shows scenes filmed by the Allies of locals who were taken by soldiers after the war to see what had happened in the camps so near their homes. The locals flinch at the sight of the emaciated mass of dead bodies. "If by a miracle his father hadn't been among [the dead] this is the way he would have faced his child": the camera focuses on the scenes of a *Muselmann* being carried out of the camp after the Liberation, half dead and unable to walk. "Through a miracle Jews did come out alive from this misery," says the narrator while showing crying, starving inmates who were freed. Unlike the Gentiles who returned home, the narrator explains that for Jews, things were different. The film focuses on the continuity between Jews being murdered during the Holocaust and after World War II in Europe in the Kielce pogrom in 1946. The camera shows the graves, people sobbing, and the funerals. This film not only highlights Jewish victimization during the Holocaust but also characterizes the Jews as a victimized group after the Holocaust. World War II ended, but the Holocaust continues and must be stopped through Jewish-American donations.

Fighting "Compassion Fatigue"

The relief organizations knew they needed to work hard to engage the American public to donate. Their appeals often landed on deaf ears. Once the United States entered World War II, news about the war flooded the American media. Most media outlets wrote very little and very late (primarily only after the middle of 1944) about the plight of the European Jews. Outside of large cities, such as New York and Washington, coverage in the press and on the radio was scant and irregular.[32] In cinema, although the directors of the major studios in Hollywood were Jewish, the studios preferred not to deal with the fate of European Jewry during World War II.[33]

The war years constituted a golden age for Hollywood. Roughly 1,700 films were made, about 500 of which dealt with World War II. Of those, some 100 dealt with the trauma of an occupied population under the Nazi regime. Of these, the persecution of the Jews was mentioned in only a few films [such as *The Great Dictator* (1940), *To Be or Not to Be* (1942), and *The Seventh Cross* (1944)], [34] and in others, only in a few isolated episodes.[35] This lack of representation reflected public opinion, in that the non-Jewish American public was, for the most part, uninterested in this subject: few perceived the Holocaust as a tragedy that had any meaning for them and considered the persecution, extermination, and rescue attempts as an internal Jewish affair.[36]

Immediately after the war, however, the American media took a different stance. The American press was filled with shocking stories and gruesome photographs. Newsreels also presented scenes that were filmed during the liberation of the camps to millions of moviegoers. Nevertheless, the non-Jewish public did not realize that the pictures and the reports only par-

tially revealed the scope of Nazi crimes.[37] The scenes showing concentration camps that were liberated could not have represented the torture, humiliation, persecution, sadism, and brutal genocide of millions.

Still, the Holocaust did not take place in America. The general public felt far removed from such a distant crisis on another continent. Susan D. Moeller claims that the presence or absence of media attention can be a matter of life and death for populations in distress and crisis. The media do not change the importance of a humanitarian crisis but can impact international attitudes towards the event. It is hard to retain a public interest in stories about difficult ongoing crises before the next news event takes its place and the media must fight the public's "compassion fatigue."[38] The images and reports about the Holocaust disappeared relatively quickly from the general press, both because the Holocaust ceased to be "fresh news" and because of the natural inclination of the public to distance themselves from problems on other continents. The new division into two opposing world blocs influenced the American public's emotional distance from the trauma, since the Cold War turned Germany from an enemy into an ally in the war against Communism, thus muting its crimes.

The relief organizations were forced to deal with these issues. Hadassah women wrote openly in the pages of *Hadassah Headlines* about the American public's indifference and apathy toward the refugee problem and called for change.[39] The JDC took an indirect approach in *Report on the Living*:

> Those who survived the camps and dreamed of liberation discover today that the enemy is apathy —the apathy of the world's nations to their request to immigrate to Eretz-Israel, the United States, and other countries. Last year a remarkable job was done by the UJA to keep these people alive, to give them some hope, but that was only the beginning, and we cannot stop after having made such a fine beginning

states the narrator in *We Must Not Forget.* The camera backs him up by showing scenes of food being delivered and hungry, dirty people eating. The film's title summarizes compassion fatigue, as the narrator reiterates that those who take on the responsibility for the rehabilitation of the survivors differ from the rest of the world, which no longer cares. In *The Future Can be Theirs,* the JDC makes it clear that the organization has helped tremendously: "Europe's Jews are still alive because the JDC was there," the narrator says while presenting the "renewed people" engaging in athletics, swimming, laughing, and talking. However, there is still hunger, disease, and an overwhelming need to help. "In the DP camps uncertainty is at its peak and elsewhere too. In Hungary, in Romania a shattered Jewish life breeds insecurity," explains the narrator, as scenes of Jews standing in lines confirm that the Jewish crisis in Europe is not over.

