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## **"I've Had A Bully Good Feed!" and "I'm Waiting in the Bread Line for Mine!": The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Food Donations and Jewish American Identity during and after World War I**

**Taylor Dwyer**

American Jews were far from a homogenous, singular community at the brink of World War I. They were working class, middle class, and upper class and their religious denominations spanned from Reform Judaism to Orthodox Judaism. During World War I, American Jews of different religious practices and economic standing found a common point of interest in international aid through the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Many American Jews were not observing Jewish dietary restrictions strictly, if at all. Nevertheless, American Jewry as a whole asserted the importance of Jewish dietary requirements by sending kosher food to Eastern European Jews through the JDC. American food aid thus created an international network of Jewish communities with different understandings of Jewish identity. The JDC's activities in Europe were also characterized by the organization's dual identity as an American corporation propelled by Judaism. The JDC's fundraising tactics specifically demonstrated an attempt to combine American patriotism and Jewish philanthropy. Through international war relief, American Jews advocated a self-imposed responsibility to provide for those less fortunate and participated in American exceptionalism. At the same time, they publicized their Jewishness through the ritual of philanthropy by supporting an external community of fellow religionists. Through this philanthropy, diverse communities of American Jews synthesized their Jewish and American identities.

Historian Hasia Diner labels the 20<sup>th</sup> century as "the pivotal century" that transformed the American Jewish experience. From 1820 to 1920, millions of Jews from Europe immigrated to America, evolving from "European ghetto dwellers" to American urbanites.<sup>1</sup> Historians have classically juxtaposed the two waves of Jewish immigration: the German wave from 1820 through 1880, and the East European wave from 1880 to 1920.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have argued the first immigrants of German descent assimilated while the second group of immigrants rejected American culture. Diner argues against this over-simplification of identity, stating it "erases from history" the diversity of American Jews, who in fact, migrated from countries across the world to America starting in 1654.<sup>3</sup> Pogroms and antisemitism in Europe motivated immigration to the United States in the nineteenth century. Violence against European Jews also motivated American Jews to participate in the American political sphere. Thus, philanthropy in the wake of World War I was a politically motivated and communal demonstration of identity for American Jews, many of whom were recent immigrants from Europe.

Scholars have tracked a heightened, dogmatic patriotism in American society throughout history. Alexis de Tocqueville commented on American's patriotic "egoism" in *Democracy in America*.<sup>4</sup> Tocqueville also

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observed that Americans had “an interest in defending everything.”<sup>5</sup> Supporters of American exceptionalism, such as the leading theorist behind the concept, political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset argues America is unique because it was founded on five republican pillars: liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism and laissez faire.<sup>6</sup> America differs from countries where national identity is founded on ethnic history. Instead, Americans of diverse backgrounds demonstrate their patriotism by prescribing to American values, what Lipset calls a “form of secular religion.”<sup>7</sup> American Jews, such as Ben Halpern and historian Oscar Handlin, have defined the American Jewish experience as unique from all other Jewish experiences in the world, arguing for a Jewish version of American exceptionalism. In 1955, Ben Halpern published an essay titled “America is Different.” Central to his argument that the Jewish experience was unique in America was the guarantee of citizenship for Jews in America. In comparison, the Jews of Europe had to fight for their emancipation.<sup>8</sup> Prominent US historian Oscar Handlin categorized American Jewish history into stages of development in *Adventure in Freedom*. In the first stage during the eighteenth century American Jews were granted full civil and political rights. He argues the nineteenth century afforded American Jews social and economic success and integration.<sup>9</sup>

World War I historian, Dr. Jennifer Keene, criticizes defining 1914 to 1917 as a period of American neutrality. She argues American ethnic communities engagement with global philanthropy outwardly contradicted President Woodrow Wilson’s declaration of neutrality.<sup>10</sup> Keene states, “international relief work fostered a sense of national pride by emphasizing numerous admirable qualities about the United States.”<sup>11</sup> Americans viewed themselves as privileged, both in liberty and in money, and “accepted their moral responsibility as global citizens to help others in need.”<sup>12</sup> American Jews were no exception. Thus, Hasia Diner concludes, “American Jews never strayed far from their belief that as Jews they bore responsibility to each other. How they fulfilled that responsibility revealed much about them as Americans.”<sup>13</sup>

Countless historians have studied the JDC during World War II, making Zosa Szajkowski’s research on the Joint’s activities during the Great War stand out. Szajkowski discussed the economic differences between the three largest organizations that were part of the JDC: the American Jewish Committee (AJC), the Central Relief Committee (CRC) and the People’s Relief Committee (PRC).<sup>14</sup> Szajkowski’s research provides a starting point for an anthropological analysis of how Jewish relief organizations engaged with food, philanthropy, and identity. Anthropologist Mary Douglas studied the community-building aspect of food in her research on food consumption and impurity. In *Natural Symbols*, Douglas considered the role of food ritual in creating boundaries to delineate community members from non-community members.<sup>15</sup> Food in the context of World War I symbolized not only sustenance for European Jewry, but was utilized as a tool to negotiate religious and cultural identity for both European and American Jews. French sociologist Marcel Mauss’s analysis of gift-exchange will be utilized to analyze the power relations between giver, American Jews, and receiver, Polish Jews.<sup>16</sup> World War I acted as a turning point in American Jewish life because it allowed American Jews to express their changing conceptions of Judaism on an international scale. Reform Judaism, which formed in the nineteenth century in response to modernization, challenged ritual performance as the constituting factor in Jewish identity. American Jewish communities practiced their Jewish and American values through philanthropy. Kosher food packages, therefore, took on symbolic meaning as a method of producing modern identity for American Jews, while affirming the historic markers of Jewish identity for Eastern European Jews.

In response to the outbreak of World War I, American philanthropists and specifically Jewish communities geared into action. The *Jewish Morning Journal’s* headline on August 7, 1914 said it all: “Relief Will Soon Be Needed.”<sup>17</sup> The dominant model for philanthropy at the onset of war was localism.

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Jewish communities formed independent, local organizations tailored to their specific constituents. The American Jewish Committee (AJC) formed in 1914 to represent affluent Reform Jews.<sup>18</sup> The AJC's first action was to provide relief for Jews in Palestine. In September 1914, Louis Marshall announced the AJC had successfully fundraised \$50,000 for Palestinian Jews.<sup>19</sup> Orthodox Rabbis and community leaders formed the Central Relief Committee (CRC) in October 1914. Leon Kamaiky was appointed Chairman, Albert Lucas as Executive Secretary and Harry Fischel as Treasurer. The organization and leadership reflected their goal to represent the "religious and spiritual leaders of traditional Judaism."<sup>20</sup> The People's Relief Committee (PRC) was founded in August 1915. Yiddish speaking laborers who felt other relief committees did not include lower class immigrant Jews formed the PRC to represent the masses.<sup>21</sup> The AJC pushed heavily for a united relief effort, under the auspices of their own organization. AJC leaders criticized the creation of the CRC as an independent organization. In November 1914, after multiple conferences, the two organizations agreed to combine efforts and formally established the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Later, in 1915, the PRC joined the JDC. Despite their differences in economic class and religious practice, the AJC, CRC and PRC benefited from working together.

