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The Perception and Reporting of the Holocaust by American
Reform Jewry in the Decade 1942 - 1952

David C. Levy

Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for Ordination
Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute
of Religion
1988

Referee, Prof. Jacob R. Marcus

Dedicated

To my Parents for their love and guidance throughout my life. I owe them more than words can express.

And

To Julie, for her love, her help, her typing, and the future.

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Digest

This study was prompted by the large number of studies in recent years of the knowledge of and reactions to the Holocaust by American Jewish leaders. Taken together, these studies examined a large number of American Jewish leaders. Where they were lacking was in the area of the American Jewish laity. None of these studies contained an in-depth examination of the knowledge of and reactions to the Holocaust by the Jewish laypeople of the United States. This study is an partial attempt to remedy that situation as its focus was one portion of that laity.

The portion chosen was that of American Reform Jewry. In order to construct a model of their knowledge and reactions, Holocaust reports by or aimed at American Reform Jews were examined. Two sources for those reports were used: 1) The temple bulletins of a group of American Reform Jewish congregations selected so as to give the widest possible size and geographic distribution, and 2) The Union of American Hebrew Congregation's magazine for their laymembership.

Conclusions of this study showed that while knowledge of Jewish persecution by the Nazis was widespread among American Reform Jews from the very beginning of the period in question, evidence of knowledge that could be classified as "Holocaust knowledge" did not appear with any frequency or distribution until late 1944 - early 1945. Also found

a wide range of reactions to the Holocaust, both emotional and "tangible". Emotional reactions found included disbelief, and despair; while the tangible (or active) reactions found included prayer, support of the war effort, support of and participation in relief efforts, political declarations, and attempts to preserve the artifacts of destroyed European Jewish Communities.

This study concludes with a series of suggestions for further avenues for study and investigation.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The inspiration for this study came in response to the numerous studies of the knowledge of and reaction to the Holocaust by the American Jewish leadership. Yehuda Bauer, David Wyman, Henry Feingold, and others, have studied the American Jewish leadership of this period and even have leveled a number of criticisms against these people. None of these studies, however, have taken an in depth look at the knowledge of and reactions to the Holocaust of the American Jewish laity.

This study attempts to fill a portion of that void by studying the knowledge and reactions of one section of that laity, the American Reform Jew.

The year 1942 was chosen as a starting point for this study for a number of reasons. First, the Wannsee conference, which finalized the plan for a systematic and scientific extermination of the Jews of Europe was held in January of 1942. This meant that by 1942, the Nazi destruction of European Jewry was well under way. Secondly, with the entrance of the United States into World War II at the end of 1941, the events in Europe took on even greater importance to the American Jew and gave him a method of action, support of the war effort. Finally, by 1942, reports of Jewish persecution by the Nazis was widespread and appeared in numerous Reform Jewish publications.

and appeared in numerous Reform Jewish publications.

The year 1952 was chosen as the concluding year of this study for more than one reason. By 1952, the War crimes trials had ended and the public information released from those trials had been disseminated. Also, by this year, European Jewish Displaced Persons were no longer a concern, the camps having been closed and the many Jewish DP's having immigrated to the new Jewish state of Israel. Furthermore, the majority of relief campaigns on their behalf were closed by 1951. Finally, by 1952, the amount of reporting in the publications studied had become negligible.'

Methodology

In order to build a picture of the American Reform Jew's knowledge of, and reactions to the Holocaust during the period in question, it was decided that a study of their Holocaust related reporting during the period would be most fruitful. A survey, conducted as a part of this study, of American Reform Jews who were adults during this period showed that data collected from such people pertaining to the focus of this study was too unreliable for use in the study. As such, only reports published during the period in question were used.

The sources of these reports were two fold. One source was the bulletins published by American Reform Jewish congregations during this period. The bulletins examined

were chosen so as to represent as wide a representation as possible in both size and geography.

The second source was the magazines published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC) for the American Reform laity. By the end of 1943, this publication was distributed not only to the lay leaders of Reform Jewish congregations, but also to the rest of the membership. Thus the reports in these magazines impacted upon the whole range of American Reform Jews.

The last and most difficult task that needed to be handled for this study, from the standpoint of methodology, was the determination of the point at which a report was relaying to the reader knowledge of the Holocaust as opposed to knowledge of Jewish persecution of a lesser magnitude. The solution to this problem is presented at the beginning of the following chapter on reporting of the Holocaust in the publications examined.

Chapter II: Reporting of the Holocaust

The Earliest Reports

As mentioned previously, the most difficult task of this study from a methodological standpoint is that of determining the point at which American Reform Jews began to recognize the magnitude of what was happening to their European brethren. In order to determine this, it was necessary to define what types of statements within a given article or report could be taken as evidence that the writer and his/her audience were gaining an understanding of the nature of the Nazi's actions against European Jewry.

Two levels of reporting were chosen in order to determine the perceptions of American Reform Jews of what was occurring in Europe. The first level includes any passage which makes reference to Jewish suffering or oppression in Europe. Reporting of this nature points to an understanding of the singling out of the Jews for unique persecution by the Nazis. It does not, however, point to an understanding of the unprecedented nature of that persecution or of the magnitude it was to take. That is the domain of the second level.

The second level of reporting includes those passages which make mention of Nazi plans to "destroy", "exterminate", or "annihilate" European Jewry or Jewry as a whole. Similarly, passages which make mention of European Jewish

deaths at the hands of the Nazis as numbering in the millions are also considered. Passages of this type must, furthermore, suggest some understanding on the part of the writers and their audience of the unprecedented magnitude and nature of this devastation of European Jewry. The passage itself and those which closely follow it, must show some idea of the systematic nature and unprecedented realization of the Nazi extermination program.

Level One Reports

Examples of the first level of reporting are found in materials dating to the very beginning of the period being investigated. As would be expected, the frequency in appearance and number of such reports in the materials being investigated increases as they come closer in time to the end of the World War and the reports in its aftermath which confirmed the nature and magnitude of the Holocaust to the world in general.

Two of the most interesting early level one reports are found in publications dated January of 1942, the very beginning of the period being studied. They are especially intriguing in that both could also qualify as level two reports.

The first of these reports is found in the January, 1942 issue of the U.A.H.C. magazine The Synagogue (a membership publication). In an article by Rabbi Abraham

Feinberg of Denver, the oppression of Jews is presented as a central facet of the Nazi's war in Europe. His article goes farther than that though in the inclusion of the following statement: "Eight Years have passed since Hitlerism began *systematically to degrade and destroy Israel.*" In a separate "news" section entitled "The Jewish Scene" that followed Rabbi Feinberg's article the following statement is also found: "As the year 1941 dissolved into 1942, mounting terror swept over European Jewry, whom the Nazis are pressing closer and closer to the announced goal of annihilation". This statement is followed by a number of reports of massacres and deportations of Jews in various parts of eastern Europe and a conclusion that takes note of a then recent boast by Goebbels that Hitler's prediction of the elimination of European Jewry during the war was being fulfilled.

The other similarly intriguing report is found in the January 2, 1942 bulletin of Temple Bnai Abraham Zion of Chicago. Contained in this issue of the Temple's bulletin is a Jewish Welfare Fund appeal asking for contributions to help the suffering European Jews. It goes the one step further by noting that these people suffer under a tyrant "who would destroy not only the Jews of Europe, but also the Jews of America".

While these two examples certainly qualify as proof of some modicum of knowledge of the suffering of European Jewry

early in the period being studied, that they truly represent reporting of the second level outlined is not so certain.

While both make mention of Hitler's desire to annihilate or destroy European Jewry, it is doubtful whether the writers understood this to be a threat of the magnitude it became. Given the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust, it is improbable that they could have conceived of a death toll reaching into the millions.

There is an even stronger objection to classifying these passages within the second level. It is most probable that the writers of these passages envisioned any Nazi plans for mass murder of European Jewry in the "conventional terms" of the pogroms of previous history. It is inconceivable that they could have had any idea of the programmed plans and the "scientific" murder machinery that the Nazis were to construct and that have become a defining aspect of the Holocaust. It is inconceivable not only because of the unprecedented nature of these ideas, but, more importantly, because of when the passages were written.

The Wannsee conference, at which the Nazis decided upon their course of Jewish annihilation and the methods that were to be used in carrying it out, took place in January of 1942. The aforementioned articles all appeared in issues dated January, 1942 in the case of The Synagogue and January 2, 1942 in the case of the temple bulletin. Thus the articles would have been written prior to the time of the

Wannsee conference and its decisions.

Finally, an examination of the reports that follow these articles in their respective publications shows them to precede the next identifiably level two reports by over a year. Thus they both fail to satisfy one more of the criteria for level two identification. With all of this in mind, the articles can be solidly identified as within level one and not level two.

With a few exceptions, such as those given above, the vast majority of temple bulletins studied presented level one reports of Nazi persecution of Jews at a much later date. Most of these bulletins gave their first level one report during the period between December 1942 and March 1943, while a few others did not produce such reporting until the end of 1943.

Temple Israel of Miami, Florida produced its first such report in December of 1942. Following a quote by the well known protestant minister John Haynes Holmes on Christianity's historical promotion of anti-semitism, the bulletin remarks that with "Jews suffering as even they have never suffered before..." the time had come for the world to face up to this situation and bring about a change in it. Throughout the period being studied, many bulletins, along with the Union's publications, would make use of the writings of non-Jews to report on the Holocaust.

Other congregations such as Central Synagogue in New

York City also gave their first level one reports around the beginning of 1942; they did, however, use a very different method of presentation. The January 1943 bulletin from Central Synagogue contains the first of many United Jewish Appeal fund appeals which call for contributions to help save the "victims of Nazi cruelty". This method, of reporting on the events in Europe through the vehicle of fund raising appeals, was among the methods most commonly found in the bulletins researched for this study.

Only slightly less common was the use of upcoming Jewish holidays to illuminate the plight of European Jewry. Dallas, Texas, Temple Emanu El's bulletin presented its first level one report in this manner. The March 1943 bulletin contains a Purim message in which Hitler was equated with Haman and promised a similar fate. The message goes on to say that Mordechai's warning in Esther 4:13¹ should serve as a warning to American Jewry to speak out on behalf of European Jewry and act to save those not among the two million already murdered.²

This method of using Jewish holidays was also employed

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1. Esther 4:13 quotes Mordechai as saying: "Do not imagine that you of all the Jews, will escape with your life by being in the king's palace."
 2. While the magnitude of the number of dead given in this report (2 million) might provoke consideration of this as a level two report, the reports on European Jewry in later Emanu El bulletins showed an absence of any understanding of the systematic nature of these events or any conception that volume of dead was reaching unprecedented numbers.

by congregations such as Kenneseth Israel of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania whose first reports are found towards the end of 1943. Channukah was the vehicle with which they chose to report on the persecution of their fellow Jews and express their hope that this tyranny, like that of ages past, would soon be eliminated.³ While this report spoke of European Jews as being under "tyranny", it wasn't until the Rabbi's message in the December 31, 1943 issue of that bulletin that that tyranny was defined as Jews being "tortured, exiled, and slaughtered...".

Finally, one more technique in which a level one report was first presented was found in the November 17, 1943, bulletin of Congregation K.A.M. of Chicago, Illinois. Here, in a message from the Rabbi, the "plight of the tortured Jews of Europe" is presented as central to the Zionist/Anti-Zionist controversy. The use of reports on the status of European Jewry as a "lead-in" to Zionist or Anti-Zionist messages was found to be very prevalent in this study.

Level Two Reports

By the end of 1943 every source examined for this study had at least one report that could be fit into the level one category. In summation, it can be safely stated that persecution of the Jews by the Nazis was widely reported in

³. Kenneseth Israel, Philadelphia, PA bulletin December 3, 1943

the American Reform Jewish world during the war. The same cannot be said for level two type reports. Of the temple bulletins studied, only two contained such reports prior to 1945. By that time the allies had begun liberating concentration camps, such as Maidanek and Dachau, and opening them up to allied reporters whose reports back home began to make the Nazi atrocities common knowledge.

The first of these was found in the January 8, 1943 issue of the Temple Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin (Chicago, IL). It contained a reprint of an editorial first published in The Nation. The editorial was entitled "Murder of a People" and shows the Nazi program of Jewish mass murder to be a planned effort. It goes on to report that the Nazis are using "scientific" methods in the "mass execution of a people". Gassing, electrocution, and lethal injections are the "scientific" methods given as examples along with the more conventional methods of firing squads and starvation. The editorial sadly concludes that all that can be done for the imperiled European Jewry is for the allied forces to win the war as fast as possible and save those Jews who survive until then. This conclusion, that the only thing that could be done to save those Jews suffering under Nazi persecution was to work for a speedy allied defeat of the axis forces, was a widely promoted idea in the literature examined for this study.

The other pre-1945 level two report was found in the

September 27, 1944 bulletin from K.A.M. of Chicago, IL. The Rabbi's message in this issue contains the bulletins first acknowledgement of the annihilation of European Jewry. The Rabbi states that "the blunt and tragic fact is that while Hitler has lost the war against the allies, he has won the war against the Jews". The Rabbi next gives the figure of four million of the eight million European Jews outside of Russia had been killed thus far. In reference to this figure he states that a kill-ratio of 50% would be considered a victory by almost any military commander. After relating the fact that Hitler had also succeeded in spreading the seeds of anti-semitism throughout Europe, the Rabbi also notes that Hitler can take "macabre delight" in the accomplishment of one of his goals even in defeat - the destruction of European Jewry.

As stated, none of the other temple bulletins in this study contained level two reports during the period 1942-1945. It wasn't until close to or after the end of the war in Europe in May of 1945 that the bulk of these bulletins gave reports in the form of articles, editorials, or statistics that indicated an understanding of the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust. There were even congregations such as Temple Emanuel of Greensboro, NC whose bulletins contained no *outright* mention of Nazi persecution specifically aimed at Europe's Jews.

This absence of early level two reports in the Temple

bulletins is very intriguing in light of what was found in the U.A.H.C.'s magazines. An examination of these publications showed such information to have been readily available to the producers of those bulletins. As early as the end of 1942 the Union's magazine gave inklings of such information and it produced its first fully identifiable level two report in its July, 1943 issue. It must be noted before going any further that the use terms such as "extermination" and "annihilation" with reference to European Jewry in articles appearing in the Union's magazine was quite common from the very beginning of the period in question. So too were there references to a Nazi or Hitlerean *plan of extermination* in articles dating back to January of 1942. However, it is apparent from context, time of appearance, and conclusions drawn by the writers that these satisfy the criterion for level two reports.

As intimated above, there was a certain amount of development in the Union's publication which lead up to its presentation of an unqualified level two report. This is in contrast to the temple bulletins wherein there was no sense of development; there were no reports that served as a bridge between the level one and level two reports in these bulletins.

In the Union's magazine there were such "bridges" and they began appearing in the later part of 1942. In the November 1942 issue of The Synagogue there appeared article

entitled "Jewish Losses Exceed Others". This article told of a stepped up Jewish extermination campaign by the Nazis as the war effort deteriorated. It gave a figure of 1.4 million Jewish dead thus far and made mention of the killing of 60,000 Vilna Jews in a two week period and the deportation of 14,000 others to camps in Poland. But by far the most interesting portion of this report, and the most relevant to this section of the study, was the mention of gassings. Reference was made to the report of the gassing of 600 Amsterdam Jews in extermination experiments conducted in Austria. This is the first mention made of a "scientific" killing in the U.A.H.C. magazine. Along with the high figures given for Jewish dead, it served as the first intimation of an extraordinary aspect to the Jewish persecutions of World War II Europe.

Another example of such intimations can be found in the December issue of that same year. In the "Jewish Scene" section (a monthly Jewish news column) there is a report on the Warsaw ghetto. It states that only 100,000 Jews are left in the Warsaw ghetto following massive deportations to eastern destinations that are not definitively identified. The makes mention of Adam Cherniakov, the Jewish council president, having committed suicide rather than help to carry out the deportations and follows this with a couple of hypotheses as to the reasons for these deportations. One of those given was that the deportations serve as a part of a

Nazi plan for Jewish annihilation.

The conclusion that the deportations of European Jews to the east serve as an integral part of a Planned Nazi extermination of Jews is further supported by a "Jewish Scene" report that appeared only four months after the above one. This report spoke of deportations of Jews from France. The report explains that most of those being deported are being sent to their destruction in the east, while the rest are being sent to perform forced labor after which they too will be destroyed.

From the end of 1942 on there appeared a number of "bridging" reports along the lines of the examples given above. All of these culminated in the promulgation of the first definitive level two report which appeared in the July 1943 issue of the Union's Magazine, now being published in a mass distribution journal format under the title Liberal Judaism. This level two report appeared in the guise of an article by Thomas Mann entitled "Germans, What of Tomorrow". Ostensibly aimed at the German people, this article asks them why they should react with surprise at reports of the development of "de-nazification" programs by the allied nations for the German youths poisoned by National Socialism. It then confronts them with the "atrocities" of the acts that they have committed against European Jewry. It does this by outlining the Nazi program for total extermination of the Jews. In doing this mention is made of the

Ghettos, the shootings, the round-ups which culminate in executions, and, most importantly, the mass executions by gassing. Very clearly does Mann present the Nazi program as one in which the annihilation of Jews in its grasp is integral.

A photograph presented in the same issue serves as an interesting corollary to this article. its caption identifies it as a shot of the interior of the barracks of a concentration camp somewhere in Nazi Germany. The picture is of a shelter that to modern eyes is unrealistically sanitary containing unrealistically healthy looking inhabitants (it is obviously a version of the real thing that has been "cleaned up" by the Germans for public consumption). Yet, the photograph does present what is little more than an overcrowded shack that must have seemed atrocious to the magazine's readers who might very well have viewed it as but a harsh holding area for Jewish inmates awaiting the inevitable, their death.