The relief organizations sought to fight the tendency to remove the Holocaust from the general public agenda in America. To this end, they sometimes used cynical dialogues in their films, cinematic effects, and fantasy to convey to the audience that the Holocaust and the survivors should not

disappear from the American public discourse because the survivors' problems were still far from being solved. These methods helped them explain to American Jews that it did not matter whether they had already donated in the past, since the struggle of Holocaust survivors in Europe is a continuous one that cannot be resolved quickly, and the donations must keep coming so that the survivors can be rehabilitated. Three main examples show how the organizations asked to fight compassion fatigue in 1947 and 1948 by using unorthodox cinematic strategies, which are rarely found in propaganda films.

In *Do You Hear Me*? the Hadassah women chose an exceptional approach that forces the viewers to confront the horrors of the Holocaust.[40] In the credits it says that the voice over is "anonymous." During the film, it turns out that an actress's voiceover represents one of the six million who were murdered. The story of Europe, before, during, and after World War II and Zionism in Eretz Israel, is told as if through her perspective in the afterlife. The woman's voice describes her vibrant pre-war life, her family, and her love of her town. The camera shows pre-war Paris ("I loved my city and its lovely streets"), as she says that she was a housewife ("and a good one too"). Her story is the epitome of modern Jewish life in Europe, and so is her death. "Six million. I was one of them [. . .] and this is how I died," she says dramatically when the camera "shows" an execution. According to Lawrence Baron, this is a scene of the Babi Yar massacre excerpted without attribution from the 1945 Soviet film *The Unvanquished*, the only Soviet wartime feature film that highlighted the liquidation of the Jews in Ukraine.[41] One child stumbles towards the killers and they shoot her. "This was my daughter," the narrator says and adds the Kaddish prayer for the dead. The film's representation of Parisian Jews who were murdered in Babi Yar has no historical foundation. But Baron suggests that this is an impressive early manifestation of how a mainstream American Jewish organization conveyed the magnitude of the Holocaust.[42]

After telling her story, the narrator asks "you Americans" to fight "underneath this banner [i.e. Hadassah] in memory of me and mine," for survivors who have become mothers once again, for children, for the right to immigrate to Palestine, and for Hadassah. Her greatest hope is that "With my fading voice, I plead – remember. I still live in this body and in this place [the camera shows scenes of men and women, children and adults in Europe] and in this one [the camera shows scenes of Eretz-Israel]." These statements create a link between the dead and the living, the Americans and European Jews. "Can you hear me? Do you hear me? Will you hear me?" she asks as the camera returns to the initial scenes of the dark sky and a woman who answers the phone.

The responses to *Do You Hear M*e? showed that these cinematic choices served their purpose: the responses to the Hadassah chapters were enthusiastic. The organization's newsletters indicate that the film, which was first screened at a Hadassah conference, generated great excitement and attracted new members. Numerous other Jewish groups made requests to screen

the film, which often became the centerpiece of their fundraising campaigns. Hadassah called the film a "very successful sales agent"[43] to a greater extent than "regular" documentaries.

Another cinematic strategy was used in the documentary *Make It Real!* "Remember the headlines you used to read pointing out the plight of the Jews? Remember the newsreel pictures you used to see?[. . .] Remember how your blood boiled when you saw this? And this"? asks actor Glenn Ford as pictures of survivors in Europe shivering with hunger and cold and babies crying appear in the frame. Then the frame flips: "But look at this. The picture has changed, hasn't it?"—the camera shows a child's birthday party filmed on a sunny day. Happy children are shown running around tables laden with cakes and cookies, with clowns entertaining them and a nursery rhyme playing in the background. "We are not used to pictures of happy kids having a good time. What would you say if we had told you that these are Jewish kids in Europe? It seems that only yesterday we could count the ribs of these children. When was it? 1945? 1946? The same faces were fear-stricken. The same bodies were hungry and bloated from lack of food. Look at them now," Ford says as the camera pans between party games and children smiling, eating cotton candy, "Healthy, well-fed, content. Hard to believe it, isn't it?" The scene changes to Ford in his office: "Well, do not believe it," he scolds the audience, "It isn't true. Those were American kids!" The strategy of this documentary thus consists of lifting the cinematic illusion to demonstrate the profound difference between cinema and reality by showing that a situation can only change in an instant in films. In the real world, it takes a long time and a great deal of money. "You know that you gave 125 million dollars last year. Where did it go?" This question probably concerned them the most: What happened to their donations? Why are these relief organizations asking for more? "Your money had bought a lot," he states, "the picture had changed but not nearly enough." The camera returns to the birthday party to show the happy children on a merry-go-round: "We can make it happen. Someday it will happen, but it needs work and money. You cannot do it by just snapping you fingers. You cannot do it by just flipping the film. Try it," he urges the viewers, "flip the film." The camera flips focusing on a blind child, "No. Still misery," says Ford. "Flip! No. Still hunger," he says as the camera focuses on a skinny baby. "Flip. No. Still madness," he says as the camera shows a child sitting on a chair nodding his head repetitively, seeming completely detached from reality. Ford extends this reflection to explain to the audience that "movies can do a lot of tricks," but in real life, things move slower. He demonstrates how he can make it look like his New York office is in San Francisco by changing the view from the window. He snaps his finger and the scene switches. In real life, "we don't have any movie tricks working for us." Therefore, more donations are needed. "Let's shut out the fantasy," he says, as the view from the window changes into a table indicating the amount of money each UJA organization needs to help the survivors. The amount totals 250 million dollars. At the end of the film, Ford reiterates the