The cooperation of the AJC, CRC and PRC allowed the JDC to reach all members of American Jewry. In 1915 Rabbi Drachman, a leading Orthodox rabbi, spoke in Los Angeles encouraging all Jews to partake in fundraising. Drachman explained to Angelinos that all classes were to be included, stating, "there are two forms of certificates, one for \$1 and one for \$5. This plan will enable not only the wealthy but those in moderate circumstances, and also the poor, to contribute to the fund."<sup>22</sup> While wealthy donors pledged thousands of dollars at various fundraising events, middle class and working class donors were integral to the JDC as well. A fundraiser at Carnegie Hall in December 1916 raised a total of \$62, 233.<sup>23</sup> *The New York Times* reported, "it was estimated that this sum came from 3,721 persons, and except for a few checks, it represented anonymous gifts. There was one check for \$1,000, but most of the contributions varied in amounts between 1 cent and \$20."<sup>24</sup> The press commended one laborer because he promised 5 percent of his earnings for the entire year of 1917.<sup>25</sup> *The New York Times* stated, "thousands of pledges were for 50 cents and a dollar a month. The number of these small amounts, besides making the fund widely representative, will considerably swell the sum collected."<sup>26</sup> The end of the article highlighted contributions of \$500 or more from individuals and organizations. The largest donation was made by Charles A. Wimpfheimer at \$10,000.<sup>27</sup> The crowd was so large and so dedicated that those who couldn't be seated in the filled to capacity concert hall, "remained standing in the street, waiting for a chance to contribute."<sup>28</sup>

The People's Relief Committee, which represented working class Jews, organized a bazaar in Grand Central Palace from March 25 to April 3, 1916. Merchants of all economic statuses were represented at the bazaar. *The New York Times* reported:

The gifts to the bazaar are of infinite variety, ranging from sticks of candy, papers of pins, and hundreds of similar small offerings, from the humble shopkeepers of the east side, to whole sets of furniture, pianos, costly gowns and jewelry, and works of art from Fifth Avenue dealers, and thousands of dollars worth of books, flowers, dolls, drug supplies and many other gifts from the great mercantile establishments of the city.<sup>29</sup>

Not only were the merchants diverse in background, but the PRC catered to multiple audiences in their advertisement of the event. A daily four-page newspaper titled "Bazaar Gazette" was printed in both Yiddish and English. The Yiddish newspaper catered to newly emigrated Orthodox lower and middle class immigrants while the English newspaper drew in well-to-do Reform and Conservative Jews. Attendees of the bazaar differed greatly in income and lifestyle. Representing Jewish American elite,

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Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Turkey, made the opening address at the bazaar on March 25<sup>th</sup>. *The New York Times* mentioned that Congressman Meyer London, Chairman of the People's Relief Committee, made a speech opening night as well.<sup>30</sup> On the last day of the bazaar, April 3, 1916, an estimated 40,000 people attended, raising over \$50,000 for relief.<sup>31</sup>

Men were not the only contributors to Jewish relief aid; in fact, both women and children participated in JDC fundraising. At the PRC's bazaar, women enticed donations by offering kisses to the highest bidder.<sup>32</sup> Women also donated jewelry to campaigns. At a fundraiser in Brooklyn, held February 1916, women donated "diamond rings, brooches, bracelets and other jewelry" when donation baskets were passed around.<sup>33</sup> *The New York Times* described: "long before Rabbi Magnes had finished his appeal the rustle and clink of money were blended with the sobbing of the women."<sup>34</sup> This observation demonstrated how emotionally attached women were to war sufferers. Women also partook in fundraisers by carrying donation baskets around at events. *The New York Times* commented that women were donating jewelry so quickly that the "white-gowned girls with baskets were forced to make frequent trips to the platform."<sup>35</sup>

Women created their own parallel subcommittees within the JDC that catered specifically to women. In January 1916 Mrs. Samuel Elkeles, Chairman of the Women's Proclamation Committee, addressed "the women of New York" in *The New York Times*:

To support that this committee has received on this historic day impels me to ask you to make one final and supreme effort before the close of January 27, 1916. The 9,000,000 Jews for whom you have worked so whole-heartedly today will receive some bread, some clothing, some medicine, some milk for their babies as a result of your labors. While sufficient for the day is the need thereof, remember, my sisters, that days, months, ay, perhaps years, are before us when these 9,000,000 suffering human beings must strain their eyes westward and stretch out their hands across the wide waste of sea to us, from whom can come the succor that can sustain them until brighter days dawn before them.<sup>36</sup>

Her plea utilized imagery of starving "babies" to emphasize the sisterly, even motherly, duty of New York Jewish women to aid European Jewish women and their children. Various women's subcommittees throughout New York and the entire country duplicated Mrs. Elkeles' efforts. Women's committees were competitive in their fundraising efforts and found pride in supporting the JDC. Mrs. Elkeles encouraged women to create "savings banks for voluntary taxes on luxuries, into which they were to drop ten per cent of the price every time they purchased an article that would come under that heading."<sup>37</sup> She hoped this practice would increase awareness of the "blessings enjoyed by American Jewish women."<sup>38</sup>

Children, despite their limited agency, also participated in JDC fundraisers. *The New York Times* commended a child who donated at the December 1916 fundraiser at Carnegie Hall, stating, "some child, who apparently, had no money to give dropped a little signet ring into one of the baskets."<sup>39</sup> A staff of fifty young girls dressed as 'Newsies' was hired to sell the Bazaar Gazette for the People's Relief Committee bazaar.<sup>40</sup> Little girls also assisted in selling flowers at the bazaar.<sup>41</sup> Children were not only token donors and cute props at local bazaars; in 1918, the schoolchildren of Brooklyn donated \$25,000 to the JDC.<sup>42</sup> Children were frequently encouraged to act as models for their parents. In 1921, the wife of Judge Harry Fisher spoke to children at Sinai Temple in Chicago. She informed the children: "your parents have always told you what you should do. Now is your chance to tell them what to do. Tell them to contribute to the funds and to come to the grown-ups meeting next Sunday."<sup>43</sup> Judge Fisher also spoke to the children. The children were so galvanized by the couple's speeches that they formed their own committee with Staton Friedburg, a 14-year old high school student, as their chairman.<sup>44</sup>

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Ultimately, two hundred children resolved to forego movies and sodas as an act of solidarity with the starving European children.<sup>45</sup> Older students also participated in Jewish relief. The graduating class of sixteen students at Public School 160, Manhattan, in 1916 decided to reallocate the money that had originally set aside for buying a class gift to donate to Jewish war sufferers.<sup>46</sup>

The participation of women and children in JDC fundraising, as well as participation of the various classes of American Jewry, demonstrated that philanthropy was a highly symbolic action connected to identity. Each and every group and individual in American Jewish communities wanted to accentuate their presence in the effort. The PRC took great pride in their contribution to the JDC and publicized their contributions in the media. Jewish workers were applauded by the press for their donation of \$101,000 through the PRC to the Holiday Drive of 1917.<sup>47</sup> *The New York Times* proclaimed that the donation, "largely from the non-English speaking population, wholly from the poorer classes, is expected to act as a notable stimulus to the progress of the campaign among the more prosperous classes."<sup>48</sup> The PRC outwardly challenged their donors to compete with the wealthy Jewish Americans. One PRC campaign manual implored volunteer collectors to question the masses, "could the Jews of America ever face the world again except in shame if they permitted a handful of men to take care of those six million?"<sup>49</sup>

In fact, competition was commonly used by each organization to stimulate donations. In 1918, the JDC honored the community of Duluth, Minnesota in "Take a Lesson from Duluth, Minn."<sup>50</sup> Jewish and non-Jewish team captains were congratulated for raising \$50,000, and their accomplishment was used to encourage others to "take a lesson."<sup>51</sup> New York was consistently chided by JDC leaders for being slow in giving, and cases like Duluth were used to urge slackers to meet their allotted fundraising goal. Implicit in these pleas for money was guilt. Jacob Schiff reprimanded New York Jews in 1914, stating:

Let us remember the Jewish heart,... Make everybody give something. Make them wear a button, too, so that those who don't give are marked people—and marked people they should be. We must do something more than we have yet done, something more than we are doing here. If not, we do not deserve any longer the respect either of our neighbors who are not Jews or of ourselves.<sup>52</sup>

Schiff's appeal characterized philanthropy not as a generous act, but as a duty. His statement also captured the importance of Jewish participation in relief as being a marker of respect to non-Jews. Schiff's speech demonstrated Mary Douglas' conception of ritual as markers of community boundaries. Schiff suggested that donors should wear literal buttons so the entire community would know who was, and who was not, supporting the cause. The absence of wearing a button would presumably motivate donors to shame non-donors in an effort to compel donations. Philanthropy was therefore an action that created and confirmed Jewish identity and respect within, and outside, the Jewish community. Each individual and subcommittee boasted their Jewishness to their own community, as well as to the American public, when they participated in fundraising.