Regardless of their reactions to this photograph, the above mentioned article by the famed non-Jewish German anti-fascist, along with the reports that immediately preceded and followed it, gave the readers of the Union's magazine a rather solid idea of the great magnitude and unprecedented nature of the Holocaust as it was occurring in Europe.

This being the situation, why is there such a disparity

between the level two reporting in the magazine and that evidenced in the temple bulletins examined in this study? During the period when it was known as The Synagogue, the magazine was distributed among both the Rabbis and the most active members of their congregations (including, it would seem, the editors of the temple bulletins); as Liberal Judaism it came to be distributed to an even wider portion of, and eventually all, Reform Jewish congregants. Thus the information was there, it just was not being reflected in the publishing efforts of the congregations.

One explanation that might be offered is that the congregations did not feel that the bulletin was the place for the dissemination of news other than congregational news. Upon examination, however, this hypothesis fails to hold up. Even the bulletin from Temple Emanuel of Greensboro, NC, which was very universal and obscure in its references to persecutions in Europe and made no outright mention of their Jewish nature, did not shy from the reporting of outside news events of congregational interest. The same can be stated even more strongly in reference to the rest of the temple bulletins studied.

A more suitable explanation would be that of ideology. Such leanings as universalism/particularism or Zionist/anti-Zionist showed themselves in the course of this study to have had an effect on the way the events of the Holocaust were reported by the various bulletins.

Other variables that were found to affect the course of Holocaust reporting in the temple bulletins included: belief in reports from Europe, understanding of those reports, the frequency of use of outside sources, how such reporting was viewed in relation to the war effort and American patriotism, how the events in Europe might relate to anti-semitism in the United States, and whether it was felt that there were any types of action available to the congregants that would enable them to help ameliorate the situation of their brethren in Europe. These and a number of other variables had an effect on the form and number of reports on the Holocaust in the various bulletins and will be fully detailed and explicated in the following chapter on the perceptions of the Holocaust by American Reform Jewry. One more aspect needs examination in this chapter however.

Reporting in the Aftermath of Level Two Revelations

A question arises as to the nature and frequency of reports on the Holocaust following level two revelations. In every case studied, there was a vast increase in the frequency of Holocaust reporting following reports which indicated the unique nature of the event.

Most of this increase in reporting manifested itself in the form of appeals for funds and needed survival and religious supplies from organizations such as the United Jewish Appeal, the S.O.S. effort of the National Federation

of Temple Sisterhoods, and collections by the Joint Distribution Committee. While these appeals were obviously a result of the concern which the level two reports brought about in their readers, their appearance and frequency can also in great part be attributed to the late promulgation of level two type reports in the vast majority of bulletins that were a part of this study. Most of these reports did not appear until the very last months of the war, the same time period in which appeals such as those above began their forceful push for funds and materials to save the surviving remnant of European Jewry. A more in depth investigation of reports in the form of these appeals can be found in chapter four.

While they also contained a large volume of appeals, the three publications which were mentioned previously as having contained level two reports earlier than the rest also contained a wider variety of reporting in the aftermath of the level two type revelations.

In addition to appeals for contributions, the bulletin of Congregation K.A.M. of Chicago also contained Holocaust-related news reports and editorial pieces. Included among these is the reprint of a letter from a Jewish soldier outlining the Jewish suffering and devastation that he has witnessed as a member of the Allied invasion forces in Europe. He relates that he has "talked with people who have come back from the dead and still cannot believe that they

are among the living...". He continues by telling of the various horrors which the survivors have related to him including a story of forty Jewish children being locked in a freight and then just left their on a siding to die. In his conclusion the soldier explains that with the letter he has enclosed a yellow Star of David to be saved as a constant reminder of the Jewish suffering that took place in the Holocaust.⁴

The K.A.M. bulletin also includes excerpts from related sermons by the Rabbi, reports on the infiltration of Nazi ideas into North America⁵, warnings against making contributions to certain "shady" relief organizations⁶, and a translation of an article that appeared in Der Toq which details the utter destruction of European Jewry and, while defiantly proclaiming that the Jewish people shall survive, calls for "...blood to atone for the blood of innocents: vengeance for Israel".⁷

In the aftermath of its first level two report, Congregation Bnai Abraham Zion of Chicago includes appeals and news and editorial pieces such as those mentioned above. It also includes reports and declarations on the situation in Europe whose origins are with political and

⁴. K.A.M. Bulletin October 25, 1944.

⁵. KAM Bulletin December 14, 1944

⁶. KAM Bulletin November 1, 1944

⁷. KAM Bulletin December 20, 1944

European Jewish organizations. Examples of this include declarations by Jews in Denmark⁸ and Switzerland⁹, and by organizations such as the American Jewish Conference¹⁰, a local black minister's group¹¹, and by the Synagogue Council of America.¹²

Finally the Union's magazine Liberal Judaism makes frequent use of a reporting method which was not found in any of the other sources studied. This is the use of literary vehicles to convey the impact of the Holocaust to its readers. Almost every issue from the bulk of the period in question contained Holocaust related poetry or short stories or both. An example of this is a short story entitled "The Blacksmith's Son" which appeared in the October 1943 issue of the journal. This story tells of the crude son of a blacksmith who is kicked out of the Rumanian army for drunkenness. He is revealed to be a Nazi sympathizer when he leaves his house to greet the invading German forces. Along the way he comes upon a Jewish woman and her very young child. They are returning home after being denied sanctuary in the home of some gentile friends. The story concludes with a graphic depiction of the man's brutal

⁸. Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin February 12, 1943

⁹. Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin February 26, 1943

¹⁰. Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin February 12, 1943

¹¹. Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin February 19, 1943

¹². Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin April 30, 1943

murder of these two innocent and helpless Jews by running them over with his horse.

All of the various types of reporting mentioned in this chapter, along with some types yet to be presented, will be more fully explicated and analyzed in the following two chapters. These chapters will use those reports to build a picture of the Reform Jew's perceptions of and reaction to the Nazi destruction of European Jewry.

Chapter III: Perceptions of The Holocaust

In order to build a model of the perceptions of the Holocaust by American Reform Jewry during the period being studied, this chapter will examine the various types of reports on which such perceptions might have been based as found in the materials which were researched. In order to study these reports they have been arranged into a number of broad catagories. These catagories are based on the types of accounts found most prevalently in the documents under question. They include numerical loss reports, religious analogies, personal reports by both Jews and non-Jews, news reports, and literary offerings. Each of these catagories will be examined in this chapter. A note of clarification must be made before preceding further; reports that call for specific types of action such as fund raising or political canvassing _are not examined in this section as they comprise the bulk of the following chapter.

Numerical Loss Reports

One rather graphic type of account which surely had some affect on the American Reform Jewish perception of the Holocaust was the Numerical Loss Report. Numerical loss reports, as the name points out, attempted to describe the events affecting European Jewry during the war in numerical terms. These outlines of the massive death toll for Jews under Nazi tyranny were presented to give the reader an idea

of the unique and great magnitude of this tragedy.

One of the earliest such reports in the Temple bulletins studied is found in the Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin (Chicago, IL) dated February 12, 1943. This article tells of a meeting between President Roosevelt and a delegation of American Jewish leaders led by Rabbi Stephen S. Wise. It is reported that the delegation presented the president with proof of the mass murder of close to *two million* Jews and the possibility that five million more Jews may also face extermination.¹³

This number of two million dead was repeated in the other loss reports found in 1943 publications. A Purim message in one calls for the saving of those European Jews left "...after the mass murder of two millions of them".¹⁴ Another source which quoted this figure was an announcement by the Synagogue Council of America that the six weeks between Passover and Shavuot had been declared to be "a period of mourning for the over two million Jews killed in Europe".¹⁵

While the aforementioned numerical reports were intended to have their effect mainly on the adult constitu-

¹³. The report goes on to state that Roosevelt gave the delegation assurances that all possible action would be taken to save those Jews who remained and to punish the perpetrators of these acts.

¹⁴. Emanu El Bulletin, Dallas, TX, March, 1943.

¹⁵. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, April 30, 1943.

ency of the congregations, there was an attempt to frame such reports for at least the older children in the congregations. An example of this is found in the June 1, 1944 issue of the Dallas, TX Temple Emanu El bulletin. Rabbi Ginsburg, at this point, a chaplain in the armed forces, publishes a message to the confirmation class in which he reminds them that: "there are thousands of Jewish boys and girls in Europe who have not been allowed to reach confirmation age." The vast majority of these reports were, however, aimed at the adult population of the congregations.

These numerical reports increased in frequency as they neared and passed the time of the war's end and they took two general forms. The form which was less frequently found in the bulletins studied was that of the use of the term "millions" without the presence of a numerical delimiter. In his 1944 Rosh Hashanah message, Rabbi Jonah Wise did just that as he lamented the deaths of "millions" of European Jews in mass executions while noting that the fate of millions more hangs on an allied victory.¹⁶ Another example of this is found in a Passover message by Rabbi Wise which includes the statement that "...death on a dung heap has been the fate of millions".¹⁷

Outside of a few examples such as those given, it was

¹⁶. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, September 8, 1944

¹⁷. Central Synagogue Bulletin, New York, NY, March 26, 1945

far more common to find in the bulletins reports that gave actual numbers. As would be expected, along with their increasing frequency as they entered the year 1945, the magnitude of the figures presented also increased.¹⁸

One of the first of these reports, found in the bulletins studied, which breached the figure of two million shown earlier was found in a message from Rabbi Jacob Weinstein. In the Sept 27, 1944 edition of his bulletin, Rabbi Weinstein speaks specifically of the tragedy occurring in Europe.¹⁹ He laments that while Hitler is losing his war against the allies, he is winning his war against European Jewry. Rabbi Weinstein makes this contention based on the following figures: he states that four million out of Europe's eight million Jews have been killed by the Nazis. He continues that a kill ratio of 50% such as this would be considered a victory by most military officers.

Numerical reports did not always give figures for the whole of European Jewry, they sometimes confined themselves to a specific city or country. The bulletin from Emanu El of Dallas, TX contained one such example. In it was reprinted a letter sent by a Temple member who was then serving in the US Army in Europe. In his letter the soldier

¹⁸. It must be noted that what is central to this study is not the accuracy of these figures, but rather their presentation and its effect on the perceptions of those to whom the figures were presented.

¹⁹. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, September 27, 1944

describes what his unit found when they reached Nancy, France. Out of a total pre-war Jewish population of 5,000, only ten Jews remained. One of the survivors related to the soldier an incident that occurred during the Nazi occupation. He told of 300 Jewish children having been locked in a synagogue basement and allowed to starve to death.²⁰ Another such example is found in the October 30, 1945 issue of Chicago, IL K.A.M. bulletin. An article on the American Federation of Polish Jews (dedicated to the relief and rehabilitation of Polish Jewry) states that 3,000,000 Polish Jews were slaughtered by the Nazis.

Along these lines, there was also found in one of the bulletins a report that combined loss figures for various European countries with a total figure for all of Europe. This "Table of Statistics of Jewish Survival" gave a comparison of the Jewish populations of various European countries in the years 1939 and 1944. It then gave estimates for the total European population in 1939 and 1944 which placed the death toll between these two years at between five and six million Jews.²¹

As the bulletins entered the year 1945, the figure of six million dead (or one very close to that) became the dominant figure found in the Numerical Loss Reports. The February 14, 1945 issue of the Chicago K.A.M. bulletin

²⁰. Emanu El Dallas bulletin, December 1, 1944

²¹. Central Synagogue, New York, NY, January 26, 1945

presents this figure in a unique way.

It quotes a Yiddish radio broadcast from Poland which gave the figure of 6,200,000 Jews killed in Poland. Of these the broadcast states that 3,000,000 were deported to the death camps there from outside of Poland.

Numerical reports numbering the loss were even more common in reports of a political nature. In his March 28, 1945, bulletin, Rabbi Jacob Weinstein presents a protest against the denial of an official Jewish seat at the UN Conference in San Francisco. Among his arguments on behalf of the granting of such a seat is the fact that the Jews were at war with Hitler longer than anyone else and, in the course of that, they sustained the greatist losses. He notes that the Jews had given 1.5 million fighting men and had sustained 6 million casualties.²²

Another such numerical report with a political twist comes in the form of an article quoting Abraham Granovsky, president of the Jewish National Fund. This article quotes him as saying that "The slaughter of six million Jews could have been avoided, but for the existence of the White Paper."²³

This final death toll was also found being presented in the midst of commentary on related events. In commenting on the opening of the War Crimes tribunal in Berlin, Rabbi

²². KAM, Chicago, IL, March 28 1945

²³. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, January 1, 1986

Saul Appelbaum interprets them as a proclamation that "...the murder of Jews, just because they are Jews is no longer a nation's private matter. ...The murder of Jews, 5,700,000 of them as the indictment charges, is now considered as the murder of human beings".²⁴

One last form which such numerical reports took in the bulletins studied was that of republication of a public address. In the January, 1948, issue of the bulletin from Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia, PA, there is a reprint of an address by Dr. William Fineschreiber (the senior Rabbi) at the congregation's Centennial Dinner. It includes the following quote: "We Jews have a horrible burden to bear. Not only do we mourn six million brethren slain through the workings of a madman and the indifference of a world that calls itself civilized, but we must now face the difficulty of maintaining the Jews of Europe."

While numerical reports were very commonly found in the Temple bulletins, they seem to have been a staple of the Union's magazine. As early as the November, 1942, issue of The Synagogue, there is found an article entitled "Jewish Losses Exceed Others". This article gave a Jewish death toll of 1,400,000 Jewish dead thus far and gave the Nazi Policies toward the Jews, "whose cruelty is increasing... with Germany's growing military frustration and war-weariness...", as the chief cause of those deaths.

²⁴. Temple Israel Bulletin, Miami, FL, October, 1945

So many numerical reports such as this are found in the Union's magazine that it would be impossible to present them all. In fact, it can be safely stated that a numerical loss report of some type can be found in almost every issue of the magazine well into the year 1946 and continued to be found less often well into the 1950 issues. As with the Temple bulletins, the frequency and magnitude of the numerical loss reports increased steadily in the Union's magazine until, in the late 1946 issues, their frequency tapered off and the reports settled in on a final total European Jewish loss figure of six million.

In determining the impact of this mass of numerical loss reports on the average American Reform Jew, there was found a report in one of the bulletins which speaks to this issue and whose conclusions are echoed in a couple of the other publications studied.

In a Rabbi's Message, Rabbi Saul Appelbaum notes: "We have become surfeited almost to the point of numbness, with the words "millions" and "billions". Sometimes we do not realize that when we speak of the millions dead in Europe, that these millions are composed of individuals - "Each a precious life.". The message continues with a report that at the last Friday night service a Temple member told of her just having received word that 72 out of the 74 members of her family left in Europe had been lost during the war. News that "hit so close to home" made the tragedy in Europe

more comprehensible to those in attendance.²⁵

Statements such as that above make it clear that for many people, the Numerical Loss Reports were so large as to be incomprehensible and unbelievable, a problem that even today is not unusual. When educators attempt to teach about the Holocaust to those who did not live through the period, they have found that the magnitude of the numbers of dead is so large as to be mind boggling for many people. In order to overcome this difficulty, teachers will often turn towards more personalized frameworks through which they can relate the horror of the Holocaust in more comprehensible terms.

A similar tactic was used by those who presented reports of the Holocaust to the readership of the materials examined in this study. They presented reports other than these numerical ones which were designed to present the Holocaust in much more accessible terms. One such framework is that of using Religious Analogies to present the events occurring in Europe. By comparing these events to those told in the stories of such celebrations as Purim and Passover, the writer is able to convey his information within a schema that is already familiar to his readers. This use of religious analogies is the subject of the next section.

²⁵. Temple Israel, Miami, FL, January 18, 1946

Religious Analogies

The use of Jewish religious observances as frameworks within which to convey information about the Holocaust was very prevalent during the period being studied. There were probably two main reasons for this. As mentioned earlier,

The use of an intimately familiar framework such as religious observances may have helped give the Reform Jewish audience some grasp of the otherwise incomprehensible events occurring in Europe. Secondly the histories of a number of Jewish religious observances, such as Purim and Passover, readily lent themselves to comparisons with the Holocaust.

The one Jewish religious observance most easily compared to the tragedy in Europe, over all others, was Purim. This story of Haman's plot to exterminate the Jews of Persia stood as a powerful symbol in the shadow of Hitler, and its triumphant conclusion, in which Mordechai and Esther foil his plan, for many served as a shining beacon pointing to the soon to come victory over the Nazi scourge.

Use of Purim as a religious analogy to convey information about the Holocaust was found in material from the very beginning of the period in question. In a Purim message dated February 27, 1942, Hitler is referred to obliquely as "the Haman of our time".²⁶ As would be expected by the ease

²⁶. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 27, 1942

of such a comparison, the most popular use of Purim in the context of the Holocaust was the comparison of Hitler with Haman. Throughout the war, and long afterward, this analogy was used to great effect.

In the March, 1943 issue of the Dallas Emanu El bulletin there was found a strong example of this type of comparison:

"The analogy between Haman of the Megillah and the perfidious Hitler has been recognized by us ever since the Austrian housepainter started to make Germany as Judenrein as Haman planned for Europe. But the gallows which ended Haman's career of hate now stands as a sinister warning about to come true."