differences between reality and film. To make it clear that feeding, clothing, and finding shelter for hundreds of thousands of survivors cannot succeed without sufficient donations, the camera focuses on a girl with severe burns, who looks directly at the camera as Ford says to the viewers that they are the only hope for that child "now staring accusingly at you;" "No movie tricks can erase this look [. . .] try blasting it off [coupled with an effect of blowing up the image, followed by the image of the girl]. Still there. Try splitting it into pieces [the image of the girl is cut up and then returns]. Still there. Try to make it disappear [the picture disappears and returns]. Still there." The camera returns to Ford in his office looking at the audience solemnly: "No. No movie tricks can do it. The only thing that will is your contribution. So, give, give to make this dream a reality." These comments are designed to fight the compassion fatigue of an audience that is either distanced from the problem or tired of giving.

Where Do You Get Off, also produced in 1948, uses cynicism and reflexive observations in a different way to deal with the public's compassion fatigue with a never-ending crisis. The goal was to explain the differences to Americans between what they considered difficulties and the real suffering the survivors were facing. This was done to make the viewers feel uncomfortable and donate. The film begins with a cameo of the famous Jewish actor Eduard G. Robinson talking on the phone: "Yes. I realize how important it is." Then, breaking the cinematic "fourth wall" between the actors and the audience, he addresses the viewers and asks them to read a UJA pamphlet filled with pictures depicting the dire conditions of Jewish DPs in Europe, but a telephone call interrupts his explanations.

A man he called earlier returns his call. "I wanted to come down and meet you about a contribution to the UJA," Robinson says. "You are always asking for money," replies the man rudely. "I know," admits Robinson, "but this year is special." He explains that this year the UJA needs 250 million dollars to cover its work in Europe, Palestine, and to help the refugees in the USA. "You'll just have to forget about me," the man says; "Every year it is something special. Don't you ever change your tune?? Money, money . . . you think I'm made of money?? Where do you get off anyway??"

Robinson, with a judgmental nod, gestures to the viewers to open the UJA brochure. The pictures then come to life and every statement is rebutted. When the man on the phone yells, "Didn't anyone tell you about conditions? Have you been to a restaurant lately? Do you know how much they charge for a steak?" the camera focuses on survivors picking through garbage cans and licking the hood of the cans; when he complains that dairy product prices are up in the US and that "it's a wonder our kids grow up to be healthy," the camera shows an emaciated infant in Europe with his stomach swollen from hunger; when he says that "businesses are falling off" and that it is getting harder to "scrape out a living," the camera shows survivors going through mountains of trash. "How can you talk that way?" asks Robinson. "I'm sorry Mr. Robinson, but I'm a busy man," says the man and hangs up.

Robinson turns to the audience and states that the name of the caller does not matter (thus emphasizing the generalization) because when UJA asks for money, people always have rationales not to donate. He asks the audience to enter the brochure again but reverses the question "Where do they [i.e., the survivors] get off?" As the camera shows scenes of Jews being deported to their death, piles of human bones, and the door of an oven that opens up to show a burnt body, he says harshly, "They got off at Auschwitz and Dachau; they got off at the gas chambers in Buchenwald. But where now?" He points to the answer: Palestine.

As the camera shows the crowding and filth on board one of the illegal ships, he jokingly describes it as "a cruise," where passengers can watch "the flying fish." When the camera shows how the passengers run and hide when spotted by the British forces, he calls it a game of hide a seek. "Your host will come to meet you to be sure you've arrived," Robinson says as the camera shows the British coming on board. "Notice the smiles of greeting on their faces," he adds, as the camera focuses on the harsh looks on the British soldiers' faces. "Let's ask ourselves where we get off," he tells the audience, as he asks them to donate to ensure support to the UJA causes.

