

The Untold Story: The World Jewish Congress Operation to Rescue Children in Portugal During the Holocaust

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The inaugural convention of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), which was attended by 280 delegates from thirty-two countries, took place in Geneva in August 1936. While the organization was new, its ideological roots lay in the transformations experienced by the Jewish communities in the United States and Europe in the wake of World War I and the Balfour Declaration. The purpose of the WJC was twofold: (1) to continue in the tradition of the American Jewish Congress (founded in 1918) and the Committee of Jewish Delegations (founded in 1919) to operate as a voluntary organization representing Jewish communities and organizations worldwide vis-à-vis government authorities and international bodies, and (2) to foster the development of social and cultural life in Jewish communities around the world. Its lead founder and first president was the Reform rabbi Stephen S. Wise, among the foremost Zionist leaders in the United States.¹

The WJC defined itself as an international organization although, in fact, it operated as an American Jewish organization. Its headquarters were in the United States, and its European and South American offices were financed by American sources and supervised by the WJC directorate. This state of affairs had prevailed prior to World War II and became even more prevalent following its outbreak.²

Studies of American Jewish leadership in the 1930s and 1940s deal extensively with top WJC executives, whose activities are closely examined and often severely criticized.³ Such criticism primarily addresses the issue of assistance to the persecuted Jews of Europe. A huge volume of scholarly literature exists on the inability of the American Jewish leadership to effect the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust.⁴

The outbreak of war and reports of the extermination of European Jewry persuaded WJC leadership and its operatives in neutral European

countries to adopt methods that were very different from the conventional patterns of philanthropic work in the Jewish public sphere.⁵ In this spirit they created a streamlined system for gathering information on the acts of murder and extermination in Europe, and they set up a clandestine operation in neutral countries and those under German occupation to rescue Jewish children and facilitate the survival of Jews who had gone into hiding.⁶

The centerpiece of the WJC's rescue activity was its clandestine operation to rescue children. The saga of these efforts is fascinating, but it has yet to receive the exposure it deserves. Yet the telling of this story is significant not merely because of the importance of its exposure, but also because it epitomizes the complexity of the debate over the WJC's activity during World War II. The apparatus for rescuing children was set up through a concerted economic, political, and organizational effort conducted by the WJC's leadership and its rank-and-file members. Despite this extraordinary endeavor, however, only a few thousand children were rescued. While the value of rescuing each child cannot be underestimated, the question remains whether the WJC's ability to rescue "only" these children highlights failure on the part of the organization's leadership to rescue a greater number of Jews from the Nazi inferno.

Over the intervening years, criticism of the WJC's wartime comportment has been reinforced, and the story of the rescue operation has fallen by the wayside in both the organization's official history and the memory of its members. One may surmise that the WJC's official historiographers believed that emphasizing the rescue of hundreds of children in Portugal would simply exacerbate criticism of the organization for having saved "only" a handful. By downplaying the saga in the WJC's historiography, it was excluded from scholarly research as well.

The WJC's methods of assisting the Jews of Europe remained essentially unchanged during the initial months of the war. Its emissaries in Europe met with representatives of the governments-in-exile and international organizations with a view to transferring food to European Jews, while its functionaries in Washington tried to obtain visas enabling Jews to enter the United States. In addition, meetings were held with ambassadors and consuls of South American nations to obtain passports for Jews in occupied Europe.⁷ By contrast, the entry of the United

States into the war and news of the Nazis' murderous deeds in Europe and plans for the Final Solution led the WJC to introduce dramatic changes to its work in Europe. The immense changes in awareness and organization that occurred can be appreciated in light of the fact that much of the information regarding mass murder and the Nazis' plans for exterminating Europe's Jews was collected and dispatched to the United States by WJC operatives in Europe. This news shaped the leadership's perception of the destiny of Europe's Jews.⁸ Upon learning of the Final Solution, the heads of the WJC stepped up their political endeavors—which deviated from the contours of the public activity traditionally conducted by Jewish aid organizations—as they reshaped the pattern they had employed before learning of the Holocaust.⁹

The Joint Distribution Committee in Opposition

In conducting the operation to rescue Jews in Europe, WJC institutions had to adopt an underground pattern of activity and forge a web of contacts with underground elements in Europe. This was complex and challenging. The WJC was a voluntary philanthropic body unaccustomed to such activity; it was foreign to its organizational culture.

The clandestine activity in Lisbon was conducted by Isaac Weissman, an emissary of the WJC. Weissman was born in Istanbul in 1892 to a family of Russian origin. His extensive business ventures took him to Berlin, whence he escaped with his wife to Lisbon in 1941. The WJC's leadership recognized Portugal's singular status as a safe haven for Jewish refugees and therefore sought to appoint an official envoy in Lisbon. Although Portugal had no common border with France and refugees could be transferred to the country only through Spain, WJC leaders believed that the Portuguese regime, unlike its Spanish counterpart, would allow a clandestine rescue operation to function within its territory.¹⁰

Weissman had been chosen by Gerhart Riegner, director of the WJC's Geneva office, who was charged with the task of locating a suitable candidate to run the Lisbon branch. It is safe to assume that Riegner took into account that the function of a WJC emissary in Lisbon during wartime would require secrecy. Weissman's business interests in Cairo, Istanbul, Vienna, and Berlin, and his command of several languages, suited him to the role. He operated as the WJC's envoy in Lisbon from 1941 until the end of the war. This enabled him to build an extensive

network of connections with the Portuguese authorities, delegations of Allied countries in Lisbon, and the British and American intelligence services.