In almost every case of the use of this comparison in documents dated prior to the end of the war in Europe, there is a statement like the one above which expresses the belief that the end ascribed to Haman is also awaiting the Nazi madman. One such bulletin, in speaking of the "modern Haman", proclaims "The gallows are ready for him."²⁷

A rather unique example of the comparison of Hitler to Haman was found in the March 21, 1945 issue of the Chicago K.A.M. bulletin. It contained a report of a Purim celebration that was held by a group of American soldiers in Europe. What made this celebration newsworthy was the location in which the observance was held - the castle of Joseph Goebbels. The report continued by comparing Hitler to Haman. It ended with the observation that the recitation

²⁷. Bnai Abraham Zion, Chicago, IL, February, 1945

of the story of the end of Haman, in that castle, stood as an omen pointing towards Hitler's end.

Each of these references pointing to an eventual downfall for Hitler certainly must have put sparks of hope into the hearts of their readers. There were also ways, other than comparing Hitler to Haman, in which the bulletins and magazines used Purim to strike a note of hope.

The March 1942 issue of the U.A.H.C.'s magazine carried one such example. In the "Jewish Scene" section of the magazine there was an item on "additional Purims" celebrated by various Jewish communities throughout the world. The article explained that it was a custom of these communities to celebrate a Purimlike observance on the anniversary of the deliverance of that community from the hands of a modern oppressor. The item concludes with the confident statement that "The Jews of 1942 feel certain, however, that surpassing them all in rejoicing, thanksgiving, and relief will be the Purim of Hitler to come." Such statements must have been rather valuable to the congregant seeking to find something in the traditions of his faith with which to build morale.

As shown, Purim was used in the bulletins and magazines examined both as a source of hope during the period of the Holocaust and as a source of comparisons with which to make the tragedy more comprehensible. A third type of report which made mention of Purim used the events in Europe as a

reason for strengthening the holiday's observance in America. Reform Jews were implored to renew with increased vigor their celebration of this Jewish day of victory in the midst of those days of darkness.

In this vein was found the following Purim message published in March of 1943:

"When has the age old custom had more realistic parallels in the life of its celebrants than it has today? In fact, so real seems the application that in Nazi Europe the observance of Purim is forbidden under penalty of death! If our enemies invest it with so much importance, how much more should and does it mean to us! If our brethren in Europe cannot celebrate it this year, with how much more fervor shall we read the words of the megillah: "... there will relief and deliverance arise for the Jews..." "28

The use of the European Jewish condition as a device with which to compel American Reform Jews to observe holidays as was done with Purim in this message was common to the materials studied. Other examples of this usage will be given with religious observances to be presented further on. There are, however, two more uses of Purim in the literature yet to be presented.

The first of these is the use of Purim as a rallying cry. Purim's literature readily lent itself to being used as the basis for calls to action. A prime example of this was found in a previously referred to Purim message from the Bnai Abraham Zion Bulletin. The relevant portion of this

²⁸. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL,
March 19, 1943

message begins with a quote from the Book of Esther (see footnote 1) which is meant to serve as a warning to the readership to speak out and act on behalf of those Jews still alive in Europe. The message continues with a warning that even those dwelling within the seeming safety of America will not escape the terrors of Europe if they remain complacent and do not take action, "FOR IF THOU WILT NOT - well, the warning is clear".

Lastly, Purim was also used in the post-war period as a corollary for *events* which occurred during the course of the Holocaust. Like the comparisons between Hitler and Haman, this seems to have been done in an attempt to gain some type of grasp of the events which occurred in Europe. By placing the tragedy in a framework encompassing the span of Jewish history, the writers attempted to lend a modicum of comprehensibility to it.²⁹ The Miami, Florida, Temple Israel bulletin contained one message which took this approach. It first made note of the tradition that Purim took its name from the idea that lots were cast to determine the date of the day on which the Jews would be destroyed. The message says that this was "... similar to the "night of long knives" which the Nazis proposed to institute". It ends with a quote attributed to Julius Streicher at the Nuremburg

²⁹. This method for dealing with incomprehensible tragedy is very common to Jewish literature throughout history and is more fully explicated in Against the Apocalypse by David G. Roskies and Hurban by Alan L. Mintz

executions in he which spoke of the executions as another Purim and "boasted of himself as the successor to Haman."³⁰

Almost as prevalent as those using Purim were the religious analogies using Passover. Like Purim, the festival of Passover lent it self very well to this usage. The comparison between the enslavement of the Israelites and the "bondage of European Jewry was very prevalent in the literature under investigation. One such comparison was found in a supplement to the Haggadah which was written by Rabbi David Polish and included in the March 1943 issue of the Union's magazine. In it the situation in Europe was specifically referred to as the "Pesach of today - the enslavement of European Jewry".

Along these lines was also found a 1945 Passover message from Dallas' Emanu El. It compared the coming liberation from axis tyranny with the liberation from egyptian bondage and called for this "crossing of the Red Sea" to occur this year and thereby bring on the "world Passover". It continued with the hope that Israel would never again suffer as it had under the Nazis for the past twelve years (this from a section of the message that will be referred to in greater detail further on in this section).³¹

³⁰. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, February 28, 1947 (The message was repeated the following year. It was repeated without the quote from Streicher)

³¹. Emanu El bulletin, Dallas, TX, March 1, 1945

Even a highly universalistic Passover message from two years earlier contained a comparison between the Egyptian bondage and the millions "enslaved and doing enforced labor under the Nazi yoke". While never mentioning Jews in particular, the context made it very clear as to which group of people in Europe was being referred to.³²

Another rather unique comparison between Passover and the events unfolding in Europe was found in the March 1945 issue of the U.A.H.C. magazine. An item in the Currents section entitled "Passover 5705: Defeat of the Modern Pharoah" compared Hitler's continued fanatical fight to the finish to the Hardening of Pharoah's heart toward the Israelites. This is presented as God's way of answering the question of what to do with Hitler at the end of the war? He is seen as causing Hitler to seal his own fate by "ensuring" that he would die fighting rather than surrender. The article ends by stating:

"The question (of what to do with Hitler) is ceasing to be a real one. Hitler is solving it for the world.

Whom God would destroy, He first makes stubborn"

The article thusly gives a Passover analogy that not only provides a framework for comprehending the situation in which European Jewry is involved, but also acts as a prophecy of the way in which the situation will come to an end.

³². Emanu El bulletin, Dallas, TX, April, 1943

It is evident that Passover was used as a source of comparison for the events of the Holocaust in much the same fashion as was shown earlier for Purim. The same is true in the case of using the events in Europe to strengthen the holiday's observance in the United States. As with Purim, there were a number of examples in the research materials of the Holocaust being used to strengthen the observance of Passover in the American Reform congregations.

An early example of this usage comes from the April 1, 1942 bulletin of the Emanu El congregation of Dallas. It contained the proclamation that "Pesach - Passover - and seder should be celebrated this year more devoutly than ever before in the life of this generation of our people." It is a rather obscure reference for the purposes of this study. However, in the context of proximate reports from this bulletin, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the report is promoting greater observance in light of the tragedies "this generation of our people" is observing in Europe.

A more solid example of this usage of the events in Europe was found in another issue of the same congregation's bulletin. The Passover message in the March 1, 1945 issue has already been mentioned in this section as an example of using Passover as a source of comparison; its conclusion used the events described in that comparison as an impetus for celebrating Passover with greater conviction than ever

before. The message concluded:

"Let us celebrate this year, above all years, our Jewish Passover with all fervour and with the prayer that never again may Israel suffer the torture and mass murders such as the Nazis inflicted upon them the past twelve years."³³

While this Passover message uses the coming end of the tragedy in Europe as an impetus for greater observance of the holiday in order to help bring about that end, another was found which called for greater Passover observance with a different end in mind.

This Passover message, also from 1945, was found in the bulletin of Central Synagogue of New York City. It was a rather somber message which dwelled on the many tragedies experienced through the course of Jewish history and made special note of the deaths of millions of Jews during the course of this most recent tragedy. The message then makes note of the great despair that many congregants have been experiencing under the dark shadow of these murders. The congregants are told that this despair might be successfully combated by a renewed emphasis on the beauty of their faith and on the preciousness of their freedom in the United States by actively celebrating Passover.³⁴

Lastly, Passover, like Purim, was also used as a rallying cry for action. While a single example was found of this type of usage in the literature dating to the period

³³. Emanu El Bulletin, Dallas, TX, March 1, 1945

³⁴. Central Synagogue Bulletin, New York, NY, March 26, 1945

in which World War II was fought³⁵, this usage of Passover was much more prevalent in the post-war period. Articles which made use of Passover to call their readers to action did so on behalf of European Jewish survivors and enlightened their readership on the condition of these Jews, especially those in the Displaced Persons (D.P.) camps. Such messages relied mainly on the themes of freedom and liberty as presented in the Passover epic and as relates to the aftermath of the Holocaust. Such a conception of Passover as relates to the Holocaust is aptly illustrated in the following excerpt from a Passover message dated April, 1946:

" "When Israel went forth from Egypt" an epoch began...The word freedom came to have a meaning in the book of humanity. Now, after the enslavement of nations by the Nazis and the torture and the savage annihilation of millions of Jews, liberty and freedom have become more precious words and ideals than ever before."³⁶

One of the first cases found in which this conception of Passover was brought into action on behalf of the Jewish Holocaust survivors in Europe was found in an issue of the Union's magazine Liberal Judaism. The April, 1946 issue carried an editorial which emphasized liberty and freedom as central themes of Passover and asked the question: "What can this years feast of liberty mean to the Jews in the D.P."

³⁵. The March, 1943 UAHC Magazine carried a supplement to the Haggadah written by David Polish (as previously mentioned). It includes a call for action with the comment "No one knows how near to us may be their fate".

³⁶. Emanu El Bulletin, Dallas, TX, April 2, 1946

camps?". The editorial concludes that liberty for the D.P.'s is the liberty to travel, and as such, this Passover holds for the D.P.'s the hope of reaching the only place that "now means home to them". The editorial closes with a call for the opening of the gates of Palestine and the pledge that we will do all that is possible to help the D.P.'s in their quest. This editorial's view and use of Passover found echoes in messages and editorials found in materials examined from the period spanning the next couple of years.

In a 1947 Passover message written by Rabbi Jacob Weinstein there is presented one such example. Using the Passover story as a framework for describing the then current situation in Europe, Rabbi Weinstein comments: "Like the Hebrews of old, the Jewish survivors of Europe seek exodus to the Promised Land, Palestine".³⁷

Similar sentiments were expressed in an editorial in the March 1948 issue of Liberal Judaism. This editorial was one of the latest items found in the materials studied for this report which made use of Passover as a mode for reporting on the Holocaust or its immediate aftermath. The editorial emphasizes the hope that the Pesach chatima "Next year in Jerusalem" holds for the D.P.'s in Europe. It follows with a lamentation over the effects of British policies which bar Jewish entrance into the land, while

³⁷. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, April 1947

allowing for Arab disruption of already established Jewish settlements. The item concludes with the conviction that despite these roadblocks, the commitment to the formation of a new state remains unwavering.

While each of these examples of a "call to action" displays a way in which the American Reform Jews may have been informed of the condition of their brethren in Europe and of the need for American Jewry to take action on their behalf, they do not give a picture of the extent to which such actions were undertaken or the forms which such actions took. This is one of the questions which will be examined in the next chapter. To continue with the section at hand, however, there is one more holiday of which mention must be made.

While used to a lesser degree in the religious analogy format than were Purim and Passover, Chanukkah was never the less quite commonly used in shaping the perceptions and reactions of American Reform Jews to the Holocaust.

The festival of Chanukkah has as one of its central themes the victory of a small group of Jews over their much stronger oppressor. This ideal of a victorious conclusion for the Jewish people in a fight for freedom is the thing that made Chanukkah such a viable source for analogy in the literature studied.

Often Chanukkah was used as source of inspiration for the readership. A Chanukkah message found in the Temple

Israel bulletin of Miami, Florida noted that: "Faithfully, the candles of Channukah have been lit for 2,000 years as a symbol of the victory over evil darkness". It continues with the thought that in light of current events, the observance has taken on greater significance than ever before.³⁸

Another less obscure (in terms of reference to European Jewry) use of Chanukkah as a source of inspiration was found in the bulletin of Keneseth Israel of Philadelphia. It proclaims that the story of this festival "continues to inspire...our own people who suffer under the crushing might of tyranny" and thusly presents it as a source of inspiration fo the congregants.

Not only was Chanukkah used as a source of inspiration, but, as with the previously mentioned observances, it was also used as a source of comparison. Both the struggle described in the Chanukkah epic and the personages said to have carried it out were fodder for these comparisons.

The December 1, 1942 issue of the bulletin from Temple Emanu El of Dallas takes the struggle itself as a source of comparison. It uses the Chanukkah story as a paradigm for the current armed struggle against "the modern pagans". This is a very universalistic passage which makes no specific mention of the Jewish people.

Only one year later however, we find a message from the

³⁸. Temple Israel Bulletin, Miami, FL, December, 1942

same bulletin which does make specific mention of the Jewish people in the course of using Chanukkah as the impetus for that report. This message makes use of the figure of Antiochus from the Chanukkah story and compares him to Hitler. It remarks that just as the one was doomed so too is the other. The message continues by using this comparison and literary allusions to the Chanukkah story as an invitation for strengthened observance of the Festival. The message comments that as Hitler comes ever closer to the "end of his accursed ten years of black hate and red death", we should rededicate our altars and rededicate ourselves to our faith.³⁹

There were still other Holocaust comparisons made using the festival of Chanukkah. A Currents of Jewish Life item from a 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism made the comparison between Jewish partisans and the Maccabees and their fight for religious freedom⁴⁰; while one of the temple bulletins compared the Nazis with the heathen tyrants of the Chanukkah epic, remarking that both wished "to destroy Judaism and freedom of religion".⁴¹

All of these comparisons, like those involving Purim and Passover, were presented to their Reform Jewish audiences as frameworks within which they might be able to ease

³⁹. Emanu El Bulletin, Dallas, TX, December 1, 1943

⁴⁰. Liberal Judaism, December, 1944

⁴¹. Bnai Abrahm Zion Bulletin, November 19, 1945

their struggle to comprehend the incomprehensible events of the Holocaust. While Chanukkah was used in much the same way as the other two observance as a source for such comparisons, it also differed from the other two in a very significant manner.

After 1948, Purim and Passover were no longer found being used in the form of religious analogies for the Holocaust in the materials examined. In fact, in this latter portion of the period being studied, messages for these holidays once again became as universal as they had been in some of the very earliest materials studied. A 1952 Purim message from Temple Israel of Miami, Florida no longer contained the references to the tragedy found previously. Instead it described the observance in more universal tones as the celebration of the triumph of common people over tyrants who seek to oppress them.⁴²

In contrast, the festival of Chanukkah was found being used in the guise of religious analogy for the events that took place in Europe right up until the end of the period in question. In fact, a Chanukkah message found in one of the Temple bulletins issued in the last month of the time span under scrutiny in this study contained the following inspirational message:

"Never have the Channuka candles been fully extinguished. Many times - only ten years ago - they were flickering in Germany, but not even the

⁴². Temple Israel Bulletin, Miami, Fl, March 7, 1952

cruel broad thumb of the Nazi overlords could squeeze out their flame."

Chanukkah, in contrast to the other observances, can be seen to have been used as a source of religious analogy for a much longer period of time.

All of the uses of religious analogies described had one common function, to assist the American Reform Jewish layperson to understand and react to the events in Europe which destroyed the Jewish community there. Another method used for this same function which was also commonly found in the literature studied was that of the Personal Report.

Personal Reports

Personal reports were those which attempted to make the events of the Holocaust comprehensible by presenting reports from trusted and identifiable individuals. Included in this category are reports by well-known gentiles, reports by eyewitnesses, and reports by well-known Jews (especially rabbis).

Reports by non-Jews were found in almost every source examined. The reasons for finding a wide usage of reports by non-Jews in such distinctly Jewish literature would seem rather obvious. Among these reasons would be that the non-Jew might be perceived as a less biased reporter than the Jew who would be emotionally bound up in the plight of European Jewry. Also, the words of support from and calls for action by various non-Jews could have acted as a

soothing emotional balm to ameliorate the despair of a world that has become so brutal for the Jew. One more reason for the appearance of these reports is the Jewish search for meaning. Many were groping for a hold on the reasons for anti-semitism and the holocaust. They must have found encouragement in seeing their gentile neighbors engaged in the same quest. Furthermore, many of these gentile writers were placing a portion of the blame for the Holocaust on the shoulders of Christianity; these were statements that must have seemed stronger coming from the mouths of gentiles than Jews (though a number of Jews did make such statements as will be seen when personal reports by Jews are taken up).

While most of the personal reports by gentiles made mention of the "brutal" or "ghastly" situation which European Jewry found itself in even when the state of European Jewry at that moment was not the main thrust of the article, there were a number of reports written by gentiles whose main thrust was to describe what was happening in Europe to the Jews. One such article was the already referred to piece by Thomas Mann in the July 1943 issue of Liberal Judaism. Under the guise of confronting the German people with the atrocities they have committed, Mann gives a rather extensive accounting of the nature of those atrocities. He makes mention of gassings, shootings, the ghettos and round ups for execution in those ghettos, and other large scale mass murders of Jews by the Nazis. In

whole, Mann describes what he calls a Nazi plan for total extermination of the Jews.

This article was written by someone outside of Europe. Even more prevalent in terms of gentile descriptions of these events were those presented as eyewitness reports to the tragedy.