These films were designed to show that the war was not over for the DPs in Europe. Hunger, disease, and uncertainty about their survival remained part and parcel of their lives: "A story not yet ended because the end is up to us," says Henri Morgenthau in *The Future Can be Theirs*. "The future can be theirs only if we help to make it theirs," he concludes.

Conclusion

This analysis of newsletters and short documentaries produced by the main Jewish relief organizations contributes to the scholarly debate on the ways Jewish Americans dealt with the Holocaust in the aftermath of World War II. Unlike scholars who have suggested that American Jewry marginalized the Holocaust until the 1960s, these media reveal the diversity within Jewish American relief organizations' approaches to the survivors. The commemoration of the Holocaust was an integral part of the narrative as early as 1945. The atrocities were represented, discussed, and visualized; the trauma was represented as part of Jewish identity, and enormous efforts were made to fight compassion fatigue. These documentaries and newsletters thus suggest that no generalizations can be made about the attitude of American Jews toward the Holocaust in the late 1940s and that the responses were complex and diverse.

Notes

1. For other Jewish organizations who launched campaigns to help Holocaust survivors during that era see: Rachel Beth Deblinger, *In a World Still Trembling: American Jewish philanthropy and the Shaping of Holocaust Survivor Narratives in Postwar America (1945–1953)*, (Ph.D. Dissertation University of California, Los Angeles, 2014). https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2v08154g
2. Haddash was also involved in the production of the fiction film *Adamah/Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day*. See Liat Steir-Livny, *Trauma ahat, shtei perspectivot, shalosh shanim* [One Trauma, Two Perspectives, Three Years] (Haifa: The Herzl Institute for the Study of Zionism, University of Haifa, 2018).
3. Jeffry Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lawrence Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory, 1945–1960" *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 17.1 (2003): 62–88; Lawrence Baron, "American Jewish Organizations and DP Docudrama Fundraising Films." *Teaching Methods of the Holocaust and Genocide: 34th Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide.* Millersville University, PA. April 2016; Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945–1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Beth Cohen, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2017); Deblinger, *In a World Still Trembling.* For example, in Diner's book *Hadassah* is mentioned on pp.11, 104, 112, 168, 185, 200, 309, and 352; the activities of the UJA and three of its most important beneficiary organizations (the JDC, the UPA, and United Services for New Americans) to help Holocaust survivors can be found in particular on pp. 159–179. The films are mentioned in two paragraphs (pp. 168, 185–186). Baron discussed what he calls "fundraising films" from 1945 until 1960 and focused on *Do You Hear Me?* by *Hadassah*. Shandler (p. 37) discusses the general efforts of UJA and other Jewish American organizations to represent the survivors as positive figures and promote their acceptance as USA citizens. Deblinger discusses a few films on pp. 82–133.
4. "Publicity and Promotion," *Hadassah Newsletter*, November 1945: 35–36.
5. "Our Fight Begins," *Hadassah Newsletter*, November 1945: 2.
6. Arieh Goren, "Haitonut hayehudit beartzot habrit" [The Jewish Press in the United States] *Kesher*, November 6, (1989): 3–16; "Publicity and Promotion," *Hadassah Newsletter*, 35–36; "A New Approach to an Old Problem," *Hadassah Newsletter,* October 1945: 18–19.
7. Hazel Greenwald, " . . . And Still They Wait," March-April 1947. *Hadassah file*, The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive.
8. Herbert Agar, *The Saving Remnant, An Account of Jewish Survival since 1914* (London: Viking, 1960). See, 25.
9. Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929–1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974), 95–100; Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*, *The Impact of American Jews on Post Holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1989), 193–236.
10. In 1948, UJA changed its name to UIA (United Israel Appeal). In 1953, the JNF split from the UIA, and since then the UIA only represents Keren Hayesod. Herbert Parzen, "The United Palestine Appeal" in Patai Raphel, ed., *The Herzl Year Book,* Vol. 7, New York (1971): 355–393.
11. For example, from 1939 to 1945, the JDC raised $73,460,688 for overseas assistance. From 1945 to 1948, the JDC raised $194,332,033 for assistance to Holocaust survivors (divided as follows 1945 - $28.3 million, 1946 - $54.1 million, 1947 - $75.7 million, and 1948 - $70.6 million). See Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*, 193–236; Yosef Litvak, "Trumato shel irgun hajoint leshikuma shel she'erit hapleta bepolin 1944–1949" [The JDC's Contribution to the Rehabilitation of She'erit Ha-Pleita in Poland, 1944–1949] in Pincus Benjamin, ed., *Eastern European Jewry Between the Holocaust and the Revival 1944–1948* (Ben-Gurion University: Ben-Gurion Heritage Center, 1987): 334–388.
12. See for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (New York: Verso Books, 2000); Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