Donations from non-Jews were used to encourage Jews to donate. *The New York Times* frequently publicized non-Jews who pledged varying sums to the JDC. In January 1916, *The New York Times* headlined an article on Jewish war relief "Non-Jews Give Aid to War Sufferers."<sup>53</sup> The article reported that Felix Warburg announced that the JDC had received a combined donation of \$1,200 from three prominent non-Jews.<sup>54</sup> The three donors were ex-Senator W. A. Clark, R. Fulton Cutting, and Paul C. Cravath.<sup>55</sup> Another non-Jewish donor, L.C. Evans of Brooklyn, included a letter with his check, stating he was ashamed he could not donate more to the cause. He cited his motivation for donating as his "forty years of close association with Jews, including very intimate and confidential relations with not a few."<sup>56</sup>

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He concluded that the appeal to help Jewish war victims came “with peculiar force” to him.<sup>57</sup> Coverage of non-Jewish donors thus demonstrated that Jews were integrated within society and shared relationships with non-Jews.

The JDC did not specifically market to non-Jews, and thus, those who donated were commended greatly by the organization. Gentiles participated in the December 1917 donation drive, despite “no special effort being made to interest persons who are not Jews in the campaign.”<sup>58</sup> A non-Jew named William Jennings Bryan sent Schiff a letter approving of the campaign and enclosed a contribution.<sup>59</sup> Herman A. Metz donated \$200 through Team 27 and the United Cigar Stores Company pledged 5 percent of their gross receipt.<sup>60</sup> In 1919, the AJC recognized non-Jewish donors with medals. To be qualified for a medal, a nominee was required to be a Gentile and “have served without remuneration.”<sup>61</sup> The design of the bronze included both American and Jewish symbols. *The New York Times* stated:

The medal, of bronze, was designed by J. Kilenyi, an Argentine sculptor, now in New York. The face shows a kneeling woman and two tattered children grouped before a figure of Columbia. Behind the figures is an altar, flanked on either side by a seven-branched candlestick and a six-pointed star of David, ancient emblem of Jewry. In reverse the medal bears the name of the committee and the legend: “Humanity Called and You Notably Responded.”<sup>62</sup>

The AJC prominently featured Columbia, a female personification of America and Liberty, in the center of the medal, with children reaching up to her (reminiscent of posters produced by the AJC to be discussed shortly). Columbia was flanked by two seven-branched candlesticks and two Star of David’s on the medal. The centrality of Columbia figuratively represented the centrality of American principles to the JDC. The medal’s message, “Humanity Called And You Notably Responded,” commended non-Jews for their voluntarily participation in Jewish philanthropy. Ultimately, non-Jewish donors were noted in the media because they went above and beyond their duty as non-members of the community. Their donations were thus used to guilt Jews, who as community members had greater reason to participate.

A major focus of the JDC was providing food to the starving Jews of Europe. European Jews required food for physical survival, yet spiritual, religious and cultural survival equally required food items. Investigation into the quality and quantity of food available to Jews in Europe painted a dismal picture. In March 1917, the JDC surmised that thirty-five percent of the seven million Jews of Europe were “entirely destitute and depend upon daily relief in the form of food to maintain life.”<sup>63</sup> Starvation was a main focus for the JDC from their inception. In November 1915, Herman Bernstein, Director for the Central Relief Committee, wrote an impassioned appeal to the Jews of America in *The Washington Post* upon his arrival from Europe.<sup>64</sup> He stated,

Millions of Jews in Russia and Galicia have been utterly ruined; they are now homeless, hopeless, starving. Thousands upon thousands are actually dying of hunger. They are starving in Galicia and they are starving in the Polish provinces occupied by the German forces. Yes, they are dying of hunger in Lodz and in Warsaw and in countless other places.<sup>65</sup>

Bernstein’s description of “homeless, hopeless, starving” European Jews was echoed throughout the media and at JDC events. The JDC frequently used first-hand testimony at fundraisers to inspire donations. In June 1916, Isidore Herschfield spoke at Carnegie Hall about his experiences abroad. He proclaimed 750,000 Jews in Russia alone “were on the verge of starvation.”<sup>66</sup> Men in JDC leadership positions traveled to Eastern Europe multiple times to witness the conditions. After his second trip to Europe in 1917, Bernstein was invited to speak by the secretary of the JDC about the conditions he witnessed. Bernstein was asked to address a Special Assembly held in the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of New York City on October 28, 1917. *The New York Times* even commented on the

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peculiarity of using a synagogue for such a meeting, reporting, "the Trustees of this [synagogue], the oldest congregation in America, in giving its consent to the use of the synagogue, broke all the traditions of its 250 years of existence in recognition of the supreme importance of the problems the assembly has been called to discuss."<sup>67</sup> The Secretary also requested an advance copy of Bernstein's speech to be presented at the synagogue to "insure it the proper publicity through the press throughout the country."<sup>68</sup> In 1919, Bernstein was described as "one of the most able correspondents on matter appertaining to Russia," upon his return from the region in a JDC memorandum encouraging donations.<sup>69</sup>

Aligning with American values was a general goal in JDC campaigning. Posters created by the JDC and their subcommittees such as the AJRC and CRC exhibited a clear effort to align Jewish philanthropy with American iconography. Print posters "Share" and "I've Had a Bully Good Feed!" both illustrated the AJC's use of American imagery to promote their fundraising campaign. "Share" featured two destitute women each with a child.<sup>70</sup> One of the women is reaching up to an enlarged, noble woman dressed in flowing white robes, holding a platter of bread and vegetables. She is shown with a crown on her head with "Share" written in bold, capitalized letters behind her.<sup>71</sup> Behind the needy is a New York Skyline, featuring the Statue of Liberty. The bottom of the poster reads "Jewish Relief Campaign" flanked by stars of David. "Share" contrasts darkness and light. The hungry are shown huddled together, diminished in size, wrapped in dark rags. Behind them, "Lady Liberty" stands tall in white, framed by a yellow orange glow radiating from the New York skyline. America, represented by the generous, regal woman with plenty to share, is therefore literally, and figuratively, depicted as a beacon for light and freedom to the destitute, starving Jews of dark Europe.

"I've Had a Bully Good Feed!" juxtaposed an American man and a European girl.<sup>72</sup> The old man appears with full cheeks and a double chin and wears a suit and tie. He has a pipe and the text next to him reads, "I've had a bully good feed!" In the opposing corner of the poster stands a young girl, shoeless and cloaked in dark rags. She gazes forlornly at the viewer with a slight frown. Her caption reads, "I'm waiting in the bread line for mine."<sup>73</sup> The man is shown with classic American symbols; he smokes a pipe and is dressed in a suit and a tie. He is depicted as a tried and true American, enforced by his colloquial statement, "I've had a bully good feed!" thus, illustrating the integration of Jews in American society, especially within cities like Chicago. The man's physical appearance represented the middle and upper class American Jews who had moved away from religious ritual. Unlike a traditional Jewish man with a long beard and *kippa* (ritual head covering), the man's appearance is unrecognizable as Jewish. His Jewishness is no longer transcribed in his attire or on his body. In the void of their audience's observance of traditional ritual, the AJC marketed *tzedakah*, the Jewish social and religious tradition of charity, as a modern ritual, in line with both American and Jewish values.

The JDC utilized multiple posters for their 1918 December campaign to raise \$5,000,000.<sup>74</sup> One such poster featured a man wearing a business suit seated in an armchair. He holds a newspaper in one hand with the headline "Millions of Jews Starving in War Zone." His young daughter points to the paper and looks up to her dad, stating, "Daddy, why should they starve when we have so much?"<sup>75</sup> The poster is designed to help the father decide what to answer to his child. It reads:

Think of the hundreds of thousands of little children starving for the want of a crust of bread. Think of the mothers standing by and see their children dying at their feet. And then give your child an answer. The kind of answer that will bring tears of joy to your eyes and peace in your heart.<sup>76</sup>



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The poster informs the viewer, “New York has undertaken to raise five million dollars between December 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 15<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>77</sup> The poster surmised at the bottom: “New York Will Do Its Duty.” This poster once again featured a Jewish man as indistinguishably Jewish; he wears the American uniform: a business suit. He is clean-shaven with a sharp haircut. His daughter wears an oversized bow on her head and a dress representative of American style. The headline of the newspaper, “Millions of Jews Starving in War Zone,” appears to create a dilemma of serious concern for the man. His eyebrows are furrowed and he holds one hand up to his mouth in contemplation. His daughter is used as a catalyst for his donation, echoing Mrs. Fish’s speech at Sinai Temple in Chicago. The poster reminded viewers that the Jewish American lifestyle, represented by the man and his daughter, were luxurious in comparison to Europe. The child explicitly stated, “why should they starve when we have so much?”<sup>78</sup> An implicit aspect of the Jewish American experience, the poster relayed, was privilege.