The August 1943 issue of Liberal Judaism contained one such report under the title "My Friend Emilia". This was presented as the memoir of a Polish Christian woman who had recently arrived in the United States. It concerns her Jewish college classmate who was made to live in the Warsaw ghetto. She describes the pain she felt on seeing the suffering of her Jewish friend. The savagery which the writer witnessed convinced her that it can only be ended by "heroic effort" (ie actions) and not by words. She ends her remembrance by calling for the punishment of those responsible even before war's end that they might experience some of the torment they inflicted upon their victims.

Another type of eyewitness report, which was more commonly found towards the end of the war and afterwards, was that of witnesses to Allied indifference to the plight of the Jews during the war (obviously the promulgation of such reports during the height of war). One such report found in a temple bulletin was run under the heading "Read and Shudder". This item was an excerpt from Jan Karski's book Story of a Secret State. The quote details Karski's

attempts to relay the cries of the Polish Jewish Underground, that they were to be destroyed by the Nazis, to the Allies. Unfortunately, things went just as the underground had warned Karski they would. According to his report, the information was neither accepted nor acted upon by the allies.⁴³

Finally, there was one other type of descriptive report by non-Jews which was only found in the aftermath of the war; they of course described that aftermath. These reports were a portion of the numerous reports which appeared as various people visited Europe and the now opened death camps immediately following the victory in Europe. The K.A.M. bulletin out of Chicago carried the following example of this type of report. It was an article by Senator Alban Barkley which opened by promising that "civilization and Christianity will not overlook the cause of displaced Jews of Europe". In the body of this article, Senator Barkley tells of the things he saw on a recent trip to Europe which included visits to Buchenwald, Belson, and Dachau. The senator reports on the mauls, garrots, gallows and gas chambers which were found in these places. He also tells of meeting young boys who have survived and are now without parents, relatives, and homes and concludes by remarking "...then I asked myself "is it possible that civilization, liberty, and justice are so tarnished with selfishness that

⁴³. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, March 1945

these boys cannot be allowed to go to Palestine and rebuild there lives?" The remark is made without any suggestions as to how to bring such a goal about.

The senator's conclusion foreshadows another common type of reporting in the bulletins and magazine which made use of the words of gentiles to make a point; these are the calls for action and also include reports of public demonstration and promises of revenge and rehabilitation.

The february 19, 1943 issue of the Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin (Chicago, IL) does this with the reprinting of a telegram sent by a local black protestant minister to President Roosevelt. The telegram was sent to protest the "Nazi brutal attempt to exterminate the Jews in Europe" and it urges the President to use his "...great international influence and the organized strength of America against these barbarous and inhuman practices". Other such public appeals for action included an appeal from the polish underground to the allies for practical measures to save those of the surviving Jews of which it is still possible.⁴⁴

There was also a warning to the Nazis by Roosevelt which included an appeal the non-Jews in germany and occupied lands to help save the Jews who still live by hiding them and helping them to escape to safe haven.⁴⁵ These calls for action also often contained promises of post war

⁴⁴. Liberal Judaism, August 1943

⁴⁵. Liberal Judaism, March 1944

punishment of the Nazis and rehabilitation for the surviving Jews.

The promises of rehabilitation were by far the less frequent of the two. One such report from the August 1943 issue of the Union's magazine includes a promise made by a Polish General of a full restoration of citizenship and rights for Jews in post-war Poland. Also found in this genre was a promise from Truman to aid in solving the problem of providing for the destitute and homeless of European Jewry, and publication of a promise by Adenauer that post-war Germany intends to negotiate a Jewish restitution agreement and seek ties between Germany and Israel.

Much more common, however, than publication of promises of aid, rehabilitation, or restitution were the gentile calls for and promises of punishment and revenge against the perpetrators of Jewish torture and extermination in Europe. Such calls often formed a portion of articles of another type such as "My Friend Emilia", the memoir by a Polish Christian woman mention above. They were also found as a portion of the already referred to warning by Roosevelt. In it he speaks of the "wholesale systematic murder of Jews in Europe". Roosevelt makes a pledge that those who participate in or assist these killings or "deportations of Jews to their death" will be punished at war's end. He further requests that the people of Germany and the occupied lands begin to keep records that can be used to convict the

guilty on the day of reckoning.⁴⁶

A portion of these calls for punishment came from Europeans residing outside their mother countries and writing in response to the events occurring in those countries. A Hungarian emigre poet writing in the September 1944 issue of the U.A.H.C.'s magazine tells of the responsibility many share for what has happened to Jews in Hungary during the war. He concludes his essay with the promise of punishment for those who had had a hand in the killing of these Jews. Similarly, another report tells of the provisional Czech government's proposal to punish Czech and Slovak quislings not only for cooperation with the Nazis, but also for such anti-Jewish activities as confiscation of Jewish businesses and properties, and aiding in Jewish deportations".⁴⁷

There is no doubt that the American Reform Jews who read these reports felt a sense of encouragement and solidarity. The reports consoled them in their despair with the knowledge that they had many gentile brethren in the world who cared about them and the Jews of Europe and who also wished to see the Nazis not just defeated but also brought to Justice. Encouragement and a feeling of solidarity with others was obviously an important impetus for the editors of the bulletins and magazine to include reports by

⁴⁶. Liberal Judaism, March 1944

⁴⁷. Isaiah Israel bulletin, March 2, 1945

non-Jews. Such a contention is ably supported by the mass of reports published with encouragement and support as their main emphasis.

In february of 1943 there was the publication of a letter of encouragement from a number of prominent swiss citizens to the Jews of switzerland. The letter equates the destruction of synagogues with the eventual destruction of every religion and concludes: "We pray to the almighty for the power to stand for all that you stand and to help you if ever persecution comes to our country".⁴⁸ Another report of encouragement that was of foreign origin was found in the K.A.M. bulletin in which it was reported that a protestant austrian woman had bequeathed her fortune to the Joint Distribution Committee in paris for the "aid of these (the European Jews) who I feel are the poorest among the poor because they are persecuted for their faith".⁴⁹

The majority of reports of encouragement found in the materials examined were of American origin. There was a reprint of an article by Alvin Johnson from the Atlantic Monthly in which he proposes:

"The Jews, however small a remnant, will manage to keep their lamps burning. Their mission has not come to an end. Indeed one might even say that today, in the midst of the greatest of all persecutions, their mission stands out clearly: to awaken us from the stupor in which we dreamed

⁴⁸. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 26, 1943

⁴⁹. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 7, 1945

that a civilized society might rest on some other basis than that which has been tested by time - good will to men".⁵⁰

This article must have had a very special effect on the congregants exposed to it; it offered both encouragement in the face of disaster and a sense of their having a mission, one that might help in the efforts effect a change.

Many of the reports of encouragement found were written by non-Jewish clergy in an attempt to console and stand with their Jewish brethren. The october 1944 issue of the Beth Israel bulletin out of Hartford, Connecticut contained a High Holiday Letter from Robbins Barstow Wolcott (President of the Hartford Seminary) which included these words:

"Surely I need not try to put into words the deep concern with which we viewed the plight of your people during these tragic years. We pray and we work for the translation of professed Ideals of true brotherhood into more consistent practice."

Another High Holiday letter of support from a minister in Philadelphia to the Keneseth Israel congregation similarly remarks:

"...Mrs. Benton and I share the heartaches we know you feel because of the so unmerited and so brutal and ghastly suffering of your people in Europe. Someone aptly called "the earth - the insane asylum of the universe". that insanity has been unleashed and millions have felt its hot searing cruelty."⁵¹

Finally, one last such pastoral letter is an example of

⁵⁰. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, Sept. 13, 1944

⁵¹. Kenneseth Israel Bulletin, Philidelphia, PA, October 6, 1944

one neither written as a High Holidays greeting, nor by a single minister. Towards the end of January of 1945, ten Chicago pastors composed a pastoral letter designed to combat recent outbreaks of anti-semitism in the U.S. and lend a supporting shoulder to the Jews of this country. It included the following which is of interest in this study:

"2) The Jews are not responsible for this war. In fact, they have suffered more from it than any other people. One-fourth of their population in the world has been destroyed - some four million. Were that same percentage carried over to the 130 million non-Jews in the united states alone, about 32 million would have been killed. the war was caused by the aggressive acts of the axis and, indirectly, by the sins of all nations."⁵²

One other type of letter of encouragement and support that seemed to be appreciated by the Reform Jewish constituency in America were those whose origin was the White House. Examples other than those already presented include a quote from F.D.R. run under the title "Freedom for the Jews". In it he is quoted as saying: "I express the confident hope that...triumph...will bring Jews and oppressed peoples in all lands the four freedoms which Christian and Jewish teachings have largely inspired".⁵³

One more example of a Presidential letter of support is a letter from the post-war period sent by President Truman to the Central Synagogue on her 100th anniversary. The following excerpt was published in the December 9, 1946

⁵². K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, January 31, 1945

⁵³. Bnai Abraham Zion, Chicago, IL, December 11, 1944

issue of that congregations bulletin:

"Your centennial comes at a time of combined sadness and rejoicing among Jews. The liberation of European Jewry has lifted a burden not only from the hearts of Jews, but from the hearts of all freedom loving peoples everywhere."

As stated previously, this excerpt ends with a call for the rescue of the Jewish D.P.'s and a pledge of involvement in that effort.

Finally, one last classification in which a number of reports by gentiles fit is that of those which attempt to answer the question why. This search for reason and meaning in the midst of great persecution was most certainly a task that engaged Jews of the period and so the editors of the literature studied often included gentile contributions to this search.

An early example from the "What They Say" column of the September 1942 issue of The Synagogue includes answers to the question of "Why?" by two non-Jewish writers. The first, by a christian clergyman who is now an editor for Reader's Digest, reasons that the Nazis are persecuting the Jews because they have been central to the struggle for emancipation throughout their history. The other answer presented comes from a speech given by an official fo the United States government. He states that: "the broadmindedness fo the German Jews, their sympathy with and natural devotion to a liberal and tolerant view of life, their fearless work in the cause of freedom...(made them) unassim-

ilable in the Third Reich."

Often these reports would include a placing of some of the responsibility for the persecution of the Jews on the back of Christianity itself. This was best seen in the already presented article by the New York protestant minister John Haynes Holmes. Speaking on Christianity and Judaism, he states that Christianity has historically attacked Judaism in an attempt to disavow its parentage. In conclusion he asks "Is not this a good time, when Jews are suffering as even they have never suffered before, to state the facts and bid the world to recognize them?"⁵⁴

Just as this Christian minister was willing to place some of the blame for the tragedy on his own Christianity, The Union's magazine presented a report by a Hungarian emigre poet in which he places some of the blame (at least for those Jews who perished in Hungary) upon the Hungarian people, including those like himself who reside outside of the country. The poet begins by telling of an august 1944 service of intercession in New York City in honor of "those tens of thousands" of Hungarian Jews sent "to the silesian gas chambers for extermination". He continues with an exposition of the culpability of all Hungarians in this crime, even those in America, because they failed to speak out and act against hungary's pro-nazi dictatorship. He concludes with a promise of punishment for those who had a

⁵⁴. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, December 1942

hand in killing these Jews.⁵⁵

Lastly, there were post-war reports of support and encouragement, many of which made special reference to the plight of the D.P.'s and gave reasons for the slow progress in bettering their lot. The October 8, 1946 issue of the Chicago K.A.M. bulletin contains a letter from a unitarian minister which describes the general American attitude toward the "jewish problem" as one of "callous indifference, if not active hostility". He gives this explanation by way of understanding the slow progress in efforts to open palestine to the DP's. He says that this attitude is responsible "for - in part - the murder of almost six million European Jews, and, today, for the inhuman policy of letting hundreds of displaced and homeless Jews die of despair and boredom in concentration camps or at the hands of murderous mobs while "christian" statesman substitute talk about "expediency" for action in accord with principles of justice."

All of the items written by gentiles and just presented here reported issues and ideas which find, as will be see, echoes in similar reports made by Jewish writers. That these writers came from outside "our people" must have had a profound and uplifting effect on those to whom the reports were presented. This is especially evidenced by the frequency with which the editors of the sources presented

⁵⁵. Liberal Judaism, September 1944

made use of reports written by non-Jews in their patently Jewish publications. However, the bulk of the Personal Reports presented in the magazine and bulletins were, as would be expected, written by Jews for their Jewish audience. What these reports lacked in objectivity they more than made up for in terms of trust and emotional appeal. Upon reading, it becomes apparent that their effect on their readership must have been indeed powerful.

Given the great quantity of Personal Reports by Jews in the literature studied, it is necessary to examine those found in the bulletins separately from those found in the Union's magazines. As was previously stated, the types personal reports written by Jews echoed many of those written by non-Jews. There were descriptive reports, messages of encouragement, calls for action, and attempts to find reason. There were also, as might be expected, types of reports not found among those by gentile writers, they too will be referred to in the next few pages.

Descriptive personal reports were just as frequent in the reports by Jews as they were with those by gentiles. Many reports of this type found in the temple bulletins were eyewitness report sent to the congregation by their members or rabbis who were overseas. As such, the reports didn't hit a high frequency of appearance until late 1944 as the war moved well into Europe.

One such letter was received by K.A.M. in Chicago from

a soldier who had recently attended the first Rosh Hashanah service held in the main synagogue in Paris in five years.

He writes:

"(I) met those who have hunted and been hunted for five years; talked those with who have come back from the dead and still cannot believe that they are among the living...I had heard and read the accounts of the many atrocities committed by the germans - I had never believed they were exact... but after talking to these french Jews and seeing them, their stories are believable and true. Tales from the mouths of individuals who have hidden in the cellar for 2 years, not seeing the sun; a family of 14, of which one remains; 80 Jewish children left to die in a freight car."⁵⁶

The soldier also mentions that with the letter he is sending home a yellow star of David patch as a constant reminder of the Jewish suffering of the Holocaust. As other examples will illustrate, such saving and relaying of "relics" of the destruction of European Jewry by Jews abroad was not an uncommon occurrence (at least in the bulletins and magazines).

A member of one of the other congregations studied also sent home a descriptive letter prompted by his attendance at a service in a reopened French synagogue. In this previously referred to letter he tells of his experiences in Nancy where they found only 10 of an original population of 5,000 jews. He speaks of having attended the first post war Jewish service in the synagogue there. It was conducted by a protestant army chaplain because they had no Rabbi with

⁵⁶. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, October 25, 1944

them. The soldier recalls how he helped an eighty year old woman fulfill her wish to light yontif candles and relates the tale he was told of the starving to death of three hundred jewish children locked in the synagogue basement by the Nazis.⁵⁷

Eyewitness reports were relayed to the congregations not only by their members, but also by their rabbis. Rabbis from a number of congregations gave their support to the war effort by entering the military chaplaincy. Many of them ended up in Europe and relayed back eyewitness reports of the destruction to the congregants they had left back in the states. Chaplain Gunther Plaut had taken leave from his assistantship at Bnai Abraham Zion of Chicago in order to enter the military chaplaincy. A couple of his letters to the congregation are not only examples of eyewitness reports, but also of ones which sent along "relics" of the Holocaust, tangible evidence of the destruction.

In March of 1945, a letter from Chaplain Plaut to Rabbi Schwartz included the enclosure of "a yellow badge, which the Nazis compelled all the Jews in Belgium to wear". Plaut also writes about the torah scroll he is currently carrying and using. It was taken from Germany to Belgium in 1939 by a 19 yr old boy and hid from destruction by gentiles during the Nazi occupation. The letter attempted to relay to the congregation a sense of the degradation which the Nazis

⁵⁷. Emanu el bulletin, Dallas, TX, December 1, 1944

imposed on the Jews and also the great efforts some Jews went to save important religious articles such as torah scrolls.⁵⁸

The other Plaut letter referred to also had to do in part with another recovered torah. This letter, from April of 1945, tells of a torah scroll fragment from the now destroyed community of Aachen which Plaut is forwarding to the congregation for safe keeping. The scroll, which includes Genesis and Exodus 1 -19 was obtained by the chaplain from an Aachen priest who had received it, by way of a number of hands, from someone who had participated in the burning of the synagogue in 1938. The fragment was missing its aytzim and was wrapped in black paper. Plaut makes special note of the fact that the Torah scroll was destroyed from the point of the decalogue on. He remarks on the fact that the Nazis would feel compelled to destroy the ten commandments whose philosophy they had so utterly abrogated.⁵⁹

As the war in Europe came to a close the eyewitness reports began to describe not only what had happened, but also the situation of the Jews in the aftermath of the tragedy. A letter from a congregant stationed in Europe to his congregation back home described the deficiencies of an United States administered D.P. Camp and requested donations

⁵⁸. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, March 19, 1945

⁵⁹. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, April 2, 1945

of clothing and religious articles be sent to him for distribution to the Jews interned there. The letter becomes an extraordinarily poignant one with its closing lines:

"Don't send clothes for children under 14 years old. They have all been cremated."⁶⁰

One last example of eyewitness reporting is a letter sent home to K.A.M. in Chicago by a Pvt, Melvin Cohen, who was stationed in an area not far from Dachau. He describes meeting Jewish DP's and relates that they are in pitiful condition. He also tells of the major work being done by the one Jewish army chaplain to provide relief for these people through procurement and donations from GI's (both Jewish and gentile). He concludes by saying that appeals to the JDC and similar organizations have gone as yet unanswered.

These eyewitness reports are not the only reports that can be described as descriptive reports. Many writers residing stateside produced reports intended to convey some of the impact of the Holocaust to their readership. Rabbis' messages and other editorial vehicles described and commented on the Holocaust and its aftermath throughout the period in question.