13. Shandler, *While America Watches*; Baron, "The Holocaust and American Public Memory"; Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*; Deblinger, *In a World Still Trembling.*
14. Cohen, *Case Closed*.
15. Daniel Navon, "Embracing Victimhood: How 1967 Transformed Holocaust Memory and Jewish Identity in Israel and the United States" in Peled Ilan, ed., *Victimhood Discourse in Contemporary Israel (*Maryland: Lexington Books, 2019), 57–84.
16. Goli Ne'eman-Arad, "Historia shel zicaron: shinuy ma'amada shel HaShoah betoda'atam shel yehudei artzot habrit" [History of Memory: Changing the Status of the Holocaust in the Consciousness of American Jews] *Zmanim* 57, Tel Aviv, Winter (1996–1997): 14–22.
17. For example, "Facing the Facts,*" Hadassah Newsletter*, August - September 1946: 3; Abba Hillel Silver, *Bama'aracha lemedina Yehudit* [In a Campaign for a Jewish State]. Jerusalem: Zionist Library, 1968. Zionist claims were seen as consistent with American principles of freedom for all nations and all human beings and to serve basic human rights. See for example, "I discover Myself," *Hadassah Newsletter,* January-February 1946: 12–14, 26.
18. "The Committee Inquires," *Hadassah Newsletter*, January-February 1946: 2–4, 27.
19. "From Bergen-Belsen and Buchenwald Camps," *Hadassah Headlines*, October 1945: 2.
20. A slang term among Jewish prisoners in Nazi concentration camps. The term describes a starved and exhausted prisoner on the verge of death.
21. "U.S Must Be Food Reservoir for Starving Europe: Only Solution Is Early Return to Food Rationing," *Hadassah Headlines*, July-August 1946: 2.
22. "U.S Must Be Food Reservoir for Starving Europe: Only Solution Is Early Return to Food Rationing," *Hadassah Headlines*, July-August 1946: 2.
23. "European Jewry—Summary of Disaster," *Hadassah Newsletter,* August-September 1945: 5, 24.
24. Abba Kovner, "Israel Unite" *Hadassah Newsletter*, October 1946: 4–6.
25. "The Polish Picture,*" JDC Digest*, Vol 5. No 3, March-April 1946: 3–4, 15.
26. "In the Wake of Battle," *Hadassah Newsletter,* June-July 1945: 12–13.
27. "Youth Aliyah Movement in Europe Being Revived," *Hadassah Headlines*, July 1945: 7.
28. "A Passage to Haifa," *Hadassah Newsletter*, May 1946: 8–9.
29. "First Children Liberated from Germany Land in Haifa As Wards of Youth Aliyah," *Hadassah Headlines*, September 1945: 2.
30. "The Young People Are Finding Their Way Home Says Youth Aliyah Head, Talking of Newcomers," *Hadassah Headlines*, May 1946: 3.
31. "Assignment Germany," *JDC Digest*, Vol 5. No 3, March-April 1946: 2, 14. See another example in: "Reunion," *Hadassah Newsletter*, June – July 1947, 21.
32 Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*.
33. Neil Gebler, *Imperia mishelahem: eich hayehudim hemtziu et holiwood* [An Empire of Their Own - How the Jews Invented Hollywood] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1988), 364–377; Arthur Hertzberg, *The Jews in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 257–263.
34. Judith, E. Doneson, *The Holocaust in American Film* (New York, 1987), 5–56.
35. Hadassah Yitzhaki. *She'erit Ha-Pleita bereyi haitonut veda'at hakahal haamerikaim 1945–1948* [*She'erit Ha-Pleita* in the Mirror of American Press and Public Opinion in 1945–1948] (MA Thesis, Tel Aviv, 1996), 161.
36. David Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust 1941–1945* (New-York: Plunkett Lake Press, 1984).
37. Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper*, 49; Helmreich, *Against All Odds*, 20–58.
38. Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (Routledge, 1999), 2–15.
39. "International Zionist Conference to Press for Action on Palestine," *Hadassah Headlines*, July 1945: 3.
40. "Do You Hear Me? Hadassah's First Membership Movie Provides Us with Dramatic, Unusual Appeal to the Unaffiliated to Join Our Ranks," *Hadassah Headlines*, December 1947.
41. Baron, "American Jewish Organizations."
42. Ibid.
43. "Do You Hear Me?" 1947.