Another advertisement promoting the same December \$5,000,000 campaign also posed a question to viewers as the poster’s headline. The title read: “Little Children—Helpless Little Children—Shall They Live or Die?”<sup>79</sup> The poster features a defeated woman holding a bundled baby in her arms with a second child reaching up to her. The woman and children are depicted in tones of gray with a dark cityscape full of smoke behind them. The woman’s thin face is furrowed, wrinkled, and morose. The caption of the photo appeals, “out of your plenty give to these babies.”<sup>80</sup> The poster reads: “open your hearts and pour out your gold so that these babies may live. \$5,000,000 CAMPAIGN.”<sup>81</sup> The December 1918 New York campaign utilized first-hand testimony from Ambassador Abram I. Elkus in a third poster describing the suffering of children.<sup>82</sup> The poster quoted the Ambassador as stating:

Oh the horror of it all. To see their sunken eyes and hollow cheeks. To hear them beg for food And then to know there is a land of plenty. Open your Jewish hearts and pour out your gold So that these babies may live.<sup>83</sup>

The poster captured Elkus’ description of the children with a black and white drawing of two young girls, cloaked in rags, with hollowed cheeks and frowns. Elkus used the same phrase, “open your Jewish heart,” that Jacob Schiff used in a speech to New York Jews in 1914. Both “Little Children” posters had the same characteristics. Each poster characterized American Jews as plentiful and abundant in comparison to those suffering in Eastern Europe. Both posters encouraged American Jews to “pour out” their gold so that these babies may live.”<sup>84</sup> The JDC thus equated money with life-saving capabilities, and donors as life-savers. The Women’s Proclamation Committee explicitly stated that Jewish American women had the ability to save the lives of war sufferers in their “save a life” campaign of December 1916.<sup>85</sup> Their slogan, “a life for a life,” requested every Jewish American woman to sponsor a “life threatened in any way by the war.”<sup>86</sup> The New York Times commented, “the interpretation of the cry is that prosperous, protected lives in America shall save pauperized, persecuted lives in Europe.”<sup>87</sup> The Women’s Proclamation Committee acknowledged that some American women lacked the funds to preserve their own lives, but hoped that others with the means would compensate by saving two lives abroad.<sup>88</sup> Duty to those in need, especially children, was a common theme utilized in many JDC campaign posters. Produced in 1917, “Shall They Plead in Vain?” displayed a woman and child huddled and defeated with a ruined building behind them.<sup>89</sup> The JDC once again used the guilt-inducing tactic of questioning the viewer. The question, and the images of one or two figures, personalized the suffering of millions.

Despite the Americanism of many JDC campaign posters, Jewish relief was still markedly Jewish in nature. Other posters, specifically produced by the CRC and intended for Orthodox Jewish Americans, featured religious content. An undated poster from World War I referenced a taxing tradition from Ancient Israel. The poster reads, “don’t forget your ½ dollar for the Jewish Victims of the War.”<sup>90</sup> Yeshiva Museum explains the connection of the half-shekel donation to Ancient Israel, stating, “after their

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successful exodus from Egypt, the ancient Israelites needed to take a census. Every individual was required to give a half shekel to a national fund."<sup>91</sup> The half dollar donation request therefore was a purposeful equalization to the ancient custom of half-shekel taxing. Another poster, financed by the CRC, was tied to the Jewish holiday of Yom Kippur. The poster was produced to encourage donations during the High Holidays of 1917, and read: "while we pray in comfort and security they tremble in misery and fear. What of their fast. Will it end with the night?"<sup>92</sup> During Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, Jews fast for 25 hours. The CRC's appeal to American Jews capitalized on the traditional practice of ritual fasting to encourage donations, which would help feed war sufferers. The religious nature of their posters implicated that philanthropy provided Eastern European Jews with the funds to perform their Judaism. Thus, supporting Jewish relief enhanced the presence of Jewish tradition abroad. Eastern European Jews were generally more observant of kashrut than American Jews, and dietary restrictions were therefore a central feature of food aid.

JDC informants were the source of information on the starving Jews of Europe, and their multiple trips to the field demonstrated the organization's commitment to and utilization of witness testimony in fundraising. A detailed, five- page report published May 1919 by an unidentified author, reported to the JDC on the pitiable conditions of Eastern Europe. The report commented on the lack of supplies and the poor quality of food, stating, "hundreds of people wait patiently in line for their wretched rations. The best bread (and I got it) is hardly edible. The cereal contains more chaff than nourishment. There is very little milk" [emphasis in the original].<sup>93</sup> The author requested specific items for the Viennese Jews suffering: "canned salmon (which is rich in fat), hard-tack (which is a good edible cracker containing more food value than flour Hoover's food expert says) dried fruit (which contains some sugar) and maybe some evaporated cream" [emphasis in the original].<sup>94</sup>

The report's reference to Herbert Hoover reflected the JDC's relationship with the United States Food Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover. The U.S. Food Administration was formed in August 1917, and oversaw food reserves for the American troops abroad. Hoover's approach to conservation differed from European countries. Hoover coined the slogan, "Food Will Win the War." Instead of requiring rations, the dominant model for food conservation in Europe, Hoover asked American families and individuals to voluntarily participate.<sup>95</sup> Hoover told *The New York Times*:

The Allies are our first line of defense. They must be fed, and food will win the war. All Europe is on rations or restricted supplies. Only in our country is each one permitted to judge for himself the duty he owes his country in food consumption, although the world depends on us to guard and provide its food supply. This is a duty of necessity, humanity and honor. As a free people we have elected to discharge this duty, no under autocratic decree, but without other restraint than the guidance of individual conscience. On the success of this unprecedented adventure in democracy will largely state the issue of war.<sup>96</sup>

Hoover's emphasis on voluntary participation by Americans juxtaposed European rations and thus characterized America as exceptional in its principles of democracy and free will. Further, America's duty to the rest of the world was emphasized in Hoover's speech, which demonstrated the belief (held both by the government and by individual Americans) that because of America's superiority or exceptionalism, it was necessary for America to spread their ideals to the rest of the world. Hoover thus utilized American culture to market food conservation as the promotion and extension of liberty. The symbolism behind Hoover's program was echoed by the JDC, who energetically joined forces with Hoover and the U.S. Food Administration.

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In 1918, the JDC and the U.S. Food Administration discussed joining forces to send food to Poles and Jews. The JDC utilized Fulton Brylawski, their full-time representative and correspondent with various government departments to organize the joint effort.<sup>97</sup> Brylawski wrote to Felix Warburg, Chairman of the JDC, on December 31, 1918, relaying the Food Administration's support of the JDC in distributing foodstuff in Poland.<sup>98</sup> Brylawski's contact in the Food Administration was Mr. Whitmarsh, who reported to Brylawski that, "the Food Administration was in a position to make the necessary purchases at a much lower figure than private organizations could hope to do and that it had at its disposal a ship which could be chartered for the purpose."<sup>99</sup> In late December 1918, the U.S. Food Administration agreed to provide the "Westward Ho," an American vessel stationed in the New York Harbor, to ship food paid for by the JDC and Polish agencies. On January 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, John F. Smulski, representing the National Polish department, and Felix Warburg, Chairman of the JDC, met to discuss the Westward Ho shipment.<sup>100</sup> The two leaders agreed the shipment would include "fats and porks" for Poles and "other food stuffs for Jews."<sup>101</sup> The document, written by Mr. Walcott, commended the two parties for their cooperation. Walcott stated he could not "emphasize too strongly entire harmony here and eagerness to co-operate in every way at this end."<sup>102</sup>

The US Food Administration and the JDC worked together to organize transportation of the shipment. On January 10<sup>th</sup>, 1919, Frederic C. Walcott, Hoover's assistant, sent Warburg a telegram informing him that it was "wholly impossible" to use the rail system in Poland.<sup>103</sup> Walcott stated that a steamer in New York would instead dock in Danzig, loaded approximately with "one third condensed milk, one third pork and pork products, one third cereals," and "probably should have vegetable oil."<sup>104</sup> On January 16<sup>th</sup>, Albert Lucas penned Walcott with the JDC's understanding of the deal. Lucas wrote he was requesting the JDC Treasurer, Lehman, to "forward a check for one Million Dollars, payable to the order of the Food Administration, to Mr. Brylawski, the JDC's representative in Washington D.C."<sup>105</sup> Lucas expected a similar check to be sent by the Polish Relief Committee. The total sum of two million dollars were expected to fund, "1000 tons condensed milk, 3500 tons rye flour, 10000 tons vegetable oil, 1000 tons packing house products," according to Lucas.<sup>106</sup> The JDC agreed to pay insurance and freight charges. The JDC also required that three representatives participate in distributing the goods in Europe.