Weissman confronted many difficulties in carrying out his mission. The Portuguese authorities, under the despotic and nationalist regime of Antonio Salazar, conducted a policy of neutrality during World War II but maintained close economic ties with the Nazi regime and sought to prevent Jewish refugees from entering the country.¹¹ Weissman was once arrested, together with his wife, by the Portuguese secret police and released after several days, only following intervention by the British ambassador. An additional hurdle was internal Jewish opposition to the operation in Lisbon, especially on the part of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and Professor Moshe Amzelak, head of the small Jewish community in Portugal. The JDC refused to transfer money for rescue efforts in Portugal, and its local representatives refrained from political activity on behalf of the WJC's rescue enterprise. Given the economic power and its seniority among American Jewish philanthropic organizations, JDC opposition greatly hindered the work of WJC emissaries in Portugal. Amzelak's opposition was likewise of considerable political significance, because he had been a classmate of the Portuguese ruler and was a personal friend.¹²

The JDC was not the only organization that declined to support WJC efforts in the first half of the 1940s. Hadassah also rejected the WJC's request for funding its activity in Europe. Hadassah's decision was based on the conviction that the JDC was focusing its activity on Europe and that the WJC should thus apply there for support. Hadassah had made prior financial commitments to the Zionist movement's rescue endeavor conducted from the United States and was therefore unable to accede to the WJC's request. In its response Hadassah stressed that its rejection of the request for funding did not stem from reservations regarding WJC activity, but was due to its inability to provide the necessary financial resources.¹³

The JDC's objections to WJC activity in Portugal were not merely a power struggle over the two organizations' control of the care of Jewish refugees in Portugal and Spain. The correspondence between Weissman and the JDC's operatives in Portugal, as well as the impressions gained by Jewish refugees who lived in the country during those years, indicates that unlike the WJC, the JDC chose to adhere to its philanthropic mission and was totally opposed to the clandestine activity that Weissman had

developed. Amzelak's opposition stemmed from similar grounds.¹⁴ The JDC and the institutions of the Portuguese Jewish community believed that not only were they unable to undertake underground activity in their capacity as philanthropic bodies, but that if this illegal activity were to be discovered, they would no longer be able to conduct the philanthropic work that in their view took pride of place.¹⁵

Over time, following the success and expansion of its operations in Portugal and Spain, the WJC's efforts there could no longer be ignored. As a result, representatives of the WJC, the JDC, and the Jewish Agency reached an agreement at the American embassy in Lisbon in summer 1944. The agreement delineated the work of the three bodies in Spain and Portugal and set up an apparatus for the transfer of information among them. A coordinating committee that was to convene at short intervals to ensure the rapid and free flow of information among the organizations was formed. A similar joint committee was to care for rescued children who had arrived in Portugal. The agreement among representatives of the three agencies was signed long after the WJC office in Lisbon had begun to operate. This affords an additional perspective on the overwhelming difficulties faced by a voluntary philanthropic organization—which lacked the legal authority and practical capacity to compel other organizations to toe its line—in founding and operating a clandestine rescue enterprise.¹⁶

A letter written by JDC Vice President Joseph Hyman to Stephen S. Wise as the agreement was about to be signed shows that the heads of the JDC genuinely feared that the operation developed by Weissman in Portugal would delay—or even prevent—the rescue of Jewish children and others from France and Belgium. Yet when Weissman's endeavor in Portugal proved effective, JDC leadership agreed to formalize the relationship between the two organizations and to contribute funding in the belief that a unified effort would facilitate the rescue of more individuals.¹⁷ The American embassy's involvement in achieving the agreement further indicates that the operation in Portugal had developed to the extent that it merited the participation of representatives of the United States in its regulation.¹⁸

Despite the agreement, the criticism against the JDC continued in WJC circles. A December 1944 editorial in the WJC's weekly journal, *Congress Weekly*, elaborated on the different approaches adopted by

the JDC and the WJC during the Holocaust.¹⁹ The article began by applauding the JDC for raising tens of millions of dollars toward assisting the Jews of Europe; it makes clear that this massive fundraising was crucial because of the dual challenge that confronted American Jewry in 1944, namely to continue the effort to rescue European Jews and to care for those who had been and would be rescued. Alongside its appreciation of the JDC's fundraising ability, however, the article harshly criticizes the organization's methods in Europe. It suggests that fundraising for purposes of rescue and rehabilitation was a necessary but insufficient action on behalf of European Jews and constituted only the initial stage of a comprehensive political endeavor. The article's author stressed that such activity demanded ongoing ties with governments and international organizations as well as new initiatives and ideas, which often achieved far more than spending millions of dollars. Adding the political dimension to the activity of Jewish aid and welfare organizations had always been the correct way to proceed, the article continued, and had become absolutely vital in light of the dramatic events of World War II and the immense tasks facing American Jewish organizations engaged in the campaign for European Jews. According to the article, the American Jewish effort on behalf of European Jewry could succeed only through shaping a coordinated strategy that blended philanthropy with politics. The article's author believed that the WJC's willingness to undertake intensive political action set it aside from other Jewish welfare organizations, such as the JDC, and enabled it to work optimally for the good of European Jews. Despite the differences in the nature of the American Jewish bodies that acted on behalf of Europe's Jews, the article viewed cooperation among groups as being of vital importance given the grave circumstances. The historical responsibility borne by American Jews required them to transcend their differences and work in unison. Jews worldwide, especially American Jews, had the right to demand that the JDC cooperate with other Jewish organizations, such as the WJC, to work on behalf of the Jews of Europe.²⁰

Laying the Infrastructure for Rescue Operations

Weissman began his work in Portugal by taking steps to formalize the legal status of the Jewish refugees there. He approached the Portuguese police official responsible for refugees and together they came to an

arrangement whereby he, as the WJC emissary, kept a record of Jewish refugees and supervised them. According to this arrangement, beginning in December 1942, the Jewish refugees would be assembled in the town of Ericeira, and those in detention would be released. Alongside this activity in Portugal, international pressure was brought to bear on the Spanish regime to regulate the status of the Jewish refugees there. To this end Weissman held intensive negotiations with Nicolas Franco, who was Spain's ambassador to Portugal and brother of the Spanish dictator. According to the information he received from the ambassador, Weissman surmised that the precedent created in Portugal had induced Spain to cease returning Jewish refugees to the French border and to grant them temporary refugee status in Spain.