In a December, 1943 annual message, Rabbi Fineschreiber of Philadelphia describes the Jews of Europe as being

⁶⁰. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, September 24, 1945

"tortured, exiled and slaughtered".⁶¹ Similarly, in his 1944 Rosh Hashanah message, Rabbi Jonah Wise states:

"The sufferings of the Jews in this war have been and are unbelievable. No one can deny that they have paid a price that entitles them to the pity and concern of all mankind....millions have been killed in cold blood."⁶²

A number of these reports went beyond merely describing the epic proportions of the destruction of European Jewry; some chose to label Hitler's plan for the extermination of European Jewry a "success" as a way of emphasizing the unprecedented tragedy of what had come to pass in Europe.

One report of this nature was published during the war and has been mentioned earlier. It is the rabbi's message from the September 27, 1944 issue of the K.A.M. bulletin of Chicago, Illinois. In it Rabbi Jacob Weinstein writes: "The blunt and tragic fact is that while Hitler has lost the war against the allies, he has won the war against the Jews". He reports that four million of eight million Jews outside of Russia have been killed thus far. Rabbi Weinstein then comments that a 50% kill ratio, such as this, would be considered a victory in the military. He continues by saying that Hitler has succeeded in spreading the seeds of his anti-semitism throughout Europe. He concludes by remarking that Hitler can take a "macabre delight" in the

⁶¹. Keneseth Israel bulletin, Philadelphia, PA, December 31, 1943

⁶². Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, September 8, 1944

accomplishment of one of his goals even as he is being defeated- the destruction of European Jewry.

In December of 1944, a translation of a Yiddish article from Der Tog also related to bulletin readers a sense of the destruction of European Jewry as having been a "success". It speaks of the utter destruction of East European Jewry and begins by remarking on the sighs and tears emanating from those in the Ukraine. In reply to those cries the article states:

"But no sighs come from the hearts of Jews. No tears run down their cheeks. Because there are no Jews left."⁶³

As the end of the war in Europe neared, these descriptive reports, like those of the eyewitnesses, turned to describing the situation of the Jews in the aftermath of the destruction.

An editorial published by Miami's Rabbi Saul Appelbaum in October of 1945 expresses shock upon reading President Truman's recent statement on the appalling conditions of the European Jewish survivors. the Rabbi reviews that statement and then writes that "...in the case of the Jew, who was the special target of facism, the war has not yet ended." He continues by noting that special privileges aren't being sought for the Jews, rather a restoration of their living standards up to that of all other peoples. Furthermore, He says that the American Jew dare not think that this has no

⁶³. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, December 20, 1944

bearing on his life. He should realize that dangerous ideas, such as those which continue to oppress European Jews, are not halted by borders. In this way Rabbi Appelbaum brings the pivotal importance of the conditions of the Jewish D.P.'s home to his congregants. He concludes these statements with a call to action on their behalf which will be discussed further on.

Lastly, the war crimes investigations and trials formed one more object of the descriptive reports of this period. Some described the Tribunals in terms of their meaning and impact, such as this excerpt from an editorial found in the Miami Temple Israel bulletin:

"For the first time in history, those who begin wars and lose are not to be regarded as fallen statesmen, or discredited leaders, but are to be considered as war criminals.

The International War Crimes Tribunal which opened in Berlin on October 8th, marks a tremendous and significant departure from our former attitudes.

What is important for Jews in these indictments is the definite statement that the murder of Jews, just because they are Jews, is no longer a nation's private matter. The murder of Jews is no longer considered a sport as it was in medieval times or even in modern times. The murder of Jews, 5,700,000 of them as the indictment charges, is now to be considered as the murder of human beings!"⁶⁴

Others, such as an article found in a 1946 issue of the K.A.M. bulletin, described findings or evidence which had come out as result of the trials. The article referred to is a report on a talk by Dr. Bernard Meltzer who assisted

⁶⁴. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, October 1945

the prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials. It reports that "He prepared and presented the case against Walther Funk, showing the Nazi's complicity in the plan to traffic in what has been characterized as "the most ghoulish properties in history - spectacles, gold teeth, and the threadbare clothing of victims in the concentration camps" ".

Often tied to or prompted by these various descriptive reports were the reports which are herein classified as Calls to Action. In fact, such reports were often contained in the same article. This is the case with the already referred to annual message by Dr. Fineschreiber of Keneseth Israel (Philadelphia). Along with his descriptive opening is a call for action on behalf of persecuted Jewry. He proclaims that while differing as to method, all Jewry has joined in whatever rescue work was possible and will continue to contribute vast sums to future food, shelter and rescue efforts. In response to those who bemoan the Jewish disunity over methods of action he replies: "We are united in the fundamental purpose of preserving Judaism and the Jew. We differ in method and interpretation. It has always been so in our long and eventful history."⁶⁵

One of the more common types of calls to action during the war-time period was the message which was designed to rally support for the war effort. Rabbi Jonah Wise's Rosh

⁶⁵. Keneseth Israel Bulletin, Philadelphia, PA, December 31. 1943

Hashanah message of 1944 concludes with one such call:

"Within the next few months the fate of hundreds of thousands may be decided both by the victory of our armed forces and by the organized help of american Jews."⁶⁶ Similarly, a 1944 letter from Jewish civilian to a military chaplain and published in one of the bulletins cites the axis' treatment of "our people" as his prime motivation for entering the war.⁶⁷

But, lest one be tempted to think that the plight of their brethren was the sole reason for Jewish support of the war effort, the bulletin of Greensboro, North Carolina's Emanuel reprints the following letter entitled "Sholem Asch to soldier son":

"America has made you a legal heir to her rich estate. She has given you history and ancestors...In this war, we Jews are engaged not only because of our hatred for the enemy...But also for the love of our America and everything for which she stands."⁶⁸

Thus there was an attempt, at least in this case, to temper growing particularism with solid patriotism.

There were also calls for the punishment of the Holocaust's perpetrators. One of these being a statement in the December 20, 1944 issue of the K.A.M. bulletin of Chicago. This statement told of the utter destruction of

⁶⁶. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, September 8, 1944

⁶⁷. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, November 1944

⁶⁸. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, January 1944

East European Jewry and asked that undeserved mercy not be given to the persecutors. However, much more prevalent in the bulletins were those calls for action that concerned themselves with Jewish relief and post-war rights.

Post-war relief efforts began as the wars closing moments were near and continued for a number of years after the victory in Europe. Most of the bulletin (and magazine) reports on this subject have to do with the actual relief efforts (as opposed to simply shaping opinion) and will be discussed in the following chapter. A few examples can be given though, of articles which sought to compel action without mentioning actual vehicles for that action.

Rabbi Saul Appelbaum wrote one of these examples and included it in a High Holy Day greeting in which he prayed:

"May we find the fulfillment of our sacred obligation in bringing the "balm of gilead" to our stricken brethren of Israel".⁶⁹ Only one month later in an editorial in his bulletin, Rabbi Appelbaum reiterates that obligation in terms that are "closer to home": "If the first victims of Facism are the last to be helped, are not even helped at all, then let no Jew in this country feel this evil thing will not creep into our lives."⁷⁰

A 1946 Rosh Hashana Message by a temple president gives an example of expression of these concerns directly stated

⁶⁹. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, Sept 1945

⁷⁰. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, October 1945

by one of the laypeople. He writes:

"But we also know that it is an incomplete, unfinished peace; that the pitiful remnant of European Jewry is wandering and homeless; that much remains to be done to implement and complete the task for which their supreme sacrifice was made."⁷¹

That the problems facing the great and very slow to be resolved can be seen in this Rosh Hashana message written a year later by a San Francisco cantor: "May we, in the coming year, strive to lift the burden of our fellow men in other lands and bring redemption to the suffering remnants of Israel which still seeks a haven of refuge."⁷²

That these hopes are as yet unfulfilled is lamented in Rabbi Steven S. Wise's Rosh Hashana message of the same year (1947). Rabbi Wise sadly observes that the gravest problems which faced the Jewish world in the past year remain. He makes special mention of the surviving European Jews who wish to emigrate and then states: "One cannot face their tragedy without feeling that the war was lost not won, that Naziism has so succeeded in empoisoning the world as to leave it indifferent to the fate of these homeless, stateless victims." Wise concludes by decrying the failure of the Christian world to open their gates to the Jewish homeless and has special contempt for the restrictive

⁷¹. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL,
September 20, 1946

⁷². Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, September 8, 1947

immigration policies of the U.S.⁷³

One of the last examples of this type of report comes from Dr. Fineschreiber's Centennial dinner speech. On the subject of the Jewish situation in Europe, he remarks:

"We jews have a horrible burden to bear. Not only do we mourn six million brethren slain through the workings of a madman and the indifference of a world that calls itself civilized, but we must now face the difficulties of maintaining the Jews of Europe."⁷⁴

In view of the fact that Dr. Fineschreiber presented this piece in 1948, it is rather apparent that the duration of these relief efforts by American Reform Jews was quite long term.

So discouraging was the slow moving nature of the relief and rehabilitation of European Jewry that for the years between 145 and 1948 there were found many echoes of the following statement taken from one of the bulletins: "To some of us it was cruel blow to our hopes when we realized that the actual physical condition of Jewry overseas did not improve as rapidly as we had a right to expect."⁷⁵ Along with these concerns about relief efforts, there were other post-war concerns expressed.

One of these was the concern for the promotion of Jewish rights and liberties in the post-war world recon-

⁷³. Free Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, September 9, 1947

⁷⁴. Keneseth Israel bulletin, Philadelphia, PA, January, 1948.

⁷⁵. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, December 23, 1945

struction. Such concerns were expressed by Chicago's Rabbi Jacob Weinstein in a message on the denial of a seat at the UN conference in San Francisco to the Jews. Rabbi Weinstein explains:

"Hitler undertook to exterminate the Jews to prove that his inspired genius could bring to pass what Pharoah, Haman, Antiochus, Titus, Torquemada, Khmelnitsky, Petlura, et al, had failed to do. He had made Jewish extermination the symbol and seal of the Nazi new order and had almost succeed. In fact, there are high Nazis like Himmler who believe that even if the third reich is destroyed, anti-semitism sown by the underground Nazi agents will prepare the ground for the victory of the reconditioned Nazis in 1965."

The rabbi suggests that the liberation of the Jews through a UN seat (not to mention the establishment of a Jewish state), as a "sign and seal" of Allied war aims in response to the Nazis, would be both poetic justice and constructive statesmanship.⁷⁶

Post-war peace efforts were also of concern as world peace and Jewish security were seen as being inextricably bound. A December 7, 1945 message from Miami powerfully expressed those concerns.

"Have you noticed the date on this bulletin...

We entered this war with high hopes of ridding the world of facist tyranny...and bringing about world peace.

Jews looked forward to the day when they could save the lives of their brethren in Europe. But we reached most of them too late. Most of them were deliberately murdered."⁷⁷

⁷⁶. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, March 28, 1945

⁷⁷. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami FL, December 7, 1945

The message goes on to describe those who would now try to "deliberately murder" the hopes for world peace that were gained and upon which future security rests.

Another type of report which falls under the call to action category is that which expresses a social action concern. These reports use the events of the Holocaust as an impetus for action in other social realms. In the May 28, 1943 bulletin of New York's Central Synagogue is found a report of this type. Reprinted in this bulletin is a letter from Rabbi Wise to the head of the "City-wide Citizens Committee on Harlem" pledging his support. In doing so Rabbi Wise makes it clear that "Worldwide persecution of our unfortunate brethren has shaken Jews out of the normal attitude of selfish satisfaction at being within the law." Thusly Rabbi Wise gives the events in Europe credit for having infused life into Jewish concern for social Justice for all people.

A social action oriented report from a later period is a bit more particularistic in its outlook. This article published in 1948 concerns anti-Jewish discrimination by American colleges. In reference to the problem, the article comments that "Once you have doomed the Jew to an inferior education or an inconvenient education under circumstances to which he strongly objects, you have entered upon a process which has no logical end until you come to the gas

chambers of Buchenwald."⁷⁸ Thus in this case the Holocaust is used to scare, rather than compel, the reader into action; a mode possible primarily because this is an instance of social injustice particular to the Jew."

One last call to action report which needs to be discussed are those which call on the American Jewish People to take on the mantle of world Jewish leadership. In the wake of the near total destruction of European Jewry, America now became the home of the world's strongest Jewish community and as such was seen as obligated and privileged to take on the responsibility of leading and preserving world Judaism in the post-war era. As the largest group among American Jews, American Reform Judaism was seen by many of the bulletin writers as having a primary role in this leadership. One of the earliest of these reports found in the materials studied was found in the February 15, 1946 issue of the Central Synagogue bulletin. It contained a report on a speech by Dr. Solomon Freehoff which said that "He told the gathering that the destruction of Continental European Jewry imposes a great responsibility upon Reform Judaism to maintain the purity of Israel's faith throughout the world." The same sentiments were expressed in a reprint of an address given two years later by Rabbi Jonah B. Wise at the inaugural luncheon for HUC President Glueck. Included in the address was the belief that "The

⁷⁸. Central Synagogue Bulletin, New York, NY, April 5, 1948

degradation and devastation of all European life has forced upon us the responsibility for carrying on that culture which is known as Israel and through which the world will be spiritually redeemed."⁷⁹

As inspiring as these calls for action might have been, so too were the reports whose aim was to lend encouragement to their readers in the face of the Holocaust. A majority of those found made reference to the strength of Judaism and the strength of Jewish faith even in the midst of disaster.

An early example of this is a message sent by Chaplain Gunther Plaut to a group of confirmands back home:

"When this reaches you, V-E day will already have become a reality: a powerful sign of the triumph of right over might. In all these years JEWS were destroyed, but JUDAISM, never; the flesh was burnt, but the spirit remained unscathed."⁸⁰

An example aimed at infusing into adults the strength of their heritage is an essay that was found reprinted in a number of the bulletins studied (its origin is given as the Bulletin Exchange). The essay, entitled "On Being Jewish", proclaims that:

"...we always emerge as a spiritual community. We have met, on our long journey throughout the ages, the world over, every strutting tyrant, every evil idolator - from the vicious canaanitish gods and goddesses and Baalim to the crusaders and the inquisitors and the Nazi beasts. We met them all;

⁷⁹. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, March 5, 1948

⁸⁰. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, May 28, 1945

We stood by the graves of all. That is because the spirit, being of god is eternal. The Jew lives by the eternal. He has to, a Power higher than himself has so decreed."⁸¹

The visit of Dr. Leo Baeck to the United States on a speaking tour under the sponsorship of the U.A.H.C.'s American Jewish Cavalcade profoundly inspired American Reform Jews. This will be discussed in greater detail later. For now it is important to note that his words inspired a number of reports which, like those above, proclaimed the saving power of Israel's faith.

A Temple Youth group member at Central Synagogue of New York City was one of those who reported on his attendance at a lecture by Dr. Baeck. He gives an account of Dr. Baeck's key to his survival of the ordeals which he endured:

"While he suffered the indescribable miseries of the concentration camp, his religion bouyed up his spirit, gave him hope and encouragement for the future, and made steadfast his version of a world that would someday be better for his Jewish Brethren."⁸²

The April 13, 1948 issue of the New York City Free Synagogue's bulletin accomplishes the same purpose by including an actual quote from Leo Baeck's talk:

"In my long life, and particularly during the years of trial under Naziism, I learned how utterly dependent man is upon faith. For 45,000 Jews, for example, to live in crowded barracks originally built for 3,000 soldiers, to literally

⁸¹. Beth Israel Bulletin, Hartford, CT, December 1946

⁸². Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, April 5, 1948

starve in a vermin infested environment for over two years, is a triumph of faith over physical reality. Without faith, without a religious philosophy to sustain us, we would have found it impossible to maintain our sanity. Perhaps a human being doesn't die as long as he has faith, as long as he has a vision of the future, until he no longer sees anything but the past and the present moment."

These views weren't only espoused by Rabbi Baeck, they were also stated by HUC President Nelson Glueck, a leader of American Reform Jewry. He is quoted as stating that it was their faith which has sustained the Jewish D.P.'s through their Harsh experiences.⁸³ Dr. Glueck is also attributed a quote which makes the synagogue central in this equation. In a report of his speech at one congregation's centennial, he is quoted as having expressed his feeling that the living synagogue is the symbol and source of our ability to stay and overcome such illnesses as the "maniacal bestiality of the Nazis".

Another type of report that seems to have been used to inspire an encouraged outlook in the readership was one which focus on the Jewish fighting spirit and Jewish resistance during the Holocaust. These reports combated the despair caused by the descriptions and mental images of Jews being herded off to their deaths like cattle to slaughter. They gave the reader the sense that the Jew had the "right stuff" inside to fight back and a number of times did resist.

⁸³. Temple Israel Bulletin, Miami, FL, April 23, 1948

One such report is an excerpt of an article originally published in Yiddish. The article's conclusion states that in spite of the massive destruction of East European Jewry, "the Jewish People is still alive". It proclaims the fighting spirit of the surviving Jewish people of Eastern Europe in this conclusion as it states that:

"There are to be sure fewer Jews than there were; but there is more to the Jew than there was...Jews will not be content with weeping at the wailing wall. They have answered and will continue to answer with weapons. Every Jew gave an oath 'we may die, but in dying we shall root out the indecent killers' ".⁸⁴

The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto was central to many reports of this type. An example is the following pulpit message by Rabbi Rypins of Greensboro, NC:

"More and more is being learned about the battle of Warsaw and those heroic Jews...Their gallant spirit shines in striking contrast to the black tragedy of Nazi inhumanity.