In 1919, the government formed the American Relief Administration to provide non-sectarian relief to those affected by war. Herbert Hoover was named Administrator on the new organization. In August 1921, the ARA secured an agreement with the USSR called the Riga Agreement. Under the Riga Agreement, the JDC and the ARA agreed to join efforts to provide relief for all war sufferers in the USSR, regardless of race or religion. In August 1921, *The New York Times* commented on the non-sectarian nature of the ARA's work alongside established organization. The newspaper reported the ARA had aligned with "all the great nation-wide relief organizations of America," listing the Red Cross, the Y.M.C.A., the K. of C., the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the Quakers.<sup>107</sup> This inclusion of the JDC, alongside well-known organizations such as the Red Cross and the Y.M.C.A., brought further clout to the JDC and its goals.

The JDC and ARA specifically organized a food remittance program that allowed Americans to send kosher food packages to their relatives or friends in Russia and the Ukraine. The JDC announced in Yiddish newspapers that their offices would open Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1921, for the sale of Food Remittances to Russia.<sup>108</sup> They printed application blanks in both English and Yiddish. Dr. Rosenblatt of the JDC described the first day of remittance sales, as thus:

The first day our office was crowded with men and women who were anxious to take advantage of the opportunity of sending relief to their kin in Russia... The number of remittances deposited with us, as I have been informed, was over 500, amounting to

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over \$6000. This was as much as was physically possible for the office to handle in one day.<sup>109</sup>

The crowding of the office inclined Dr. Rosenblatt to request an increase in application writers and receipt typists.<sup>110</sup> In 1922 banks across New York began selling food drafts for the JDC. From March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1922, American Jews were able to buy food drafts from eleven bank branches spread throughout Manhattan, Harlem, Williamsburg and the Bronx.<sup>111</sup> The banks provided their services free of extra charge. Every remittance, whether purchased at JDC headquarters or at a bank, cost \$10. The JDC reported their "usual kosher food package" consisted of "flour, rice, beans, sugar, tea, cocoa, oil and other foods."<sup>112</sup> The \$10 package contained 117 pounds of food. In 1923, Dr. Boris D. Bogen commented on the necessity of kosher food packages in Russia. He reported to the JDC, "traveling through the Ukraine, I find that especially in the southern part, or in the part that was affected by the famine, the majority of the Jewish population depends upon the food remittances that they receive from their relatives."<sup>113</sup>

Recipients of the JDC and ARA were not only Jewish, however. Outside of the individual kosher packages sent through relatives, JDC funding supported ARA projects that were non-sectarian. The *New York Times* reported on this fact, stating,

Except where the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee has allowed its machinery to be used for the designation of individual recipients of standard food packages, its funds have always been directed to relief on the basis of the greatest need rather than on sectarian lines.<sup>114</sup>

The article enumerated the JDC's participation in relief for all war victims. The JDC donated \$1,500,000 to "general child feeding," \$750,000 for famine relief in the Volga district, and \$300,000 to sufferers in White Russia (which had a Jewish population of less than one percent).<sup>115</sup> The JDC also aided the ARA in feeding over 800,000 children of all races and religions. By October 1921, the JDC reported "food packages to the extent of \$4,500,000" had been distributed in Russia, helping more than 10,000,000 people."<sup>116</sup>

Herbert Hoover communicated extensively with the JDC. He personally wrote to the organization multiple times throughout 1921 and 1922, and specifically praised the JDC's efforts. In a letter to Mr. Lewis Strauss, Hoover described the relationship between the JDC and ARA as "intimate," demonstrating the harmonious teamwork between the two organizations.<sup>117</sup> Upon completion of their joint program in 1923, Hoover wrote to the JDC thanking them for their help. He boasted that through the JDC's cooperation, the ARA had successfully provided \$13,000,000 in food and clothing remittances.<sup>118</sup> He repeated his favorable view of the JDC, stating:

I would like to express to you the sincere appreciation both for myself and for the American Relief Administration for the service which you have rendered, not only to your customers and to the American Relief Administration but, particularly, to the needy people in Russia. Yours faithfully (signed), Herbert Hoover.<sup>119</sup>

The JDC's cooperation with non-Jewish organizations and governmental agencies such as the US Food Administration and the ARA exhibited their effort to represent Jewish philanthropy as inherently American. The JDC's willingness to work with non-Jews, and their effort to publicize the project through press releases, attested their enthusiasm for the project.

Eastern European Jews required kosher food, which obliged verification from the Rabbinate. The unknown author of the 1919 report stated, "Now for the kosher food problem—there are it is said, 220,000 Jews in Vienna, including the refugees. Those who are strict observers of the dietary laws vary

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(according to different reports) from 75,000 to 125,000.”<sup>120</sup> The large population of kosher observers, the author reported, had gone without meat or fat because they refused to buy pork items supplied through their ration cards. The author concluded the “most important” task for the committee was therefore to provide smoked and corned kosher meat and vegetable oil.<sup>121</sup> The necessity of kosher meat meant the JDC needed kosher certification from Rabbis on all packages sent to Europe. On May 20, 1919, JDC Secretary Albert Lucas wrote a letter to Mr. Bisbee of Joseph Sterns and Sons concerning a JDC order of 10,000 pounds of beef.<sup>122</sup> Lucas specified that each barrel of meat was required “to be marked or stenciled showing that it has been passed as kosher, by either or both of the said Rabbis, as they may require.”<sup>123</sup> The Rabbis qualified for the job were named by Albert Lucas as Rabbi Philip Klein and/or Rabbi M. Z. Margolies.<sup>124</sup> Secretary Lucas concluded the letter with the admonition that if the supplier failed to meet the requirements “of either or both of the Rabbis” the contract will be cancelled.<sup>125</sup> A third rabbi, Solomon E. Jaffe, was also qualified to verify the authenticity of kosher meat for JDC shipments.<sup>126</sup> All barrels of kosher food shipped from the U.S. to Europe were required to be individually stenciled with one of the three Rabbis’ seals. This stenciled verification provided Eastern European Jews satisfactory proof that the food was indeed prepared according to Mosaic Law. Each seal included the name of the Rabbi overseeing the kosher food. The specification of the three Rabbis named continuously throughout JDC records illustrated how important not only kashrut was to the recipients of the aid, but also highlighted the importance of Rabbis’ individual reputation and prestige.

The Rabbis chosen by the JDC for kosher verification demonstrated the need to prove to Eastern European Jews that American Jews were qualified and able to provide ritually correct food items. Rabbi Moses Zevulun Margolies was born in Meretz, a Lithuanian town, in 1851.<sup>127</sup> Not only was Margolies from Eastern Europe, but he was the grandson of Rabbi Wolf Altschul, a reputable figure in Lutzan’s Jewish court. Through Altschul, Margolies was related to Rashi, medieval Talmudic scholar. Margolies was also related to another renowned religious leader through his mother’s family. Margolies served as the chief rabbi in Boston and as the leader of New York’s Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun. His prestigious leadership positions included terms as President of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada and as President of Yeshiva University.<sup>128</sup> Margolies, as a founder of the Central Relief Committee and as a prominent leader of Orthodoxy in America, was a natural fit for kosher certification for the JDC. His Lithuanian heritage of Rabbinic dynastic no doubt played a role in the respect he was given by European Jewish communities. His connection to various historical Talmudic scholars, such as Rashi and the Vilna Gaon, surely enhanced his prestige and qualifications for Eastern European Jews. Rabbi Philip Klein was also born in Eastern Europe in Baracs, Hungary, 1849.<sup>129</sup> As a rabbi in Kiev, he officiated communal and religious affairs. After serving for seven years in Kiev, he fled religious persecution and immigrated to the United States. His Hungarian background qualified him to serve as rabbi of the First Hungarian Congregation Ohab Zedek in New York.