The differences between the JDC pattern of action in Spain and the WJC operation in Portugal are noteworthy. In Spain the JDC conducted strictly philanthropic activity among the refugees, providing the funding to meet their ongoing needs. By contrast, Weissman, as the WJC emissary in Portugal, did not confine himself to caring for the refugees' welfare; he initiated contact with the heads of the country's security as part of a political effort that far exceeded the scope of traditional philanthropic work. Thus Weissman's political activity and efforts to set up a clandestine infrastructure gathered momentum during 1943 and 1944 and would eventually lead to the establishment of the WJC's full-blown rescue operation in Portugal.²¹

One of the major concerns for Weissman, WJC emissaries in Europe, and the heads of the organization in the United States was the establishment of a clandestine communications network. In the midst of a world war, it proved difficult to communicate via letters and telegrams. Transfer of information among European countries and between Europe and the United States was exceedingly slow and sometimes altogether impossible. As a philanthropic rather than a government body, the communications structure of the WJC was totally exposed to the intelligence agencies of various nations. It was impossible through its existing communication channels to conduct a clandestine rescue operation, which required the ability to transfer information rapidly and securely. Therefore Weissman immediately proceeded to set up a clandestine system for communication among the WJC's offices in Europe and between Europe and America. He secured agreements from

the delegations of the French, Polish, and Czechoslovak governments-in-exile to transfer WJC mail via their diplomatic post bags. But Weissman suspected that even the diplomatic postal channels were exposed to hostile intelligence, so he also took steps to set up the organization's independent communications procedure. He secured the services of an Argentinean diplomat, who transferred the WJC's documents as diplomatic post, and an additional courier who secretly—and illegally—dispatched the organization's documents and equipment vital to the rescue effort. The clandestine system that Weissman established was so efficient that the envoys of governments-in-exile in Lisbon sometimes preferred to send classified information through him rather than through regular diplomatic channels.²²

Having settled the status of the Jewish refugees in Spain and Portugal, Weissman and the apparatus that he had set up began dispatching food and medication to the Jews of Europe and obtaining information from occupied European countries on Nazi actions against the Jews. WJC documents from the period between the outbreak of the war and the receipt of detailed information on the Final Solution at the end of summer 1942 demonstrate that this was the major issue that occupied the leadership. At the time, the heads of the WJC believed that the orderly dispatch of food to Europe could significantly ameliorate the condition of the Jews there and induce the Nazi leaders to improve their treatment of the Jews. U.S. and British opposition to the transfer of food to Europe based on the fear that it would not reach its destination and would contribute to the German war effort prevented even an initial attempt to set up a comprehensive operation of food transfer to Europe, but it did not stop WJC leadership from persisting in its effort to get food to the Jews in smaller volumes and by indirect means. Even after receiving news about the Final Solution, the WJC continued trying to transfer food to the ghettos and the camps, believing that this was one of the few means of helping the Jews of Europe.²³

Toward the end of 1943 the French resistance informed the WJC of an extensive German operation to apprehend Jewish children hiding in private homes and Catholic institutions in areas of France under German control.²⁴ WJC functionaries in Europe estimated that four thousand to five thousand Jews were in imminent danger. Further reports told of the intensified German effort to locate and capture

Jews—children in particular—in Holland and Belgium.²⁵ A report by Weissman to the WJC's New York office shows the circuitous route whereby this information reached Lisbon. Weissman told of a Dutch Jew who had escaped from Mauthausen concentration camp in Austria and had managed to reach Portugal via France. He was conscripted by the Dutch government-in-exile and shared whatever information he had with Weissman.²⁶

Upon receiving this information, WJC officials approached the French government-in-exile to request that its representatives publicly ask the French population not to cooperate with the Germans in their effort to find children and to instruct the French resistance to take active steps to see that children were not handed over to the Germans. The French broadcasting centers in London and Algeria did indeed put out broadcasts to this effect directed at the population at large and at the resistance in particular. Parallel meetings were held with senior Dutch and Belgian officials, who promised to allocate special underground forces to rescuing children in their respective countries and to try to transfer the children to France as an interim staging post on their way to Spain and Portugal.²⁷

The messages arriving from occupied Europe left Weissman in no doubt as to the urgency of investing most of his effort in rescuing children from France and transferring them to Spain and Portugal. He and the WJC leaders concluded that the activity undertaken through the governments-in-exile and the various undergrounds was insufficient, and they therefore set up an independent underground operation to rescue Jewish children in France. To this end Weissman traveled from Lisbon to London, where he met with two WJC leaders from the United States: Nahum Goldmann, chair of the executive committee, and Arieh Tartakower, chair of the welfare and relief committee. The three men held intensive meetings with envoys of the French, Dutch, and Polish governments-in-exile, who promised assistance for the WJC's rescue machinery. With the support of the governments-in-exile and their embassies in Lisbon, Weissman, Tartakower, and Goldmann also created an independent task force charged with rescuing Jewish children. Members of the group moved clandestinely between France and Spain as they implemented the rescue effort. Most were French-speaking Jews, some with experience in underground activity. Their

number was augmented by the addition of professional smugglers who could cope with the tremendous obstacles presented by crossing from France to Spain over the Pyrenees. Seeking to present WJC functionaries in New York with the profile of a typical member of one of these groups, Weissman described a twenty-four-year-old Jewish man of Polish origin who had lived most of his life in France. In the wake of the occupation he had joined the French resistance and gained extensive experience in operating communications equipment for the underground. He had come to London on a mission for the resistance, and Weissman had recruited him there. In addition, Weissman recruited peasant families on both sides of the border, who were paid to serve as a base for the departure of smugglers and groups of children.²⁸

To establish and run an underground operation in a Europe under Nazi rule would have been a difficult task under any circumstances, but the challenge facing Weissman was particularly daunting—and not simply because of the tremendous obstacles in smuggling groups of children through tens of kilometers of border areas under close military supervision. Contemporary witnesses emphasized that Weissman's mission was made significantly harder by having to adopt operations and conduct missions far beyond the conventional sphere of such philanthropic organizations.²⁹ A number of questions arose as preparations were being made. To whom did the children legally belong? Could any particular government claim that the children should be under its aegis? And did the WJC have the means to determine the children's original citizenship and legal status? Those in charge of the operation were severely critical of the governments-in-exile, which for the most part ignored the children altogether once they had been rescued, making no attempt to establish whether these were children of their own citizens even when such an examination was feasible. This lack of concern was particularly galling in view of their assiduousness in attending to their non-Jewish citizens and the dedicated financial resources for the care of their citizens who were refugees or displaced persons. The WJC and other Jewish and Zionist organizations in effect took governmental functions upon themselves because the governments were not concerned with their Jewish citizens.³⁰

The fact that the WJC was merely a philanthropic organization had far-reaching consequences for its ability to function in Europe. Unlike

the governments-in-exile, the WJC was unable to make radio broadcasts to Europe or, as previously discussed, to operate a diplomatic postal service; its emissaries did not enjoy diplomatic immunity or preferential means of transportation during wartime; and the organization received no funding from the Allies. The Jewish philanthropic organizations took care of their brethren in a manner similar to that of the governments-in-exile yet were not granted the economic and organizational infrastructure vital to their ability to operate in Europe.³¹

Rescue Gets Under Way

The operation to smuggle the children out of France began in Toulouse, where local women collected and transferred them close to the border. Because most of the children carried forged identity documents or had none at all, each woman was put in charge of only two children; any more could have aroused suspicion. The children were concealed in the homes of families living near the border; there they waited to be led over the mountains to Spain. Passing through the border region was particularly tricky because an area some 20 to 25 kilometers wide leading up to the border had been declared a “military zone,” within which movement was severely restricted.