Let us attempt to understand the main elements of Jewish Heroism and appreciate the challenge it brings to us to live up."⁸⁵

The strength of Jewish faith and Jewish fighters were prominent in the task of bouying Jewish spirits in the midst and aftermath of this tragedy; so too was the power of prayer.

Many bulletins published prayers of comfort and even more simply called on their people to pray on behalf of

⁸⁴. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, December 20, 1944

⁸⁵. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, March 1947

their European brethren. In December of 1942, President Roosevelt declared New Years Day, 1943 to be a national day of prayer. Many Rabbis wrote responses in support of this proclamation. One of them was Rabbi Samuel Schwartz who wrote to his congregants that:

"It is fitting for Americans to lift their hearts in prayer. But doubly so for Jews. The ghastly horrors to which our brethren are being subjected in the subjugated countries are beyond description".⁸⁶

Also very important to the American Reform Jewish morale seems to have been attempts find reason in the Holocaust... attempts to answer the question "why?".

One of the first attempts, in the bulletins, to answer this question was found in the Keneseth Israel bulletin. The April 1, 1946 issue contained an excerpt from a radio sermon by Dr. Fineschreiber in which he gives Jewish allegiance to God over human sovereigns as the reason they often persecuted. He proclaimed:

"This is our credo: we put our faith in god not princes. That is why we have been persecuted by the princes, rulers, and dictators, from Antiochus to Hitler. We have been eternal obstacles to their complete victory and for that they have tortured murdered and robbed."⁸⁷

⁸⁶. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, December 25, 1945

⁸⁷. Keneseth Israel, Philadelphia, PA, April 1, 1946

Rabbi Levi Olan of Worcestor, Massachusetts, spoke to a different facet of the situation. He saw the Nazis as being driven by soulless intellect.

In a radio address which he made on the 25th anniversary of his Temple, Rabbi Olan observes:

"We Know what happens to people whose intellects outstrip their emotions. ...Read the record of Nazi persecutions. These were men who supplied the most scientific skill in the creation of gas chambers and torture cells for millions of their innocent victims. Their was nothing wrong with their brains! It was their hearts, their souls that were undeveloped."^{ee}

An address by U.A.H.C. President Eisendrath looks back to one of the founders of American Reform Judaism for an answer.

The address was given on the 100th anniversary of I.M. Wise's arrival in America. The Miami Temple Israel bulletin reprinted the following excerpt from that address, explaining Wise's reasons for leaving Europe: "The man, Wise, saw the handwriting on the wall of bigoted Europe and yearned for what he was sensitive enough to realize was taking place in America." Wise is credited with seeing the prejudice of 19th century Europe as a mere prelude to greater dangers to come, a revelation that found confirmation in modern times. This explanation seems to imply that anti-semitism and bigotry are an integral part of European society.

One last very different, but widely disseminated,

^{ee} Emanuel bulletin, Worcestor, MA, April 6, 1946

attempt to answer the question "Why?" was that of Stephen S. Wise. Rabbi Wise stated that the Nazis equated the Jews with democracy and felt to destroy the former would lead to the destruction of the latter. This hypothesis is ably stated in an article in his congregation's bulletin entitled "Democracy vs. Discrimination" (taken from a speech to the CIO). In it he remarks that few Americans and fewer Germans were disturbed by Hitler's first assault on the Jews. Wise comments that he next went after the labor unions, and continues by stating that Judaism and democracy are bound together. "Naziism did understand that the fate of the Jews is bound up with the survival and strength of Democracy."⁸⁹

He reiterated this contention a few month later in a speech before the Latin American Conference of the World Jewish Conference in which he proposes the thesis that Hitlerism wasn't primarily anti-semitic, it was anti-democratic.

Stephen Wise would also speak of responses to the Holocaust in his bulletin. After proclaiming the post war vindication of that small group of European Zionists who took that philosophy seriously, made aliyah, and escaped the Holocaust he states: "We think with sorrow of some Jewish groups, those who would not go to Palestine and met their fate in the furnaces of Naziism, which Christiandom did

⁸⁹. Free Synagogue, New York, NY, September 2, 1947

nothing to extinguish until it was too late..⁹⁰ Thusly Rabbi Wise comments both on the effects of two Jewish responses (Zionist and non-Zionist), and also recalls the scanty response to the tragedy in Europe by the leaders of Christianity. Wise made further comment on Christianity's response during the Holocaust in a sermon given at Temple Israel in Miami, FL and reported on in their bulletin. It reports that:

"Dr. Wise stressed the moral responsibility of the Christian world toward the Jews and lamented the fact that six million Jews were destroyed in Europe by Hitler, while not a single voice was raised by official Christianity to protest or stop the wholesale slaughter."⁹¹

There are yet two other reports found in the bulletins which were unique, intriguing and each found in only one instance.

The first is an attempt to relate some of the effects of the Holocaust children of the congregation. In a letter directed at their children asking for Chanukkah gift donations, the Miami Temple Israel bulletin relates that:

"For six years the word "Chanukkah" has meant only a distant memory to the Jewish children of Europe. No one had time to think of gifts when fleeing the dread and terror of the concentration camp or lying in the forest. Even this year, it cannot be a completely joyous holiday for these children.

The parents of many of them have been killed and there is no one to bring them the warmth and happiness that these children so desperately

⁹⁰. Free Synagogue, New York, NY, September 16, 1947

⁹¹. Temple Israel, Miami, March 14, 1947

need."⁹²

This is followed by an appeal for gift donations that will be discussed further on.

The second unique report is taken from a prayer by Rabbi Jacob Weinstein. In it he makes the following intriguing relation between martyred Jewry and the State of Israel that has some interesting implications:

"Accept the charred remains of the six million who perished in Europe and the blood of the finest flower of our youth as a complete atonement for our sins. Let them be sprinkled over the altar of the new state of Israel...as full payment for the displaced persons, that they may now become destined for Palestine"⁹³

The interesting implications which this prayer might have raised rest upon the following question: Were the six million sacrificed in order to bring about the state of Israel, or Is Israel a form of compensation for the tragic loss of the six million?

As stated earlier, because of the great quantity of material, personal reports by Jews from the magazines will now be examined separately. It will become very apparent that, with a few exceptions, they follow much the same format as those found in the bulletins.

As with those reviewed from the bulletins, this examination of the Personal Reporting in the Union's magazine will begin with a look at those in the descriptive

⁹². Temple Israel, Miami, FL, October 1945

⁹³. K.A.M. bulletin, Chicago, IL, May 25, 1948

category. Just as in the bulletins, the descriptive personal reports made up a major portion of the personal reporting found in the magazines. Also, they too began to appear with any noticeable frequency only towards the middle of 1944.

Some of the first descriptive reports of that year had to do with the Concentration Camps. Either through eyewitness accounts or accounts found in other sources, the writers of these reports tried to relate to their audience, in some small way, the atmosphere of the Nazi Death Camps.

"The Empty Glass" by Eugene Hevesi was an early example of these reports. The report grew out of a visit by a group of Allied and Neutral journalists to a concentration camp in Gurs, France and tells of a group of Jews there. In describing them the reader is told "They all knew that there was no escape for them because they were Jews and prisoners of Hitler." Hevesi describes the collective resignation of the inmates to their inevitable deaths, and of their retreat into the only "haven" left for them - "the sanctuary within themselves".⁹⁴ This clear and accurate description of one of the common modes of emotional manifestation in the camps, that of despondency, resignation, and an emotionless turning inward, is reiterated in a later article based on a newspaper report.

The newspaper article told of the sighting of Leon

⁹⁴. Liberal Judaism, February 1944

Blum, the Jewish former French premier. "What of Leon Blum" appeared in the October 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism and was written by a personal acquaintance of Premier Blum. In the newspaper report the 73 year old man is described as looking despondent as he was seen lugging heavy planks on his back. When he was asked to confirm his identity, he is said to have answered affirmatively and burst into tears. The article's writer finds this report hard to take because the description bears little resemblance to the premier as he personally knew him: a strong willed and defiant man who was not given to despair or defeat. In point of fact, the description did agree with others as to the transformed state of the inmates of Nazi concentration camps. (As a side note: the article ends by noting that Blum is thought to have died in the camp. In reality, he survived, was liberated from a concentration camp in 1945, and remained active in politics until his death in 1950.)

Another rather gruesome descriptive report relating to the concentration camps was one entitled "The Tyrants Loot". It told of the Nazi practice in the concentration camps of stripping the victims of all their clothing before sending them to their deaths. The garments are said to then be distributed to German civilians. The writer notes that these acts were foreshadowed in a short story by the Jewish writer Smolenskin. In it a young Jewish boy sees his mother's Locket, which was stolen during a pogrom, hanging

around the neck of a young non-Jewish girl. When confronted she brazenly admits its origin.⁹⁵ The use of literary vehicles to affect the perceptions and understanding of the American Reform Jew was very common in the Union Magazines and will be dealt with later. For now there is one more descriptive report to be presented which dealt with the Nazi Death Camps.

This report, from the October, 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism, reports on the procedures of the Nazi death camps as opposed to the emotional status of those still surviving within. It is an editorial run under the heading "Vengeance is Mine" which grew out of the Russian Army's capture and opening up of the Maidanek death camp. The editorial tells of having heard "more than a year ago" of mass slaughters of Jews.

"The story came of the round up of entire Jewish communities, of their being herded into cattle cars, of the cars sealed and sent eastward...to some secret destination in the Polish forests. There were reports of huge slaughter camps where machine guns, poison gas, and crematories were all prepared for the quick and systematic slaughter of helpless Jews..."

While noting that such reports found their way into the news, the average American probably found them to be too horrible to believe (esp. in light of the mis-information of the last war). Now the reports are believed because of the discovery and opening of Maidanek by the Russians as

⁹⁵. Liberal Judaism, December 1944

reported in the New York Times. The Russian troops found the mass graves, gas chambers, crematoria, and warehouses of booty (NYT 8-31-44). This prompted hundreds of news editorials, but Liberal Judaism's editor states that it all may be too unimaginable for the American public to have any prolonged emotional reaction (He points out that the death of a single child is often a more powerful image than the murder of millions). The editor continues with an exposition of the Jewish response which will be presented later.

As the war in Europe neared its conclusion, another form of descriptive personal report became very common. These reports would tell of European cities that were great Jewish centers before the war. As the news of that Jewish community's devastation or near total destruction would come to light with Allied recapture of the town or city, these reports would appear. They would mourn the disappearance and loss of the great Jewish community that once was and give a review of its history. Sometimes the article would unrealistically state that the community would now rise again to its former stature; often, however, the article would simply lament the loss of a community never to be seen again.

The community of Vilna was one of the first old world Jewish centers to receive this treatment. In "The Glory that was Vilna" the great Jewish community is described as it was before the war (with a Jewish population of over 80,000).

The article then sadly tells of Russian troops finding only 3 Jews remaining there when the city was recaptured. The article continues by describing life under the Nazis: persecution, murder, ghettoization, deportation, and extermination. This exposition is followed by a review of the history of the once glorious Jewish community of Vilna which concludes: "...that kehilla is now but a heap of ruins, of dust and ashes. But it is destined to rise again."⁹⁶

A few months later, in the December 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism, there is the appearance of another report of this genre, this time examining the French Jewish community. "Rebirth of French Jewry" recaps the history of French Jewry and their gaining of equality in France. It then notes that only 120,000 out of an original 350,000 Jews remain in France following liberation leaving a greatly weakened community. The article closes with the hope that the French Jewish community will be able to rebuild. Even while making that statement though, it does allude to the great obstacles such as the heavy resistance in much of France toward the recovery by Jews of their businesses which were sold by the Nazis to non-Jews during the war, that make such rebuilding a formidable task.

In contrast to the last two articles, "Reform Judaism in Germany" and "Epitaph for Germany Jewry" make no pretention of predicting a rising from the ashes of the Jewish

⁹⁶. Liberal Judaism, November 1944

community they describe. Both these articles are written as historical reviews and as, in the words of the latter, epitaphs for a community whose history is finished.

"Reform Judaism in Germany" is a review of the history of the Juedische Reform Gemeinde in Berlin by its former preacher, Rabbi Karl Rosenthal, who spent one year in a concentration camp ('38-'39) before escaping to London.⁹⁷ "Epitaph for German Jewry", by Trude Weiss-Rosmarin, on the other hand takes the entire German Jewish community as its focus. It begins with Leo Baeck's statement: "The history of the Jews in Germany is finished." and continues: "Now that the sun of German Jewry has set, it is fitting that its achievements be inscribed in the golden book of Jewish memories." What follows is a review of German Jewish history with special attention paid to the "Judaic creations of German Jewry". (Mentioned are such luminaries as Rashi and Graetz, and contributions such as Reform Judaism) The article closes: "The history of the Jews in Germany is finished". The legacy of German Jewry, however, will be a blessing for all Jewish generations to come, in all parts of the world."⁹⁸

An equally dismal future is painted for the survival of the Jewish community of a Yugoslavian town described in "The Jews of Split". In this article, an American Jewish seaman

⁹⁷. Liberal Judaism, May 1944

⁹⁸. Liberal Judaism, February 1946

tells of his trip to Split, Yugoslavia and his learning of the almost total decimation of that Jewish community. He gives the figure that only 60 out of an original 500 Jews remain (most of these are said to have survived because they joined the partisans). Furthermore, he reports being told that 30,000 Jews perished in the Yugoslavian Concentration Camps alone. He concludes by relating the need of these few remaining Jews for food, clothing, and money to reestablish businesses in order that might be able to survive, revival of the community is not even mentioned.⁹⁹

One of the last descriptive reports found in the magazine was a much more upbeat message for it reported on the beginnings of a rebuilding that at that point actually seemed to be successful. This report ran under the title "Spiritual Survival in Budapest" and told of the history of the Rabbinical seminary in Budapest, of its destruction by the Nazis (and extermination of many of the faculty and students - 30 out of 100 students remain) and of its post-war rebuilding and revival as the only progressive Rabbinical school functioning in Europe (Paris is discounted as insignificant). The school's head sends greetings to American Reform Jewry and hopes, through this article only to focus the attention of American Jewish opinion on their efforts and problems; there are no solicitations for

⁹⁹. Liberal Judaism, January 1947

donations in the article.¹⁰⁰

Even though this article might not have been a call to action, the magazine did contain a large number of reports that did fit this classification. One of the earliest examples of this appeared in an article by Rabbi Abraham Feinberg of Denver Colorado in the January 1942 issue of The Synagogue. In "Three Dots and a Dash" Rabbi Feinberg states that:

"Our most effective contribution to the fight on Hitler, the surest technique of self defense must be forged out of our will to be what we can be...The survival of Jews will depend on the survival of Judaism in their hearts. Judaism shall not be a war casualty, but a permanent investment in the future of mankind."

The value of strong religious faith and practice in the fight against Naziism was forcefully espoused throughout the war-time period. One of the strongest statements to this effect appeared in "A Call to Faith", a resolution by the American Jewish Conference which was published in the January 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism. It calls the Holocaust "not merely an expression of Nazi brutality, but a violent and tragic manifestation of the collapse of moral and spiritual standards in many parts of the world." The "moral crisis" of the age is seen as manifested in the suppression of religious freedom in Nazi countries. The resolution declares that the physical rehabilitation of the oppressed and their future well being depends largely on

¹⁰⁰. Liberal Judaism, March 1947

"the rehabilitation of the conscience of mankind." It calls upon Jews to strengthen their religion and culture so as to: "revive the broken spirits" of their European Brethren, compensate for what the Nazis have destroyed, and "remain true" to their "historical heritage". Furthermore, Christians are asked "to employ the immeasurable power of their faith to restore the presence of God in a world that has almost been destroyed by the agencies of evil."

One final note on these reports of a need to strengthen faith in response to the crisis. An article by Rabbi Harvey E. Wessel, "Yardstick for Reform Judaism", states that is the current state of the world which is responsible for Reform Judaism's return to ceremony and ritual.¹⁰¹ Obviously, these religious calls to action were reflecting an actual felt need of the American Reform Jewish populace.

Strengthening their faith was not the only thing American Reform Jews were called upon to do in the fight against Hitler. There were also a number of call to action messages which petitioned their readership to vigorously support the war effort.

An item in the September 1942 issue of The Synagogue entitled "Massacre" repeats an independently verified report by the Polish government in exile that the Nazis have thus far destroyed over 1 million Jews. In a commentary on this news the editor raises the question, What is to be done?,

¹⁰¹. The Synagogue, May 1942

and answers simply: "Defeat the Nazis".

Philip Bernstein repeats this contention in his article "The Jews of Europe" in which he states that there is hope for European Jewry in a swift Nazi defeat. He continues with a seven point plan to buoy the hopes of those under Nazi oppression as they await that defeat.¹⁰² But he concludes by stating that despite all efforts, the only permanent solution to the "Jewish Problem" is a Jewish state in Palestine.¹⁰³

The American Jew's commitment to the war effort on behalf of his brethren is most forcefully stated in the publication of the text of a Rosh Hashana message broadcast in Yiddish to the Jews of Europe by the president of the Synagogue Council (Israel Goldstein). Entitled "In Hope of Deliverance", it concludes: "We American Jews feel a sense of contrition that we have not been able to effect a substantial program of rescue for you...", and continues by saying that we are doing that which is possible - Actively supporting the war effort.¹⁰⁴

As in the bulletins, there were also numerous calls to

¹⁰². That seven point plan included: 1) announcement of a Jewish hearing in the UN Councils, 2) Establishment of a Jewish army composed of stateless and Palestinian Jews, 3) Permitting at least 37,000 more Jews into Palestine now, 4) Opening frontiers for refugee transit, 5) providing temporary shelter for the refugees, 6) Getting food to the Jews in Nazi occupied territories, 7) Saving Jewish children.