Both Klein and Margolies’ knowledge of Mosaic law and their Eastern European background established them as prestigious authoritative figures for Jewish communities in America and in Europe. Rabbis thus acted as reassuring figures of authority for Eastern European Jews, who required reassurance from religious leaders that the JDC was observing Jewish dietary law. Rabbi Halberstam of Bochni, Poland directly requested confirmation regarding kashrut from Rabbi Margolies in June 1921. Halberstam wrote:

“Last winter there was opened in Bochni a children’s kitchen, where condensed milk is served. As the cans containing the condensed milk are not labeled “kosher,” the orthodox, who form the overwhelming majority of the local Jews, do not permit their children to consume it. Those in charge of the kitchen say they have no authority to change the milk, and insist that the children take it, else no food at all would be served to

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them. Rabbi Halberstam, therefore, appeals to Rabbi Hillel Kahn and Rabbi Margolies to inform him whether this condensed milk is strictly kosher.<sup>130</sup>

Halberstam's appeal reinforced the religious and communal authority of rabbis and situated the "kosher food problem" as a central feature of food relief in Eastern European communities.

Kosher meat was an expensive, and at times, scarce commodity during World War I in general, making the JDC's shipment of it to Jews in Eastern Europe all the more impressive. *The New York Times* reported on December 27, 1916, that, "3,000 shops refused to handle kosher beef yesterday" as a result of the high prices on "kosher-killed products."<sup>131</sup> In February 1917, Jews in Cincinnati boycotted kosher butcher shops due to the high prices.<sup>132</sup> *The New York Times* called it a "stormy affair."<sup>133</sup> Kosher butchers in New York organized a boycott against their manufacturers in March 1917, declaring they would "not buy any more meat until the price drops several cents from the present scale."<sup>134</sup> Some kosher meat boycott demonstrations even ended in arrests. Mrs. Sadie Lina was sentenced to five days work in 1919 on a "charge of disorderly conduct" for disturbing a Harlem kosher meat market.<sup>135</sup> Two other women were arraigned on disorderly conduct charges for interfering with customers in front of a butcher stop at 52 East 110<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>136</sup>

Despite the conditions of the meat market in the United States, the JDC organized shipments of kosher meat for Eastern European Jews. The JDC published a press release on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1920 describing a shipment of "more than five thousand barrels of kosher meat."<sup>137</sup> The report stated, "The meat was prepared in strict accordance with Jewish ritualistic requirements and was shipped from New York by the Joint Distribution Committee in December."<sup>138</sup> The experts in Warsaw who tasted it described the meat as arriving in perfect condition. The meat was given to public institutions as well as individuals. According to the JDC's report, many of the individuals "had not tasted meat for five years."<sup>139</sup> Of the 5,046 barrels shipped, Warsaw received 421, Lwow received 753, and Wilno received 603.<sup>140</sup> The JDC did not charge any of the recipients for the meat.<sup>141</sup> The JDC's press releases boast of providing Eastern European Jews with their first taste of kosher meat in five years exemplified the symbolic capitol of kosher food packages. On top of the economic implications of providing such a shipment free of charge, the kosher meat was rich in religious and communal significance. Eating can be analyzed as a cultural performance in which an individual or community physically exhibits their otherness through the body. Communities thus mark themselves as unique through their food practices, forming boundaries between themselves and others based on their diet.<sup>142</sup> These boundaries work as visual markers to identify community members from non-community members. Ultimately, based on the vast opportunities and methods of feeding oneself, how an individual or community chooses to eat is greatly significant.<sup>143</sup> By providing kosher food for Jews abroad, American Jews participated in the consumption of kosher meat, and the preservation of traditional ritual, even though not all American Jews were personally practicing the laws of kashrut.

Kosher food relief permitted the practice of Jewish holidays. The JDC was annually involved in providing flour for European Jews to celebrate Passover, an eight-day festival in the spring commemorating the emancipation of Jewish slaves in Ancient Egypt.<sup>144</sup> During Passover, the consumption of leavened products is banned, necessitating both communal and familial preparation to rid houses and businesses of breaded products. In December of 1920 Rabbi Isaac Rubinstein, President of the Mizrahi Organization of Lithuania, appealed to the "Orthodox Jewish Relief of America" for the upcoming holiday. Originally written in Hebrew, likely as a means to appeal to like-minded traditional Jews, the letter was translated by the JDC. Rubinstein wrote that, "the month of Tebeth has already passed and the matzoth question is already troubling us."<sup>145</sup> Rubenstein explained the JDC had informed him "no

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Passover relief will be granted” this coming spring for his community.<sup>146</sup> Rubenstein appealed to Vilna’s “brethren in America,” and enlisted religion to appeal to American Jews, stating that, “as a religious body it is incumbent upon you to save the Jews of Vilna from the calamity of going without matzoth this coming Passover.”<sup>147</sup> Rubinstein’s classification of a lack of matzoth as a “calamity,” and his plea that the Jews of Vilna need “saving” from such a dilemma, characterized the lack of religious food items as a threat to survival. He addressed Jews in America as “American brethren,” and stressed that American Jews had a responsibility to create conditions in which his community could practice Judaism. His proposal hinted that American philanthropic supply of matzoth for European Jews was a religious practice or ritual in its own right. Rubenstein’s appeal for flour (or the means to purchase flour) for Vilna’s ritual observance of Passover illustrated the symbolic currency of food and money in the production of cultural and religious identity. The flour presented to Jewish communities throughout Eastern Europe created circumstances in which the ritual of Passover could be practiced. Thus the religious performance of the receiver was entwined with and enabled by the giver.<sup>148</sup> Rubinstein’s letter captured the implicit inequality between the giver and the receiver, but his appeal also questioned American Jews’ privileged position. According to Mary Douglas, in a foreword to *The Gift*, “a gift that does nothing to enhance solidarity is a contradiction.”<sup>149</sup> American philanthropic gifts during World War I can thus be analyzed as a mechanism of solidarity. Rather than the flour being merely flour, Passover aid was a deeply meaningful ritual transaction in which both parties received something. While European Jews received the tangible gift of food aid, American Jews received cultural prestige by embracing philanthropy as a religious ritual that allowed European Jews to perform Jewish rituals correctly.

While the majority of European Jews practiced the strict rules of kashrut, food ritual practices in America varied greatly. At the same time rabbis in Eastern Europe were requiring kosher certification on food packages sent to their regions, many Jews were integrating, adapting and modifying kosher ritual to fit their modern lives in America. *The Neighborhood Cookbook*, published by the Council of Jewish Women in Portland in 1914, contained many non-kosher dishes.<sup>150</sup> An entire chapter, “Shell Fish and Shell Fish Entrees,” was dedicated to local seafood items such as clams, oysters, crab and lobster, all of which were forbidden according to the laws of kashrut.<sup>151</sup> The integration of Oregonian cuisine, including non-kosher shellfish, reveals the integration of middle and upper class Jews into Portland culture. The variety of Jewish food practices in America during World War I sometimes made it difficult for American Jews to come together over the symbolic and ritualistic aspect of kosher food aid.

Jewish communities of varied economic class and religious observance had opposing conceptions of American Judaism that played out in the disagreements between the JDC’s various subcommittees. A letter from the AJRC to the JDC in 1918 demonstrated the division among the committees. The AJRC, a subdivision of the AJC, wrote to the JDC criticizing an advertisement in their bulletin.<sup>152</sup> The AJRC opposed featuring the Jewishness of Jewish American soldiers for fear that a focus on religion separated Jewish soldiers from other American soldiers. A representative of the AJRC wrote, “this is the war of ‘our country,’ supported not by so-called American Jewry and not by an American Christendom, but by an American Citizenry without reference to religious faiths.”<sup>153</sup> The AJRC wished to represent Jewish soldiers as no different in their patriotism than Christian soldiers. This letter illustrated the Reform community’s emphasis on establishing Judaism as firmly American.

American Jews felt a duty to provide for European Jews based on their shared religion, but also because of their American identity. Newspaper coverage juxtaposed the democratic principles of America with the poor political stature of Eastern European Jews. *The Los Angeles Times* wrote in 1916:

"I've Had A Bully Good Feed!" and "I'm Waiting in the Bread Line for Mine!"