In March 1944 the first two groups, each comprising six children, were led out of France. The youngest was a girl of five and the oldest a boy of fourteen. Weissman reported to the WJC’s New York office on the poor medical and emotional condition of the rescued children. Most suffered from various diseases, were underweight because of the prolonged lack of food, and were coping with emotional and psychological difficulties stemming from losing contact with their families and living in constant fear. These children’s stories included the disappearance of parents whose fate remained unknown, loss of contact with siblings, and vague memories of relatives who lived mainly in the United States and Palestine.³²

Malka Azaria, a resident of Savyon, a suburb of Tel Aviv, told in 1968 of her escape from France by means of the machinery that Weissman put in place. Azaria was born in Antwerp, Belgium, to Orthodox parents of Polish origin. The family had passed from one concentration camp to another over the four years since Belgium was overrun by the Germans in May 1940. During this period Azaria lost contact with her family, apart

from her eldest brother, six years her senior. At the age of eleven, after a prolonged period of suffering, Azaria reached a Catholic monastery, where she was found by emissaries of the WJC. She continued the tale of her escape over the Pyrenees to the Spanish border: She was part of a small group of children accompanied by professional smugglers. They wore improvised shoes and clothing that was inadequate for the cold mountain air. After an arduous journey they passed the last Spanish border post and arrived at an isolated mountain village. Here they were cared for by a peasant family, sent on to Barcelona for a short while and then to Paco d'Arcos, a holiday resort on the sea near Lisbon. All their physical needs were attended to in the children's home there, and Azaria emphasized that the staff made them feel at home. In November 1944 all the children in the group set sail for Palestine, apart from a single girl who traveled to Philadelphia in the United States.³³

The arduous task of rescuing the children did not end with crossing the border. Since they had entered Spain without the permission of the government, they had to be concealed there as well. Weissman requested the assistance of the American and British ambassadors in Lisbon in asking the Spanish government for authorization for the children to pass through the country. The request was made and authorization was granted. With the assistance of the higher echelons of the Catholic Church in Portugal, Weissman likewise asked the Portuguese government to agree to accept groups of three hundred children at a time. The agreement stipulated that after one group had left Portugal the next group could enter, and that this cycle could continue indefinitely.³⁴

After the first two groups of children had successfully made their way to Lisbon, the rescue operation became ongoing, with some ten children crossing the border each week.³⁵ On average, with fluctuations owing to the weather, some sixty children per month crossed the border between France and Spain, making a total of over seven hundred children, joined by some two hundred parents. While the WJC's operation in Spain and Portugal was intended to rescue children, its services were also extended to adults who were deemed at high risk and to parents of rescued children. In addition, 1,350 youngsters under the age of twenty were ferried from France to Switzerland between October 1943 and September 1944. The WJC's Swiss office also transferred considerable sums of money to France, which was used to conceal approximately four thousand children

in France itself. The endeavor to smuggle, rescue, and conceal children entailed extensive document-forging activity. The WJC offices in Lisbon and Geneva supervised the forging of some eight thousand documents, primarily identification cards and birth certificates. This was funded by various sources and by devious means, making it difficult to arrive at an overall figure. The WJC's Geneva office estimated the total to be in excess of 18 million French francs.³⁶

The operation in Portugal and Spain presented a severe financial challenge. WJC institutions estimated that the cost of rescuing each child was US\$350. The New York office worked extensively to raise funds among WJC members in the United States, other Jewish public bodies, and individual Jewish donors. In addition, WJC was successful at raising funds from non-Jewish organizations such as the American Quakers and the Unitarian Church.³⁷ During 1944 considerable funds were likewise received from the War Refugee Board (WRB), an agency of the Roosevelt administration set up in January 1944 to rescue and assist victims of World War II.³⁸

In the context of a world war, the raising of funds in the United States was merely the first stage of a complex process of transferring money to Portugal. WJC files for 1944 are filled with correspondence between Lisbon and New York detailing the work of European and American functionaries in tracing and transporting funds: seeking the transfer of funds; tracing monies' circuitous routes; investigating why funds had not arrived; and even trying to obtain the best exchange rates possible.³⁹

To care for the children, a home was established near the coast, some ten kilometers from Lisbon. Weissman's wife Lily, who managed its operation, related that the staff tried to evoke the atmosphere of a warm family in an attempt to assist the children's recovery from the trials of their escape and the loss of contact with their families. As part of the rehabilitation process, the children also received schooling at the home. A Jewish refugee by the name of Shlomo Lifshitz was recruited to teach them. Lifshitz was a graduate of the Jewish gymnasium in Warsaw and taught the children a wide variety of subjects. Assuming that most of the children would eventually reach Palestine, particular attention was paid to studying Hebrew.