¹⁰³. Liberal Judaism, March 1943

¹⁰⁴. Liberal Judaism, October, 1943

action which spoke of the rescue and rehabilitation of European Jewry. In 1942, "Pattern for an Ideal World" by Adolph Rosenberg on the function of the synagogue in war time included this call to action: "The afflicted and dispossessed survivors of the war will have to be saved from the brink of death and rehabilitated."¹⁰⁵ While this statement was made early on in the period, the majority of such personal reports came after the end of the war.¹⁰⁶ Most of these were very similar in form to an editorial entitled "A Year of Survival and Salvation" which noted that many refugee Jews are still homeless and hungry in a "heartless world" and tells of the need to work harder than ever to "Redeem the captives" as any delay can mean the death of another.¹⁰⁷

As will be seen in a fuller examination of them later, relief efforts went slowly, but were reported to be successful in amassing needed supplies which were responsible for saving many lives. In contrast to the success of these relief efforts, the hopes for rehabilitation of the European Jewish communities often expressed in the relief oriented calls for action faded away rapidly during the years

¹⁰⁵. The Synagogue, October 1942

¹⁰⁶. As stated earlier, specific appeals for volunteers or donations and reports as to the success of those specific appeals are not considered with the personal reports and will be examined separately in chapter four.

¹⁰⁷. Liberal Judaism, September 1946

following the war. A January, 1948 editorial aptly illustrates this growing cynicism towards the possibility of reconstituting the European Jewish community to its former stature. "The European Remnant of a Remnant" comments on the December 1947 meeting of 75 Jewish leaders in Budapest to make plans to reconstruct the Hungarian Jewish community. The editor finds this interesting considering the fact that most European Jews wish to go to Palestine, rampant anti-Semitism still exists there, traditional Judaism will be hard to observe, the community will be tiny, Jewish resources and workers will be sparse, the environment will be radically different than before, and there is continuing political instability in central Europe. Nevertheless, the editorial calls the attempt "noble" and courageous and concludes with the "chatima": "May they find inner strength and attain fulfillment of their hopes."¹⁰⁸

Echoing what was found in the bulletins, another important type of call for action was that which emphasized the need of American Jewry to take on the mantle of world Jewish leadership in response to the destruction of European Jewry. This was expressed as early as November 1942 in an article in The Synagogue by Lee Friedman. In "Reform Program" he observes that American Jewry has been "forced

¹⁰⁸. Liberal Judaism, January 1948 (It must be noted that the growing cynicism coincided with the growing reality of the State of Israel and the growing appearance of pro-zionist reporting in the magazine. Examination of this, however, is beyond the scope of the present study.)

into a position of world leadership in all Jewish affairs by the upheaval of the second world war" and calls for Reform Judaism to develop a program for "world Jewish leadership and Jewish religious survival."

Of course, such calls for American leadership became ever more common as the war's end became more imminent and its aftermath became more evident. Rabbi Joshua Loth Liebman's 1944 article "Redemptive Sanctuaries is a case in point. In this piece, Rabbi Liebman calls Europe (for the Jews) "A street of slaughterhouses" and Hungary "the latest of death chambers for our people". He observes that European Jewry has been wiped out and declares that American Jewry, the youngest member of the Jewish Family, is now the "Head of the House". According to the Rabbi, American Jewry must create a spiritual citadel to preserve Jewish religion and culture and the synagogue must be supported as the center of such activities.¹⁰⁹

Following the end of the war in Europe, these calls for world Jewish leadership by American Jewry multiplied rapidly. There was Solomon Freehof's "Hail Our Alma Mater" presented on the occasion of HUC's 70th anniversary.¹¹⁰ In part, this essay proclaims:

"In world Israel, American Jewry will play an increasing part. With great centers of old world

¹⁰⁹. Liberal Judaism, May 1944

¹¹⁰. Along with publication in the U.A.H.C. magazine, this was also reprinted in a couple of the bulletins.

Jewish learning now destroyed, with innumerable synagogues in ruins and their worshippers dead or in exile, awesome responsibilities rest upon us in this blessed land. Every branch of American Jewry has heavier responsibilities."¹¹¹

This new responsibility for American Reform Jewry was also expressed in post-war articles by Reform Jewish lay leaders. In the October, 1946 issue of Liberal Judaism there are a number of reports from the first post-war meeting of the World Union of Progressive Judaism. Among them is this observation by National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods President Mrs. Louis Rosett made in relation to the reports given by various European Delegates to the conference on the devastation of their Jewish communities: "Always the eyes of everyone are on America - Hope of the Remnant". Another UAHC executive board member who was also at the conference observed a crying out by European Delegates "not for food but for spiritual aid and guidance" (rabbis, teachers, literature, etc.). This prompts him to speak of the heavy responsibility of American Jewry, now the "largest and most powerful unit of the Jewish people".

The responsibility of American Reform Jewry to take the lead in Jewish spiritual and cultural sustenance for world

¹¹¹. Liberal Judaism, September, 1945 (In the article, Rabbi Freehof goes on to speak of the "magnificent opportunity" that HUC now has to express Reform Judaism in the wake of the collapse of "old habitual practices" during the world catastrophe. While Rabbi Freehof's good intentions are duly noted, this writer does find calling the destruction of traditional old world Judaism a "magnificent opportunity" for Reform Judaism rather distasteful.)

Jewry was also a point of "Jewish Cultural Trends" by Rabbi Levi Olan. In this article the point is made that in the aftermath of the destruction of Eastern Europe's Jewish community, the American Jewish community must now "grow up" and serve as a center of "cultural sustenance and spiritual nourishment" to the world.¹¹²

As American Reform Jewry began to accept this new responsibility, there was also a realization of the need to change their mode of action in the world from that which was suitable during the Holocaust to one more suited to the post-war situation. This was the point of an item entitled "From Defense to Offense" which remarked that during the "Hitler era" American Jewry was in a defensive mode combating anti-Semitism. Now, with the "hate disease...cured", the author calls for American Jewry to enter into a constructive, offensive mode of religious revival.¹¹³

Going from defense to offense is also the point of the social action oriented calls to action which gave the events of the Holocaust as a reason for involvement in the causes of world reconstruction and social justice. Such sentiments were even expressed in war-time issues of the magazine as in Waldo Frank's article on the first anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising "Israel's Fighting Genius" In which he remarks that we all share in some part responsibility for

¹¹². Liberal Judaism, January 1949

¹¹³. Liberal Judaism, December 1950

the loss of those martyred Jews for it is the modern world we helped to nurture which allowed for the Nazi rise and it is our duty to fix the world in their memory.¹¹⁴

Far more common were the post-war calls for social action as typified by "Freedom from Fear" which warns against paralysis among American Jews in the shadow of Maidanek, Treblinka, and Dachau. Instead of being paralyzed by the fear of it happening in this country, it remarks that Jews must join together with their friends in opposition to their foes and fight in the "vanguard of forces that fight for universal justice, progress, and a stable society."¹¹⁵

One thing that is very apparent from both the descriptive and call to action personal reports is the great effect the upheaval of European Jewry had on American Reform Jews. As such, the need for the numerous magazine personal reports aimed giving them encouragement was very evident. So apparent was this need that encouragement reports were found as early as the January 1942 issue of the Union's magazine. Therein was found a item which assured the reader that in the end, God's will would triumph. Written in response to a Goebbels boast that Hitler's prediction of the elimination of European Jewry is being fulfilled, this item, an editorial, counters by saying that only God decides such things and that we are now witness to the rising up of

¹¹⁴. Liberal Judaism, May 1944

¹¹⁵. Liberal Judaism, September, 1946

nations against the Nazis to do "His" will.

One of the most common vehicles used to create personal reports of encouragement was the depiction of various forms of Christian support for the Jews. An editorial in the May, 1943 Liberal Judaism outlined Christian indignation towards Nazi actions. It noted both passive resentment and active condemnation. The Church is said to be taking a leading role in many areas, but this is said to be primarily caused by the impetus of a mass lay reaction. Special mention is made of: Bulgaria (where it reports a parliamentary vote against the government's anti-Jewish policies and a halting of deportations), Denmark (where eight leading bishops are said to have protested anti-Jewish policies before the minister of justice), Finland (where the editorial reports a counter campaign against the Nazis by the liberal and socialist parties), and Hungary (where Christian pressure led by Cardinal Seredi is said to have forced a ban on the circulation of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion"). The editorial also mentions that Non-Jews of Bulgaria and Holland have been hiding Jews from the Nazis and helping them to conceal their assets. All of these protests and efforts are seen as a "silver lining" for the Jews in the midst of the war.

"In the Danish Tradition" is another such report which gives encouragement to the Jew with a description of Danish efforts on behalf of Jews. It begins by recalling a long

tradition (since 1692) of Danes working to help Jews just as they have responded with words and actions to help Jews in "Hitler's house of Death". In that respect it tells of Danes donning yellow stars and of the rescue of all but 600 of the Jews of Denmark by taking them by sea to Sweden.¹¹⁶

The "It's A Fact" column by Bernard Postal which appeared in the 1945 issues of Liberal Judaism contained a number of similar reports which made use of instances of non-Jews aiding Jews. One example is a report from the June, 1945 issue which revealed that of the over 5,000 Jews saved by the danes, 100 of the most prominent ones were saved by being given "public funerals" and then being smuggled into Sweden in packing cases marked "machine parts". The August, 1945 issue's column contained another example in which it reported that the chief Rabbi of Liege, Belgium had been saved from the Nazis by that city's Catholic Bishop. The Bishop disguised the Rabbi as his secretary and sheltered him in the monastery.

The Jewish Scene column of the February, 1943 issue of The Synagogue presents a different method for giving its readership a feeling of support and encouragement. Under the heading "Milestones of Jewish History - 194-?", he gives 194-? as the year in which Israel will be delivered from Hitler's grasp and her persecutors punishment and "they shall sit every man under his fig tree and none shall make

¹¹⁶. Liberal Judaism, June 1944

them afraid." Often the immanence of victory was used to buoy up the outlook of American Reform Jews in these tragic times. A reprint of a Yom Kippur broadcast from the United States (originally in Hebrew) to European Jewry does just that. It speaks of the unbroken spirit of Israel, the Jewish fight for freedom, and the nearness of victory.

Just as it was in the bulletins, the strength of Jews and Judaism was also frequently used as a source of encouragement. Liberal Judaism's 1944 Rosh Hashana editorial ends with this hopeful statement in that vein: "The people which for centuries has come through the fire of persecution and not been consumed, and through the water of tyranny and conquest and not been overwhelmed will also outlive this direful day."¹¹⁷

The strength of Jews and Judaism was often represented through the actions of the Jewish martyr or freedom fighter. In his previously mentioned article "The Empty Glass" about a visit by journalists to a concentration camp, Eugene Hevesi tells the story of one of the martyrs they encountered there.

Hevesi tells of the death of a mother who had lost her four sons and now was fading away by refusing to eat or leave bed. In her last moments she drinks with great pleasure and glory from an empty glass. The journalist sees this as an expression of triumph in the face of oppression

¹¹⁷. Liberal Judaism, September, 1944

and humiliation and as a sign that "freedom is destined to conquer."¹¹⁸

Even greater belief in the eventual triumph of freedom was culled from the exploits of Jewish partisans and freedom fighters. An editorial on American Jewish observations of the Warsaw ghetto uprising's first anniversary tells of pride in their heroism mixed with sorrow at their annihilation. It also speaks of many similar partisan confrontations with the Nazis recently in other parts of Europe, all of them involving Jews. Out of the heroism of Warsaw the writer sees great hope for the eventual triumph of freedom.¹¹⁹

Not only was Jewish fighting inspirational, so too were Jewish acts of defiance. For example one editorial made special note of the fact that the Mogen David has become a symbol of defiance to the Nazis. It goes on further by telling of the complaint by Nazi leader Julius Streicher that European Jews are wearing their badges with "provoking dignity and pride".¹²⁰

Of course encouragement was not enough, the personal reports of the magazines also had to attend to one of the major questions with which their readership was grappling - The search for meaning...The question of "Why?". As in the

¹¹⁸. Liberal Judaism, February 1944

¹¹⁹. Liberal Judaism, May 1944

¹²⁰. Liberal Judaism, November 1943

bulletins, the Union's magazines were full of personal reports which strove to find reasons for the persecution of the Jews of Europe. In "Three Dots and a Dash", Rabbi Abraham Feinberg sees anti-Semitism as an essential tool of world conquest. Rabbi Feinberg speaks of the Jew as having been chosen for a central role in history. The plight of the Jews of Europe was a signal to the world.

"Had official Christianity really followed the Samaritans example and regarded the Jewish plight as its own, the Nazi gangsters could never have plunged Germany ...and the world into war. Its anti-Semitism stands no longer as an end in itself, but as an instrument of world confusion and conquest."¹²¹

One month later, in the February, 1942 issue of The Synagogue, "Spurious Substitutes" by Rabbi Ira B. Sanders of Little Rock, AK forwards an alternate thesis that the Nazis seek to destroy Judaism and with it the Old Testament because of its (the Bible's) emphasis on liberty and freedom.

A rather different suggestion as to a reason for what was happening in Europe was proposed by Abraham Joshua Heschel in "The Meaning of this War". Heschel sees the war's roots and the tragedy in Europe in our having "failed to fight for right", as a result we are forced to "fight against evil". Our goodness must now become as great as the fascists evil.

"We will survive if we shall be as fine and

¹²¹. The Synagogue, January, 1942

sacrificial in our homes and offices, congresses and clubs, as our soldiers are on the fields of battle. ...The martyrdom of millions in this very hour demands that we consecrate ourselves to the fulfillment of God's dream of salvation...The mountain of history is over our heads again. Shall we renew the covenant with God?"¹²²

Lastly, some gave as the answer to the question "Why?", that anti-Semitism was an essential, integral facet of Naziism. One place where this was proposed was in an editorial entitled "A Plea Before Suicide". In it mention is made of the suicides of Hitler, Goebbels, Himmler, and Robert Ley. Remarking on the fact that Ley's took place at the end of October, the editorial states that Ley, in contrast to the others, had time to consider the aftermath of his actions. Only he had time to compose and leave a statement regarding that aftermath. The editorial comments that his suicide note reveals anti-Semitism to be not merely a device, but rather a central tenet of Nazism.

"He picked the most important subject of his life and thus revealed that the deepest emotion in Naziism and perhaps in Germany is hatred for the Jews. The Nazis were not cynical about anti-Semitism. they were shockingly sincere."¹²³

Along with grappling with questions of importance to the American Jew, there were also personal reports which attempted to reflect some of the responses of the American Jew to the events of the Holocaust. One of these was the already referred to article "Vengeance is Mine" from the

¹²². Liberal Judaism, February, 1944

¹²³. Liberal Judaism, December, 1945

October, 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism. It makes note of the mixed Jewish reactions to the widely disseminated news accounts of the mass murder of Jews which appeared as a result of the Russian capture and opening of Maidanek. The article observes that having known of this for over a year there is no one emotion; there is depression, pity for those slaughtered and those who have survived, and horror at the brutality. "Yet among our emotions, complex and deep as they are, there is no raging blazing desire for revenge" The writer asks if there is a punishment that could equal the crime. To kill a like number of Germans (equal vengeance) is a horrific idea to us. He states that Jews are by nature forgiving and not vengeful therefore, "No, we do not seek to persuade the UN to provide a punishment to fit the crime." However, Justice and punishment for crime is important: but the writer feels that God, rather than we, is exacting punishment on the Nazis. Through their own fanaticism the Nazis are "stumbling blindly into the vengeance which God had prepared for them". Their bombing of England and rape of Russia means that both the Russians and British will never permit the Reich to rise again. Also, the truly fanatical Nazis do not surrender and thus are killed by the triumphing Allied troops. The article ends "Their madness is killing them. "Vengeance is Mine" saith the lord, "for the day of their calamity is at hand.""

An editorial in the May 1945 issue of Liberal Judaism

discusses a response to the events in Europe by the young people of the congregations. In a discussion of why there has been a drop off in religious commitment following confirmation, it declares:

"In the past few years we taught them that God's justice is dominant; but they saw Nazi justice triumph time and time again. We taught them that God wants us to love mercy, but they saw that the cruel and brutal Nazis perpetrated vast crimes with apparent impunity. We taught them the prophetic ideals of world peace and they saw the world engaged in a paroxysm of mass slaughter. How can we expect young people to work out for themselves some harmony between ideals and such realities?"

The editorial concludes by remarking that the immanent victory will make confirmation different and more meaningful this year.

One more prevalent response to Naziism and the Holocaust was an increased appreciation for and allegiance to Democracy as a system of government. This was one of the points of "Democracy in Judaism" by Dr. Jacob R. Marcus which included the statement:

"It remained for Hitler and his terrorists to give democracy its current meaning. The stark brutalities of the fascists and the gradual disappearance of popular government made men realize the value and need of democratic practice."¹²⁴

One of the most affecting events on the American Reform Jewish response to the Holocaust as reflected both in the bulletins and the magazine was the 1948 speaking tour of the United States by Dr. Leo Baeck.