The distress of the Jews in the stricken zone is the most miserable in all the tragic history of the race. They speak of it as the "third exile"—but they are not even exiles. They have nowhere to go. They have nothing to eat. They cannot work or go into business. The intolerable attitude of many Europeans toward the Jews, that has descended from the bigotry of the Middle Ages, leaves the children of Israel without a friend among the belligerent nations of Europe to whom they can turn... It is for America to relieve the distressed and exiled Jews for whom help is now asked.<sup>154</sup>

In 1919, Dr. Bogen reported on the persecution of Jews in Prague, Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia.<sup>155</sup> Henry Alsberg, who accompanied Bogen, experienced a "great wave of anti-Semitic feeling" in Czechoslovakia after the signing of the armistice.<sup>156</sup> He described the persecution as including "plundering and looting of Jewish shops and homes, and in one case, at any rate, a real pogrom, that of Hillischau, where two Jews were killed and a large number wounded."<sup>157</sup> Herman Bernstein commented on the anti-Semitic nature of the suffering of Jews in Eastern Europe as early as 1915, when he wrote in *The New York Times*, "the Jews who are martyred now, who are tortured for no other "crime" than their Judaism, are dying for you and me."<sup>158</sup> He used the anti-Semitic nature of attacks on European Jews to inspire American Jews to act, stating, "the refugees are crying in vain in the wilderness, but their hopes are directed to the Jews of America."<sup>159</sup>

The JDC, their subcommittees, and their representatives, utilized the American principle of democracy and freedom to promote their cause. On top of philanthropy being a religious obligation that permitted the performance of religious tradition, philanthropy was also an inherently American practice to increase the liberties of those less fortunate. American Jews politicized Jewish war relief to extend the American ideology of liberty abroad. In 1917 American Jews from 51 different organizations met in Washington, D.C. to "demand equal rights for Jews in all lands."<sup>160</sup> *The New York Times* described the high status of the delegation, stating, "delegates from more than 100 cities, many of them of national reputation, Judges, former Ambassadors, financiers, lawyers and business men participated in the deliberations."<sup>161</sup> The meeting was ripe with contention. Louis Marshall, head of the JDC, encouraged the congress to work alongside the JDC, yet the delegates refused to align the congress with any committee. Former Ambassador Henry Morgenthau advised the delegates to set aside their differences or face the consequence of their congress being ineffectual and accomplishing nothing.<sup>162</sup> The disagreements between the delegates, and the JDC's appeal to unite them, contextualize the disunity of American Jewry in World War I. The JDC thus provided a unique opportunity for American Jews of different backgrounds to work together to pursue the physical, spiritual and political wellbeing of Jews abroad.

Food remittance packages demonstrated the implicit inequality between giver and receiver. American Jews who purchased a \$10 package were aware that their decision to participate in charity sustained the lives of their relatives or friends abroad. Colonel William N. Haskell, Director of the Russian Unit of the ARA, characterized Russian recipients of aid as "simple." He told *The New York Times*, "their gratitude to America is touching. It has become almost a childlike worship on the part of the simple people."<sup>163</sup> ARA officials were not the only ones to characterize relief recipients as somehow beneath Americans. Felix Warburg, Chairman of the JDC, utilized an analogy of medicine:

In returning from Europe for the fourth time since the war I feel like a physician who has visited a very sick person in the hope of finding him improved...America as consulting surgeon took a very active part in the operations that cut out Czarism, Kaiserism and Hapaburgism... Europe expects of us to see that the patient is not abandoned until



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normalcy returns... Mr. Hoover is the one man who has looked at Europe at all times with the eyes of a kind physician. The diet he prescribed has saved millions.<sup>164</sup>

Warburg's analogy characterized American Jews, the JDC, and Hoover himself, as physicians with the knowledge and agency to provide life-sustaining care. In juxtaposition to the American agency was the destitute powerlessness of those receiving the aid. Warburg's statement echoed the superiority of Colonel Haskell's statement, and the air of American superiority that Hoover used to promote both the US Food Administration and the ARA.

Philanthropy, as exemplified by the work of the JDC, can be considered a type of gift giving, and implicit in any gift giving is a nuanced relationship of power. Sociologist Marcel Mauss considered the power dynamics between giver and receiver in his seminal work *The Gift*. Mauss analyzed gift giving in archaic societies and argued gifts are never truly free, but rather, create a never-ending relationship of reciprocity between the giver and receiver. Mauss proposed, "the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them."<sup>165</sup> JDC donations created a relationship between American Jews and European Jews, a relationship inherently asymmetrical in power. The receiver, European Jews, relied on American Jews for survival. This agency to save lives was not lost on American Jews, who understood their privilege as a responsibility to extend their success (and their American ideals) to civilian war victims. Mauss argued all gifts are reciprocated, but the currency exchanged between American and European Jews was more cultural in nature. Through the efforts of the JDC European Jews acquired tangible aid in the form of food, clothing, medical supplies, and food while American donors received symbolic status that heightened their membership both in the Jewish community and greater American culture. Thus, gift-giving in the form of Jewish war relief during World War I was an expression of American Jewish exceptionalism. The supply of kosher food for Eastern European Jews also enabled the practice of Jewish traditional law. Even though strict Jewish observance was a contentious disagreement between modernizing, Reform Jews and more observant, traditional Jews in America, all denominations supported the JDC's shipment of kosher food abroad.

Ultimately, Jewish philanthropy from 1914 to 1924, must be contextualized to the American experience of World War I. Firstly, Jewish philanthropy demonstrated that during the pre-war years, Americans were hardly neutral, despite President Wilson and the government's official stance of neutrality. American Jews, of whom many were immigrants or the children of immigrants, differed in economic, social and religious background. While historians have typified the earlier immigrants of German Jewish heritage as assimilated and Eastern European Jewish immigrants as stagnant in their resistance to American culture, both populations, as well as even older Jewish communities within America, all participated in Jewish war relief aid through the JDC. The familial rhetoric American Jews used to describe European Jews enforced an international Jewish community despite differed religious practices, such as keeping kosher.<sup>166</sup> American Jews enforced a concept of trans-national community based on religious background through their supply of kosher food. Yet, philanthropy was truly a method to align Jewish American communities with American values, and a way for American Jews to perform membership in greater society. Analysis of Jewish war relief campaigns indicates a patterned use of American symbols such as Lady Liberty. Further analysis also reveals that American Jews described European war victims with patronizing undertones. Jewish relief organizations differed in economic status and religious practices, yet ultimately, American Jews utilized the JDC to perform their identity as both a minority concerned with the conditions of their coreligionists abroad, as well as members and active participants in greater American culture. Analysis of Jewish wartime relief thus illustrates that American Jews, despite many being newly immigrated, believed their experience of Judaism was fundamentally an American experience of Judaism. The JDC's response to European Jewish war sufferers was thus an American response, just as much as it was a Jewish response.

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- <sup>1</sup> Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), accessed April 15, 2016, 80.
- <sup>2</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 79.
- <sup>3</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 81.
- <sup>4</sup> Peter S. Onuf, "American Exceptionalism and National Identity," *American Political Thought* 1(1): 77, accessed April 15, 2016, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/664594>.
- <sup>5</sup> Onuf, "American Exceptionalism and National Identity," 78.
- <sup>6</sup> Howard Temperly, "American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword by Seymour Martin Lipset," *Review of American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword: Journal of American Studies* 31 (2), 322.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*, 322.
- <sup>8</sup> Tony Michels, "Is America 'Different'? A Critique of American Jewish Exceptionalism," *American Jewish History* 96, no. 3 (2010): 201, accessed April 15, 2016, Project MUSE.
- <sup>9</sup> Michels, "Is America 'Different'?" 204.
- <sup>10</sup> Jennifer Keene, "Americans Respond: Perspectives on the Great War, 1914-1917," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40, no. 2 (2014): 268.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 272.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 273.
- <sup>13</sup> Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, 200.
- <sup>14</sup> Zosa Szajkowski, "Concord and Discord in American Jewish Overseas Relief, 1914-1924," in *Studies in Modern Jewish Social History*, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1972), 240.
- <sup>15</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols: Explorations in Cosmology* (New York: Penguin Books, 1973), 60.
- <sup>16</sup> Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: Norton, 1967), 17.
- <sup>17</sup> Szajkowski, "Concord and Discord in American Jewish Overseas Relief," 237.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 239.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 239.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 244.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 248.
- <sup>22</sup> "TO SAVE JEWISH WAR SUFFERERS," *The Los Angeles Times (1881-1988)*, 3 August 1915: 115, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/160202459?accountid=10051>.
- <sup>23</sup> "SURE OF \$3,000,000 FOR JEWISH RELIEF," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 23 December 1916:16, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97810405?accountid=10051>.
- <sup>24</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>26</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>27</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>28</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>29</sup> "JEWISH BAZAAR GETS \$150,000 IN GOODS," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 25 March 1916: 11, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97983773?accountid=10051>.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>31</sup> "JEWISH BAZAAR TAKES IN \$140,000," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 3 April, 1916: 9, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97964610?accountid=10051>.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid*.
- <sup>33</sup> "BROOKLYN JEWS GET \$125,000 FOR RELIEF," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 7 February 1916: 4, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97831120?accountid=10051>.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "\$2,000,000 IS GIVEN TO AID WAR JEWS," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 28 January 1916: 1, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/98028531?accountid=10051>.