The topic of Hebrew instruction reveals the difficulty that Weissman and his staff in Portugal faced during the war years in locating a

destination to which the children could migrate. Apart from the conviction that finding a permanent home would be in the best interest of each child, Portuguese authorities permitted only three hundred children to stay in the country at a time. It was therefore imperative to arrange for the children's migration while the war continued. Weissman and the WJC leadership believed that the preferred destination was the Jewish community in Palestine. Here, they explained, the Aliyat Ha-Noar (youth immigration) organization, founded in Berlin in 1932 to facilitate the immigration of youngsters to Palestine and to take care of their education there, provided a broad institutional infrastructure that had proved its effectiveness in absorbing children directly upon their arrival.⁴⁰ Aliyat Ha-Noar indeed played a major role in receiving the children and its head, Henrietta Szold, informed Weissman in late 1944 of the arrival of dozens of children from Portugal to Haifa aboard the ship *S.S. Guine*. In telling the story of one child whose parents had been located in Palestine, she termed the ship's arrival a "unique event."⁴¹ However, the choice of Palestine did not stem from purely bureaucratic considerations. Weissman and his associates believed that ideological objectives should also play a part in caring for the children. Were they to send the children to other destinations, they would be unable to ensure adoption by Jewish families, which was likely to lead the children to abandon their Judaism. By contrast, their absorption into Palestine would guarantee that they would remain part of the Jewish people.⁴²

The clear preference on the part of the WJC for sending the rescued children to Palestine contrasts with the JDC's opposition to Palestine as the preferred destination for migration. This disagreement was a major factor in the JDC's refusal to participate in funding the children's upkeep in Portugal or their voyage to Palestine.⁴³ As mentioned, the JDC began to cooperate with the WJC's rescue operation at a very late stage, after the two organizations and the Jewish Agency signed an agreement at the American embassy in Lisbon. The JDC's refusal to help fund WJC efforts hindered them considerably, because arranging the children's migration during wartime was exceptionally expensive. Seafaring vessels were hard to come by, and when a suitable ship could be found, the cost of transport was prohibitive. Despite these obstacles, Weissman sent hundreds of children to Palestine and dozens to the United States in 1944 and 1945. In some cases children were equipped with basic

items such clothes and bed linen to facilitate their absorption. Although Palestine remained the destination of choice, children who had relatives in America were sent there. The WJC made a point of publishing the names of the rescued children, along with as many identifying details as possible, to enable families in America to identify their relatives and to allow the WJC's New York office to attempt to locate families. If contact was established between a rescued child and relatives in the United States, the WJC took steps to reunite them, including handling all the bureaucratic and financial obstacles to migration during wartime.⁴⁴

An Untold Story

In late October 1944, prior to his departure for America to participate in the WJC's emergency war conference in Atlantic City, Weissman received a letter from Robert Dexter, the WRB's envoy in Lisbon. Dexter praised the WJC, and especially Weissman, for working to ameliorate the living conditions of the refugees in Portugal and for the rescue operation they had set up there. Toward the end of the letter he referred to the number of children who were rescued through Weissman's efforts in Lisbon, as follows:

It is not your fault that this number was not vastly greater, but the hundreds who did come through, whether under the auspices of your organization or in any other way, owe you and the World Jewish Congress a deep debt of gratitude. In view of the difficulties under which you have been laboring here, your accomplishment has been of an unusually high order.⁴⁵

Dexter's praise was not offered without a context; it should be read against the backdrop of the severe criticism leveled by WJC rank-and-file delegates toward what they saw as the organization's—particularly its leadership's—ineffectiveness in halting the Nazi killing machine. This widespread dissatisfaction was unmistakably manifested during the debates at the Atlantic City conference.

The wartime conference of the WJC convened in Atlantic City in November 1944. This was the first international Jewish gathering to take place since the outbreak of the war and was attended by delegates from twenty-six countries. They came from the United States, Palestine, South America, and the European countries that had been liberated from Nazi occupation. Even emissaries who had managed to escape from

Jewish communities in areas that were still under Nazi control attended. Fifteen hundred people gathered for the opening to hear speeches by Stephen Wise and Nahum Goldmann.⁴⁶ At the conference, WJC speakers described the overwhelming obstacles that confronted the organization in its attempts to rescue the Jews of Europe—from the restrictions the Allies placed on the transfer of food and money to Europe, to their refusal to attack the German death industry, to the cooperation of many of Europe's citizens with the Nazis. Alongside these explanations, they presented the brighter side of the picture as they related the steps taken by their organization on behalf of Europe's Jews: the dispatch of food packages, the assistance rendered to refugees, political activity designed to ease the burden of Bulgarian and Danish Jews, and the rescue of children in Portugal. Yet despite these circumstances, the atmosphere at the conference was one of failure and loss because American Jewry and the WJC had been unable to halt, or at least curb significantly, the murder of millions.⁴⁷

The WJC's rescue operation in Portugal was proudly mentioned several times during the debates.⁴⁸ Yet, as is implied in Dexter's letter and in the testimony of Samuel Roth (A Jewish refugee in Lisbon who wrote to Leon Kubowitzki, director of the WJC's rescue effort in Europe), contemporaries knew that, despite the vast financial and organizational effort in Portugal and the exceptional devotion of those involved, only relatively few children were rescued.⁴⁹ This state of affairs was evident in Wise's address at the WJC conference held in Montreux, Switzerland, in June 1948. While Wise, as president of the WJC, was undoubtedly involved in its rescue operation, he ignored it altogether in his address; instead he said, "We failed to save millions of Jews, but we helped to save, in however decimated a form, the Jewish people."⁵⁰

The difficulty of integrating the WJC's story of the rescue in Portugal with the scholarly discourse on the rescue of Jews during the Holocaust was compounded by the fact that it was totally excluded from the memoirs of activists in the other organizations that took part in the general Jewish rescue operation, especially those in the Iberian Peninsula. For example, Eliyahu Dobkin, head of the Jewish Agency's Aliya Department during World War II, wrote of the rescue activities in Spain and Portugal in his book *Aliya and Rescue During the Holocaust Years*: "By contrast, the Jewish Agency authorized immigration permits

for 700 of the 5,000 refugees who escaped to Spain and Portugal via the Pyrenees. Arrangements are currently underway for their voyage on a special ship to Palestine.⁵¹ Dobkin's terse account totally ignores the efforts of the WJC in Portugal and in fact conceals the rich narrative set out in this article. The manner in which he glosses over the actions of the WJC in Portugal is particularly puzzling given that he himself, as the Jewish Agency's representative, signed the July 1944 memorandum of understanding between the WJC and the JDC at the American embassy in Lisbon. This proves beyond doubt that he was aware of the organization's operation in Portugal. A similar picture emerges from a book by Haim Barlas, head of the Jewish Agency's Rescue Committee in Constantinople, titled *Rescue at the Time of the Holocaust*. Barlas wrote on the book's title page: "In 1943 the Jewish Agency and the Joint set up rescue centers in Lisbon, Teheran and Shanghai, and emissaries from Palestine operated there too."⁵² Further into the book he wrote:

At that time E. Dobkin was sent to Lisbon and Spain and he succeeded in arranging the aliya of Jewish refugees from France who were living in Spain, in particular the aliya of the children, and this facilitated the passage of further refugees to this country. Prior to this the refugees were regularly apprehended by the Spanish authorities, and ran the risk of being handed over to the Nazi border guards.⁵³

Like Dobkin, Barlas was aware of Weissman's actions in Portugal, as evidenced by the contact between the two men in 1943 regarding the danger of Turkish Jews living in France. Weissman and Barlas led the operation by the WJC and the Jewish Agency on behalf of these Jews, most of whom were saved. Further evidence of the contact between the two can be found in the 1944 exchange of telegrams between Lisbon and Constantinople regarding the fate of four hundred Spanish Jews who were living in Athens.⁵⁴

WJC's Twofold Commitment: Zionism and the Diaspora

As part of the attempt to shape Jewish historical memory, especially Israeli memory, rescue activists sought to glorify the work of their own organizations while playing down that of their competitors. Examination of the books written by Dobkin and Barlas reveals that they chose to

completely exclude the efforts of the WJC but to mention the activity of the JDC, emphasizing its contribution in the Iberian Peninsula. This strategy may result from the fact that the WJC was not defined as a Zionist organization (although it was not at all anti-Zionist) and that it was in effect competing with the Zionist movement. The WJC's rescue activities turned the organization from a strictly philanthropic organization to one that required political activity. But the political role and the competition with the Zionist movement contributed to its absence from historiography.⁵⁵ The JDC, on the other hand, was an entirely philanthropic organization that had no political or ideological quarrel with the Zionist movement. For this reason, mention of its contribution to the rescue operation could not constitute a propaganda or political tool that might detract from the reputation of the Zionist movement.

Despite the critical attitude toward the WJC and the tendency of nearly everyone—contemporaries, scholars, the organization's official historiographers, and activists belonging to other bodies—to ignore its rescue operation, from the perspective of more than half a century of hindsight, a different evaluation emerges. The significance of the rescue of more than a thousand children and parents who were smuggled into Portugal, and the thousands more who were concealed in France and conveyed to Switzerland by the WJC in 1943 and 1944, cannot be overstated; it sheds a different light on the organization's entire operation. In this case, the WJC's leadership and its rank-and-file activists displayed initiative and determination and altogether transcended the accepted boundaries of Jewish philanthropic activity prior to and during the early part of World War II. True, this transformation took time, but any assessment should take into account the need for an organization that operated within the international political system, but conducted largely philanthropic work, to function in an entirely different arena. To make this transformation, it had to construct a system that could work with espionage organizations, smugglers, underground groups, and various governmental agencies. Notwithstanding the vital role that Weissman played in setting up and running the rescue operation in Portugal, credit must go to Riegner, director of the WJC's Geneva office, for selecting Weissman for the position. Riegner realized that it was essential to match the WJC's team of activists to the dramatic changes occurring for European Jewry. The documents demonstrate that Weissman could not

have operated as he did without the organizational, financial, political, and moral support of the WJC.

The wartime papers of the WJC provide valuable information on the organization's activity related to the Holocaust, but their importance exceeds the mere presentation of facts. The great majority of the founders of the WJC considered themselves to be Zionists, with some holding senior positions in the Zionist movement. They saw no contradiction between their Zionist leanings and activity within the WJC. They fought diligently for the establishment of a Jewish state, while at the same time striving to empower the ethnic identity of Diaspora Jews. The organization's founders were well aware of the existence of Jewish philanthropic organizations devoted to the Jews of the Diaspora. Yet the founders of the WJC and its activists during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s believed that since these organizations operated as philanthropies, they were unable to confront the Jews' existential crisis that began in the 1930s. Thus, in contrast to other organizations, from its inception in 1936 to the outbreak of World War II, the WJC involved itself in world and European politics worldwide, at the League of Nations, and with representatives of European governments as it attempted to ameliorate the condition of European Jewry and to create solutions for long-term migration.

The politicization of the WJC activities would be developed to an unusual and singular Jewish ethnic mix that offers an alternative to the conventional patterns of Jewish existence in the modern era. While the leaders of the WJC supported the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, they did not regard it as their foremost objective. They saw themselves as representatives of the Jewish world on the eve of World War II, during the course of the war, and thereafter. And as such they labored for the establishment of a Jewish state and for the revival of Jewish life in the Diaspora as twin goals that complemented rather than contradicted each other.

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Notes

¹The author wishes to acknowledge with gratitude Professor Gary P. Zola, executive director of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati, Ohio (hereafter AJA), and the entire staff of the AJA for their help in this research. For a general account of the WJC see A. Leon Kubowitzki, *Unity In Dispersion: A History of the World Jewish Congress* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 1948); Isaac I. Schwarzbart, *25 Years In the Service of the Jewish People: A Chronicle of Activities of the World Jewish Congress August 1932–February 1957* (New York: World Jewish Congress, 1957). For an example of the voluminous works on Wise, see Melvin I. Urofsky, *A Voice That Spoke for Justice: The Life and Times of Stephen S. Wise* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982).

²Announcement of the Directorate of the World Jewish Congress in New York, 1 August 1940, MS-361, Box A-5, Folder 2, AJA.

³For a prominent example of these, see David S. Wyman and Rafael Medoff, *A Race Against Death: Peter Bergson, America, and the Holocaust* (New York: New Press, 2002), 29–30, 230–231.

⁴See, for example, David S. Wyman, *The Abandonment of the Jews: America and the Holocaust, 1941–1945* (New York: New Press, 1984); Rafael Medoff, *The Deafening Silence* (New York: Shapolsky Publishers, 1987). For an extensive list of like-minded studies, see Gulie Ne’eman Arad, “Cooptation of Elites: American Jewish Reactions to the Nazi Menace, 1933,” *Yad Vashem Studies* 25 (1996): 32–33.

⁵For more information about the WJC activities in Geneva and the significance of the Committee for the Relief of the War-Stricken Jewish Population (RELICO) that was financed and operated by the WJC see, Raya Cohen, *Between “Here” and “There”: The Story of Witnesses to Destruction: Jewish Emissaries in Switzerland: 1939–1942* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1999), 127–167 (Hebrew).

⁶See, for example, memorandum of the World Jewish Congress submitted to the War Refugee Board, 3 March 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 2, AJA.