<sup>37</sup> "ASK JEWS TO GIVE MORE FOR RELIEF," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 27 April 1917: 11, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99928512?accountid=10051>.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> "SURE OF \$3,000,000 FOR JEWISH RELIEF."

<sup>40</sup> "JEWISH BAZAAR GETS \$150,000 IN GOODS."

<sup>41</sup> "JEWISH BAZAAR TAKES IN \$140,000."

<sup>42</sup> "JEWISH WAR DRIVE NOW IN FINAL DAY," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 18 December 1918: 13, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100125714?accountid=10051>.

<sup>43</sup> "JEWISH CHILDREN GIVE UP SODAS TO AID STARVING: 200 Resolve to Forego Fun for Famine Victims," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (1872-1922), 28 November 1921: 3, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/174878306?accountid=10051>.

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> "NATION GIVES TODAY FOR JEWISH WAR AID," *New York Times* (1857-1922), 27 January 1916: 5, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/98030693?accountid=10051>.

<sup>47</sup> "JEWISH WORKERS SEND \$101,000 GIFT," *New York Times* (1857-1922), 5 December 1917: 15, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99919484?accountid=10051>.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Szajkowski, "Concord and Discord in American Jewish Overseas Relief," 253.

<sup>50</sup> "Take a Lesson from Duluth, Minn," 10 June 1918, JDC Administration, Publicity, Press Releases, 1916-1918, 1914-1918 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> "QUICK RELIEF URGED FOR WAR ZONE JEWS," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 16 November 1914: 9, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97615581?accountid=10051>.

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> "JEWISH WORKERS SEND \$101,000 GIFT."

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> "35 PER CENT OF JEWS IN EUROPE IN WANT," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 4 March 1917: 6, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/98118843?accountid=10051>.

<sup>64</sup> Herman Bernstein, The American author, who has just returned from his trip of investigation in Europe, and has reported his findings to the American Jewish Relief committee, "Jews, Greatest Sufferers of War, Appeal to Americans for "Bread For Living, Shrouds for Dead," *The Washington Post* (1877-1922), 14 November 1915: E3, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/145430237?accountid=10051>.

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<sup>67</sup> "JEWISH WAR RELIEF ASSEMBLY ON OCT. 28," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 18 October 1917: 14, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99849049?accountid=10051>.

<sup>68</sup> Letter from Secretary, Joint Distribution Committee to Mr. Herman Bernstein, 18 October 1917, JDC Administration, Fund-Raising, Special Assembly, 1917, 1914-1918 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>71</sup> Burke, "Share."

<sup>72</sup> "I've Had A Bully Good Feed!," sponsored by Chicago Jewish Relief Campaign, ca. 1920, Pinterest.com, accessed March 1, 2015, <https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/11/5c/f9/115cf9e17005f5da9d7fa78f94845db9.jpg>.

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<sup>74</sup> "JEWISH WAR RELIEF TO ASK \$5,000,000," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 24 November 1918: 25, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100088656?accountid=10051>.

<sup>75</sup> "How Will You Answer Your Child?: 'Daddy, Why Should They Starve When We Have So Much?'" ca. 1914-1918, University of Minnesota Libraries, Manuscripts Division, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://purl.umn.edu/75286>.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>79</sup> "Little Children—Helpless Little Children—Shall They Live or Die?: Open Your Hearts and Pour Out Your Gold" ca. 1914-1918, University of Minnesota Libraries, Manuscripts Division, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://purl.umn.edu/75284>.

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<sup>82</sup> "Little Children—Helpless Little Children—Shall They Live or Die?" ca. 1914-1918, University of Minnesota Libraries, Manuscripts Division, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://purl.umn.edu/75285>.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> JEWS TO DEMAND A WORLD EQUALITY," *The New York Times* (1857-1922), 26 December 1916: 6, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97808374?accountid=10051>.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Louis Mayer, "Jewish War Sufferers: Shall They Plead in Vain?" 1917, Boston Public Library. Available from Flickr Commons, [https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston\\_public\\_library/3551356065/in/album-72157604204316251/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/3551356065/in/album-72157604204316251/).

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<sup>92</sup> Abel Pann, "What Of Their Fast? Will It End Tonight?" AR 14-18, File 29, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>100</sup> "Meeting held here today present John F. Smulski, representing National Polish Department..." 3 January 1919, Poland, Relief Supplies, Food, 1919-1921, 1919-1921 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>103</sup> F.C. Walo-TT, "Telegram F.C. Walo-TT to Felix M. Warburg," 10 January 1919, Relations with U.S. Government, U.S. Food Administration, 1919," 1919-1921 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Archive.

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<sup>105</sup> Albert Lucas, "Letter from Albert Lucas to F. C. Walcott," 14 January 1919, Relations with the U.S. Government, U.S. Food Administration, 1919, 1919-1921 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> HELP FOR FAMINE-STRICKEN RUSSIA, *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 10 August 1921: 8, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/98280592?accountid=10051>

<sup>108</sup> "Memorandum from Dr. Rosenblatt to Administration Committee," 9 November 1921, Subject: ARA Food Remittances, USSR: Subject Matter, Relief Supplies: American Relief Administration (ARA), Individual Packages- Food, 1921-1923, 1921-1932 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> "Eleven Banks throughout New York City begin selling Food Packages to Russia," 5 March 1922, pg. 1, USSR: Subject Matter, Relief Supplies: American Relief Administration (ARA), Individual Packages - Food, 1921 – 1923, 1921-1932 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>113</sup> Boris D. Bogen, "Letter from Dr. Boris D. Bogen to Mr. Lewis Strauss, Subject: Individual Food Parcel Deliveries," 10 February 1923, USSR: Subject Matter, Relief Supplies: American Relief Administration (ARA), Individual Packages - Food, 1921 – 1923, 1921-1932 New York Collection,

<sup>114</sup> "FOOD FOR THE UKRAINE," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 26 June 1922: 3, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99518543?accountid=10051>

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<sup>116</sup> "FEEDS 800,000 IN UKRAINE," *The New York Times (1857-1922)*, 20 July 1922: 31, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/99485440?accountid=10051>

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<sup>118</sup> Herbert Hoover, "Letter from American Relief Administration from Joint Distribution Committee," 20 February 1923, USSR: Subject Matter, Relief Supplies: American Relief Administration (ARA), Individual Packages - Food, 1921 – 1923, 1921-1932 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>120</sup> "For the first time in days I have a quiet spell," 2.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>122</sup> "Letter from Albert Lucas to Mr. Bisbee," pg. 1, 20 May 1919, Relief Supplies, Kosher Food, 1919-1920, 1919-1920 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 1.

<sup>125</sup> "Letter from Albert Lucas to Mr. Bisbee," 2.

<sup>126</sup> "For the first time in days I have a quiet spell," 2.

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> "Statement of Distribution of Kosher Meat," 8 January 1920, Poland, Relief Supplies, Food, 1919-1921, 1919-1921 New York Collection, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archive.

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<sup>143</sup> Douglas, \_\_.

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