⁷Secret minutes of a meeting of Congress operatives in Europe, 6 December 1939 (no location specified), MS-361, Box A-7, Folder 1, AJA. See also the minutes of a meeting in Geneva of WJC functionaries based in Europe, 9 December 1939, MS-361, Box A-7, Folder 2, AJA; the correspondence between Wise and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles regarding visas, 11 and 19 November 1941, MS-361, Box D-16, Folder 6, AJA. For more on activity in Washington, see activity report, 22 June 1942, MS-361, Box D-16, Folder 7, AJA. WJC envoys continued to operate in Washington during 1943. See the following report, 25 October 1943, MS-361, Box D-10, Folder 9, AJA.

⁸The most well-known evidence of this is the 28 August 1942 telegram dispatched by Gerhart M. Riegner, director of the Congress’s Geneva bureau, to Stephen Wise in New York. While Riegner’s telegram is widely cited, it is but one example of evidence obtained through an elaborate information-gathering network that the WJC operated in neutral European countries. See, for example, report from the Congress office in Geneva titled, “The Situation of the Jews in the General Government,” 8 October 1942, MS-361, Box H-287, Folder 12, AJA.

⁹See minutes of a top-secret meeting in Geneva of Congress activists in Europe, 6 December 1939, MS-361, Box A-1, Folder 7, AJA.

¹⁰Weissman's letter to the Congress's New York headquarters, 20 August 1943, MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 7, AJA.

¹¹Avraham Milgram, "Portugal, the Consuls, and the Jewish Refugees," *Yad Vashem Collected Studies* 27 (1988): 95–122 (Hebrew). On the ties between Nazi Germany and Portugal, see Antonio Luca and Ansagar Shefer, "The Lisbon Connection Regarding the Sales of Gold Plundered by the Nazis," *Yad Vashem Collected Studies* 27 (1988): 81–94 (Hebrew).

¹²On the importance and power of the JDC in Spain and Portugal and the difficulties presented by its aloofness toward WJC efforts in these areas, see Haim Avni, *Spain, the Jews, and Franco* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1982), 188–196. On Amzelak's ties to Portugal's ruler and his refusal to cooperate with the WJC's operation in Portugal, see Weissman's letter to the members of the WJC's executive committee, 19 February 1945, MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 3, AJA.

¹³Henrietta (Mrs. Robert) Szold to Tartakower, 12 June 1941, MS-361, Box H-287, Folder 8, AJA. Szold, president of Hadassah's American Affairs Committee, wrote the letter on behalf of Hadassah president Tamar De Sola Pool.

¹⁴See the following correspondence between Weissman and the JDC's representatives in Portugal and Spain: Weissman's letter to the JDC delegation in Lisbon, 19 May 1944; JDC representative's reply refusing Weissman's request for support, 21 May 1944; further reply from Weissman noting the JDC's refusal to participate in the endeavor from the outset, 22 May 1944, all found in MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. See also telegram from Weissman to Wise informing him that the JDC had refused to join the effort in Portugal and France, 24 May 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA; report by a Jewish refugee on the JDC in Portugal and Spain, 23 August 1943, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 1, AJA.

¹⁵On the JDC leadership's view that Weissman's efforts in Portugal were not contributing to the rescue from France of Jews in general and children in particular, see a letter from JDC Vice President Joseph C. Hyman to Wise, 7 July 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.

¹⁶For a copy of the agreement, see 13 July 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.

¹⁷Letter from JDC Vice President Joseph Hyman to Wise, 7 July 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA; and New York Section 1933/44 File 897, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Archives, New York (hereafter "JDC Archives"). Hyman's perspective was not unique among JDC leaders and activists in Portugal. See cable exchanges between the JDC offices in Portugal and New York, 6 July 1944, Section 1933/44, File 897, JDC Archives; memorandum from JDC office in Lisbon to the JDC office in New York, 22 August 1944, Section 1933/44 File 897, JDC Archives. The American ambassador in Lisbon wrote to Washington about the struggle between the JDC and the WJC in Lisbon. See the ambassador's letter, 10 May 1944, WRB (War Refugee Board) Documents, Dr. Chaim Pazner Papers, Section P.12, File 105, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem.

¹⁸Weissman and the American embassy had a very good collaboration, which was reinforced after the establishment of the WRB. The WRB was an agency set up in January 1944 on the instructions of President Roosevelt to rescue and assist victims of World War II. The Jewish Agency was represented by Eliyahu Dobkin, head of its Aliya Department. The JDC delegate was Robert Pilpel. Weissman represented the WJC. James H. Mann and Robert C. Dexter, members of the American Rescue Committee, participated as observers.

¹⁹Opinion piece in the *Congress Weekly* by M. Boraisha, 29 December 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 3, AJA.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹On the process of regulating the status of the Jewish refugees in Portugal, see a summary of WJC activity, no date specified, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA; Weissman's report on WJC activity in Lisbon, 15 September 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA. On the outlook of Portuguese officials regarding the Jewish refugees' communist tendencies and Weissman's proposal for a solution, see Weissman's memoirs, Isaac Weissman, *Facing the Colossi of Evil* (Tel Aviv: Yvne, 1968), 56–70 (Hebrew). On the status of the Jewish refugees in Spain, the ongoing international diplomatic effort on their behalf, and the JDC's activity in Spain, see Avni, *Spain*, 94–127. The Spanish ambassador to Portugal visited Weissman in early 1943. See the secret minutes of this meeting, 8 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. For criticism of the nature of the JDC's activity in Spain, see Weissman's report to Goldmann and Tartakower, 28 July 1943, MS-361, Box H-285, Folder 6, AJA.

²²Weissman, *Colossi of Evil*, 45–48.

²³On the WJC's attempts to set up an official channel to transfer food to European Jews, see the organization's report to the Committee for War Refugees, 3 March 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 2, AJA.

²⁴For information about the Jews in France during the Holocaust and about the Jewish resistance see, Renée Poznanski, *To Be a Jew in France, 1939–1945* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000).

²⁵Lecture by Weissman, 19 January 1945, MS-361, Box D-71, Folder 2, AJA. On Jewish children in churches in Belgium, see a secret report, 18 September 1943, MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 6, AJA. On the hunt for Jewish children in France and a request for a radio broadcast, see Weissman's telegram to the WJC's New York office, 20 December 1943, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 1, AJA. For additional information on the number of Jews in hiding in France and Belgium, see an internal WJC document, 4 February 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA.

²⁶See the secret summary of Weissman's reports to New York, 4 January 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 1, AJA.

²⁷Weissman's speech, 10 January 1945 (no location specified), MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 3, AJA.

²⁸Weissman's report in the *Congress Weekly*, 29 December 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 3, AJA.

²⁹See the letter from Samuel Roth, a refugee in Portugal, to Leon Kubowitzki, who directed the WJC's rescue effort in Europe, 12 June 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.

³⁰Weissman's letter to Tartakower, 2 February 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA.

³¹Weissman's letter to Tartakower and Goldmann, 8 February 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA.

³²For biographical details of the children, see a letter from Lisbon to New York, 7 September 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.

³³The testimony of Malka Azaria delivered to Gershon Elimor (Wilkowski), in Weissman, *Colossi of Evil*, appendix, 158–161. For two more testimonies that tell the same story, see Section 0.3, File 7623; Section 0.92, File 19210, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem.

³⁴Telegram from Weissman to Wise, 7 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. On the condition of the children, see Weissman's telegram to New York, 9 May 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA.

³⁵See, for example, a report from Lisbon regarding the ongoing arrival of groups of children; Weissman's secret telegram from Lisbon, 10 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA. Similar information is in a telegram from Weissman to Wise, 22 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-293, Folder 3, AJA.

³⁶The total number of children is based on the following sources: telegram from Riegner to Wise sent through the American consulate in Bern, 10 May 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA; summary of the WJC's rescue operation, 11 November 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 2, p. 43, AJA. For a very positive assessment of the WJC activity in Portugal, see secret letter from the American ambassador in Lisbon to the U.S. State Department, 2 September 1944, 13 May 1944; letter to the secretary of state, 5 May 1944, Section P.12, File 105, Yad Vashem Archives, Jerusalem.

³⁷For details, see Weissman's letter to Lady Reading, widow of Rufus Isaacs, first marquess of Reading, 31 March 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA.

³⁸On the WRB's involvement in the rescue operation, see, for example, a secret telegram from the WJC Lisbon office to New York, 19 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA; telegram from Weissman to Wise, 22 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA; report by Weissman, 15 September 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.

³⁹Weissman's letter to Kubowitzki, 24 May 1944, thanking him for the transfer of \$10,000, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA; telegram from Kubowitzki and Tartakower to Weissman expressing concern that he had not confirmed receipt of \$23,000 transferred to Lisbon from New York and stating that they were willing to send additional funds if needed, 30 June 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. For a recommendation to transfer the money directly to Portugal rather than to Spain owing to the better exchange rate, see Weissman's telegram to New York, 7 March 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA. On the estimate that the cost of rescuing a child was \$350, see memorandum to the WJC's executive committee, 19 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA. On fundraising for the rescue of children, see letter, 10 July 1944, MS-361, Box D-71, Folder 2, AJA.

⁴⁰Weissman's letter to Wise, 22 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA.

⁴¹Henrietta Szold's letter to Weissman, 1 December 1944, MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 3, AJA.

⁴²Weissman's letter to Wise, 22 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA.

⁴³Telegram to Wise, 6 May 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. On the JDC's anti-Zionist policy in the Portuguese context, see Weissman's letter to Tartakower, 19 January 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 2, AJA.

⁴⁴Telegram from Weissman to Wise, including the names of children who arrived at the beginning of May, 9 May 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA. See also a letter from Weissman to Mrs. Spector of Philadelphia regarding her young sister who was on her way to the United States. Weissman added that, to his regret, he had no information about the parents and asked Spector to inform him of her sister's arrival in America, 19 June 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA. For a report on the voyage of the Portuguese ship Nyassa to Haifa with 750 Jewish refugees on board see Weissman's letter to Kubowitzki, 25

- January 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 8, AJA. On the cooperation between the WJC and the Jewish Agency in the context of the voyage, see Weissman's letter to Tartakower, 7 January 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 8, AJA. The British embassy in Spain provided valuable assistance in arranging the voyage. See letter from Weissman's office to the British ambassador in Madrid, 16 January 1944, MS-361, Box H-294, Folder 5, AJA. On the voyage of an additional ship carrying five hundred refugees from Portugal and Spain, including ninety children, see Weissman's telegram to Kubowitzki, 24 October 1944, MS-361, Box H-295, Folder 9, AJA. Regarding the transfer of equipment, see Weissman's telegram to the WJC executive in New York, 19 September 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.
- ⁴⁵Robert Dexter's letter to Weissman, 24 October 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.
- ⁴⁶See the press statement on the conference, November 1944 (no precise date given), MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 4, AJA.
- ⁴⁷See the summary of the Atlantic City debates, 26–30 November 1944, MS-361, Box A-67, Folder 5, AJA. For harsh criticism of the Allies' failure to attack the German death industry, see the summary of the WJC's rescue operation submitted to the Atlantic City conference, 26 November 1944, MS-361, Box A-68, Folder 2, AJA.
- ⁴⁸See, for example, a copy of Weissman's report to the conference in Weissman, *Colossi of Evil*, 127–130; and a summary of the rescue operation, 26 November, *ibid.*
- ⁴⁹Samuel Roth's letter to Kubowitzki, 12 June 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 4, AJA.
- ⁵⁰Wise's speech, 27 June 1948, MS-361, Box A-5, Folder 9, AJA.
- ⁵¹Eliyahu Dobkin, *Aliya and Rescue During the Holocaust Years* (Jerusalem, 1946), 53 (Hebrew).
- ⁵²Haim Barlas, *Rescue During the Holocaust* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 1975), 9 (Hebrew).
- ⁵³*Ibid.*, 104–105.
- ⁵⁴For a detailed account of contact between Weissman and Barlas about Turkish Jews, see Weissman, *Colossi of Evil*, 105–107; telegram from Barlas to Weissman about Spanish Jews living in Athens, 5 April 1944, MS-361, Box H-296, Folder 3, AJA.
- ⁵⁵For a detailed account see Zohar Segev, "Nahum Goldmann and the First Two Decades of the World Jewish Congress," in *Nahum Goldmann: Statesman Without a State*, ed. Mark A. Raider (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2009), 107–124.