¹²⁴. Liberal Judaism, September, 1945

Dr. Baeck toured the United States under the sponsorship of the U.A.H.C.'s American Jewish Cavalcade. During the period of his tour, mention was made of him and his history in almost every bulletin studied. His talks were widely reviewed and praised as having been inspirational and affecting as to perceptions of what occurred during the Holocaust. Some of the responses to his talks were mentioned earlier, but there were no reprints of any of those speeches included in either the bulletins or the magazines. The August, 1945 issue of Liberal Judaism did however carry an article on him which included his history (reprinted in most of the bulletins) and a number of the views that he was later to express during his 1948 tour.¹²⁵ The article "Leo Baeck Alive" tells of his escape from death and of his views. It reports that he was aided by the Red Cross and the JDC after the opening of Theresienstadt. He is said to have been liberated from Theresienstadt by the Russians in May of 1945 and flown to London. During his time in the concentration camp it reveals that he surreptitiously conducted services and Jewish study groups. Some of his views that are given in the article are:

On Germany and punishment of war criminals: He gives the analogy of a doctor who excises an illness and leaves the healthy parts to grow - "There is hope in the children

¹²⁵. This confirmed by articles in the 1948 issues of Liberal Judaism (see esp. January 1948)

under ten". He states further that individual war criminals must be dealt with mercilessly.

On German Jewry: "The history of German Jews in Germany is finished...but their history in the United States and Britain is only beginning..."

The article also reports that only 600 of the 60,000 Jews transported to Theresienstadt remained there when the Russians arrived in May. Baeck asked in the article that those who remained be given asylum in Switzerland while they decide where to go. He states forcefully that the few surviving German Jews wish not to return to Germany and describes the "chasm" which exists between Jews and the Germans whom they regard as guilty either by participation or silence. Finally, Baeck reveals that he is one of three survivors of his original transport of 2,000 and credits his survival to a bookkeeping error by the SS in which they confused him with another Jew of the same name who had died at the camp.

It is quite evident that these words expressed by one as lofty as Baeck surely had a stirring effect on the Jews of America privileged to hear or learn of them.

A final type of personal report from the pages of the Union's magazine was one which spoke of Remembrance. It praised the memorializing of the martyrs of the Holocaust by the American Jewish Congress in a modern Martyrology. In the December, 1943 Liberal Judaism there appeared an

editorial on the American Jewish Congress' publication of "Hitler's Ten Year War on the Jews" which it compares to the martyrologies (memor books) of medieval Europe. The editorial recalls that the first of these was published in Nuremberg in 1296 and goes on to state that this new volume will "preserve Israel's sense of community with the new martyrs of Nuremburg" whose current number it puts at 3,000,000. The editor ends with the hopeful declaration: "From Nuremberg to Nuremburg let us pray the cycle is completed".

With the completion of this examination of Personal Reports, there are just two more major catagories of reports left to be considered. They are the literary and "straight" news reports and they share one common attribute; both these catagories of reports were found primarily in the magazines and not in the bulletins.

Literary Reports

Literary reports were found almost exclusively in the Union's magazines and comprised a rather unique vehicle for reporting on and affecting the readerships perceptions of the Holocaust. Of all the various types of reporting, this one appeals to the reader's emotions more than any other. Most of the literary reports found were original pieces written for the magazine or translated from a foreign language publication (usually Yiddish).

One of the earliest instances of a literary report comes from the "What they say section" of the November, 1942 The Synagogue. It is of a reprint of Bialik's poem B'ir Haharegah with the addition of the comment that to these "lamentations of yore, add the Ir Haharegah of today."

More representative of the bulk of literary reports were the short stories. Studied chronologically, as they will be here, They reveal a progression of knowledge and understanding about the Holocaust by Reform Jews which substantiates the progression as revealed by the other forms of reporting. The earliest example, by Joseph Opatoshu, appeared in the May, 1943 Liberal Judaism. "Walls without Barriers" (translated from the Yiddish) tells of a learned man who teaches mishna in a Polish ghetto. A German protestant minister comes to consult with him on mishna and a translation of the apocrypha. The minister apologizes for the Nazi acts as he is leaving and explains that they were not the work of the German People, but of "Police agents in disguise". The teacher replies: "The Germans, so pugnacious, so overwhelmingly proud of the race, are not even human beings. They are to be pitied - they have so utterly lost their likeness to God."

The next short story to appear in the magazine was entitled "Expulsion from Vulke". It was a dramatized version of a Nazi round up and expulsion for deportation of Jews in a Russian Border town. The story ends with a call

to God by one of the townspeople. He challenges God to bring about a long overdue redemption of his people. The Rabbi in the story proposes that "whomever God loves He punishes" (taken from proverbs). This was one of the only stories published which included a crying out against God or any attempt at answering the question of why God has allowed these things to happen to his people.¹²⁶

In the short story "The Blacksmith's Son" which was mentioned previously, a rather gruesome and graphic picture of the bloodthirsty Nazi collaborator is given. He is crude, drunken, cold, and murderous. The story also contains an implied condemnation of European Gentiles who turned their backs on the Jews rather than taking the risk of helping them. As explained previously, the main character of this story is the crude son of a blacksmith who is kicked out of the Rumanian army for drunkenness. He is revealed to be a Nazi sympathizer when he leaves his house to greet the invading German forces. Along the way he comes upon a Jewish woman and her very young child. They are returning home after being denied sanctuary in the home of some gentile friends. The story concludes with a graphic depiction of the man's brutal murder of these two innocent and helpless Jews by running them over with his horse.¹²⁷

A fictional tale translated from the pages of the

¹²⁶. Liberal Judaism, July 1943

¹²⁷. Liberal Judaism, October, 1943

Yiddish publication Der Emes also portrays drunken Nazis killing a helpless Jew. It tells of a Jewish Crimean farmer being tortured, hung, and cremated on Yom Kippur by a band of drunken Nazis. The tale's powerful conclusion has the earth crying out: "Destroy, scorch, kill, strangle the two footed beasts of the accursed Hitlerite tribe.", a rather forceful statement of what the story's writer feels needs to be done.¹²⁸

Another story from the pages of Der Emes was found in the April, 1945 edition of Liberal Judaism. Entitled "What a Mother I Am!", it is the story of a Jewish mother and daughter in a Russian town occupied by the Nazis. It graphically describes the round up and confinement of the town's Jews in an open field surrounded by barbed wire, and the carting off of Jews each day for mass murder and burial. Included is a description of two men who were forced to dig the graves and return on the ghetto's next to last day in a corpse-like hysteria. The story ends with the mother being separated from her daughter (who goes to her death) when a pharmacist is needed. She is later freed by the partisans. The story concludes with a guilty lamentation by the mother. She relates that before the Nazis arrived, her daughter had stated a desire to join the partisans. The mother had selfishly denied her permission so as not to risk losing her. Now the mother realizes

¹²⁸. Liberal Judaism, August, 1944

guiltily that her daughter is indeed lost.

In contrast to these early short stories, those of a later post-war vintage are more positive and point to an ultimate triumph of good over evil and Jew over Nazi. A prime example of this is the 1945 short story "No Mercy". This story is about a German SA recruit who starts out as an undercover Nazi agitator in Austria hiding under the guise of a bell hop in a hotel wherein resides an elderly Jewish woman. After the Nazis enter Austria, he is sent to fight at the front. The soldier is wounded and transferred to a job as head of the reception center of an extermination camp. Here he again meets up with the elderly Jewish lady from the hotel. She recognizes the man as the friendly bell hop from the hotel and cries out to him for help. He calms her down and in gratitude she hands him a gold pocket watch, after which he sends her to her death. At war's end, we find the former SA man back at the Austrian hotel hiding under the civilian guise of desk clerk. The hotel is now the headquarters of one of the Allied War Crimes Tribunals. An Army lawyers asks the clerk for the time and the clerk pulls out the gold pocket watch. It turns out that the lawyer is an American relative of the elderly woman, he recognizes the watch and takes the clerk into custody for war crimes.¹²⁹

Similarly triumphant is a short story written by Rabbi

¹²⁹. Liberal Judaism, May 1945

Ely E. Pilchik. What makes this story unique is that it was the only one found which was written expressly for children. The story, "Prayerbooks are Our Weapons" begins:

"Some years ago there arose in Germany a cruel group of men called Nazis. Their leader was a mean, angry fellow with a loud, hoarse voice. He made slaves out of his own people, turned them into soldiers and began his march to conquer the world. He hated the Jews more than anyone else, because he knew the Jews prayed to God and taught everyone else to pray. He knew that as long as their prayers continued he could never conquer the world, so he tried to destroy them wherever they lived and demolished many synagogues."

Rabbi Pilchik continues by telling the children that into one of the few remaining synagogues (in Hamburg), marched a band of ten Nazis with clubs and guns and who said that they had heard weapons were being hid there and if they found any, all the Jews would be shot. The Nazis tear the place apart and finally come to an old closet in which they find...only a pile of old prayerbooks. The Rabbi then says to them: "You've found them. These are our weapons. These old prayerbooks are our weapons and ammunition. You will never conquer us."¹³⁰

One of the last Holocaust related short stories found in the magazines examined used children to make a point to Adults. The Story "The Mark" is a short story about a D.P. camp for children. A surgeon visiting there offers to remove the identifying "J", which the nazis had tattooed on the arms of the children, before they are dispersed to

¹³⁰. Liberal Judaism, December, 1946

foster homes around the world. Their leader angrily refuses and explains that it is a mark of "strength" for they survived and had victory over the Nazis, and a mark of pride in their Jewishness. Rather than fearing the possible negative attribute of it being an identifying factor, all the children are committed to eventually reaching Israel ("our own country") where being identified as a Jew is not a problem. In the story's conclusion, the surgeon tells a friend who is accompanying him that even though he has been hiding it in New York City where he lives, he is Jewish. He says that the children's way is the better way and hints "Maybe I will see him (the child) there." Thusly does this short story succinctly present to the reader the value of a strong Jewish identity in a way more powerful than any of the related personal reports of encouragement.

Poetry was also a literary form highly valued by the editors of the magazine as a format for Holocaust reporting. Appearing over a year later than the earliest short story was the first such poem, a black, dire piece entitled "Nazi Death Train" whose content is best explained by its title.¹³¹

A number of months later, in the November, 1944 issue of Liberal Judaism, there appeared a poem by David Polish entitled "Warsaw-1943" which was notable both for its message and its use of a Jewish literary format. This was a

¹³¹. Liberal Judaism, September 1944

poem in five parts (b'reshis - d'vorim) dedicated to the martyred ghetto fighters. It is written in their voices and at its conclusion they call on their surviving brethren to rebuild what has been destroyed.

The next piece of Holocaust related poetry did not appear until March of 1945. It was a rather more triumphant piece than the previous two which acquired its tone from one of the instances of war-time Jewish rescue, in this case of Torah scrolls. "The Rescued Scrolls", the afore mentioned poem, was inspired by the news that "synagogue scrolls, buried four years ago, are being brought forth in liberated regions..."¹³²

This tone did not carry over to the two poetic pieces found in the April, 1947 Liberal Judaism. One of them stood as an indictment of the German people's attempts to deny their guilt in the deaths of the six million. This poem, "Geniza Fragments" by Efraim M Rozenweig uses the voice of a slaughtered Jew to tell of the blood stains left in the wake of the Holocaust and mentions Maidanek and Dachau in the process. The Jew asks, at poem's end, If Germany will try and delete its guilt, washing away the blood with soap made from the Jew.

The other poem, "Passover (Cyprus, 1947)" by Harold Appelbaum, deals with another post-war problem, the dire circumstances of the DP's interned in camps such as those in

¹³². Liberal Judaism, March 1945

Cyprus and denied permission to fulfill their desire to emigrate to Palestine. In commenting on their plight, the poem concludes:

"But now no miracles of Exodus,
No flaming clouds appear, and here they stand,
The Jews in flight from hate and prejudice,
But with no Moses and no promised land."¹³³

The last of the poems found in the Union's magazine also speaks of those who have had to find new homes as a result of the Holocaust; in this case it speaks of the emigrant to America and it is a very positive appraisal of that person. The poem "Refugee" praises what a homeless refugee given haven and home in America gives back - a "dynamic" commitment to his new land.

Lastly, there was one more type of literary report found in the U.A.H.C.'s magazine. The May, 1943 issue of Liberal Judaism saw the publication of the complete script to the play "We Will Never Die". This play, produced and presented in New York's Madison Square Garden, was a lavish memorial to the "2,000,000 Jewish dead of Europe". It was notable mainly for its participants. First of all, amongst the players were included twenty European refugee rabbis who made a cameo appearance. Even more impressive, however, was the cast of people who made this production a reality. They consisted of some of the brightest stars of the theatrical scene: It was written by Ben Hecht, produced by Billy Rose,

¹³³. Liberal Judaism, April 1947

directed by Moss Hart, and scored by Kurt Weil.

"Straight" News Reports

Finally, we come to the "straight" news reports. These are differentiated from the descriptive personal reports in that they are presented as news items culled from a news organization or an unnamed source as opposed to being tied to the words of a known author or editor. These reports were found primarily in the magazines and consist of a vast amount of material. Every issue of the magazine contained at least one or two such reports; at the peak of the period studied (1944-47) nine or ten pieces in an issue was not unusual.

These reports followed the same progression of revelation of information to the readership as did all the previously described reports. As such an intensive review of this vast quantity of literature is not necessary for the purpose of this study with the exception of one exceptional report.

This news report appeared in the December, 1945 issue of Liberal Judaism and served as an appropriate summation of the various reports of the events of the Holocaust to which American Reform Jews were exposed. This report, "Crimes against the Jews" was the complete reprint of U.S. Prosecutor Robert A. Jackson's indictment of the Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials. The power of this single "straight" news

report is very apparent in the following excerpts taken from it:

"The most savage and numerous crimes planned by the Nazis were those against the Jews. . . They (the Jews) were few enough to be helpless and numerous enough to be held up as a menace. . . It is my purpose to show a plan and design, to which all Nazis were fanatically committed, to annihilate all Jewish people. . . The persecution policy against the Jews commenced with nonviolent measures, such as disenfranchisement and discriminations against their religion, and the placing of impediments in the way of success in economic life. It moved rapidly to organized mass violence against them, physical isolation in ghettos, forced labor, mass starvation, and extermination. . . Only remnants of the European Jewish Population remain. . . Of the 9,600,000 Jews...60% are...estimated...Perished. 5,700,000 Jews are missing (from their homelands)... 4,500,000 cannot be accounted for by normal death rate nor by emigration, nor are they included among DP's."

The indictment also includes quotes by Streicher and Hans Frank calling for world Jewish extermination and continues with four pages of recitation of various documents containing evidence of Jewish persecution and murder and plans for extermination. The piece ends powerfully:

"While a few defendants may show efforts to make specific exceptions to the policy of Jewish extermination, I have found no instance in which any defendant opposed the policy itself or sought to revoke or even modify it.

Determination to destroy the Jews was a binding force which at all times cemented the elements of this conspiracy...there is no one of them who has not echoed the rallying cry of Naziism - Duetschland erwache, Juda verrecke! (Germany Awake, Jewry Perish!)"¹³⁴

This report serves as a perfect tying together of all the

¹³⁴. Liberal Judaism, December, 1945

reports that have come before it. It also sets the stage for the examination of the various types of action American Reform Jews took in order to help their European brethren who, as the report shows, were so cruelly tortured by the Nazi "beasts". It brings to mind the question of the "tangible" reactions of these Jews to the events of the Holocaust such as support for various American institutions, political declarations and resolutions, observances, and the collection of European Jewish artifacts. These examinations comprise the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter IV: Tangible Reaction to the Holocaust

This chapter is entitled "tangible reactions" in order to differentiate the reactions of American Reform Jews being studied in this chapter from those already presented in the previous chapters. The reactions being studied here are classified as tangible in that they represent active reactions by American Reform Jews in response to the Holocaust as opposed to the emotional or intellectual reactions outlined by reports already presented. The reports presented in this section represent instances of "doing" in contrast to those which only involved "thinking".

The types of actions presented in this section will include involvement in relief efforts (this includes appeals for and cooperation with such efforts), religious observances, declarations and resolutions, use of the Holocaust to gain support for non-relief efforts and organizations, and collection of artifacts of European Jewry. It must be noted that in the case of relief efforts, the focus will be on American Reform Jewish participation in those efforts. The efforts which various national organizations such as the UJA or the JDC undertook in Europe and their effectiveness will not be examined except in so far as they relate to American Reform Jewish efforts as outlined within the publications under study in this report.

Involvement in Relief Efforts

The most common form of tangible reaction among American Reform Jews was involvement in relief efforts. The members of the congregations studied vigorously rallied on behalf of the efforts to relieve the plight of their distressed European brethren. Every congregation examined was involved in one or more of the national relief efforts on behalf of European Jewry. There were collections of food, clothing, cosmetics and comfort items (such as soap), medical items, children's needs (including toys), layettes, books, and religious needs (prayerbooks, Tefillin, etc.)

Appeals for European Jewish relief efforts began appearing as early as the beginning of the period under question. However, such appeals did not begin to appear with any significant frequency until the latter half of 1944 (with the liberation of various parts of Europe and continued well into the end of the period being studied. Such appeals included general appeals for relief and appeals for relief which were tied directly to national relief organizations.

Every bulletin studied contained a large number of general appeals for aid in relief efforts. Such appeals asked for donations of food, clothing, and medical items. They did not mention which, if any, organizations the

donations would be channeled through.¹³⁵ Some of the more unique general appeals found included one for Tefillin, a number for books, and one which asked gifts for European Jewish children.

The appeal for tefillin appear in the Beth Israel bulletin of Hartford, Connecticut. It was presented as follows:

"For overseas - If you have at home Tefillin which are not being used please bring them to the temple for shipment abroad. Our homeless brethren are asking for them for use int their daily prayers."¹³⁶

Related to this appeal were the numerous general appeals for books as most of them specifically mentioned the need for prayerbooks by the displaced Jews of Europe.

One such appeal was published in the form of the Rabbis message. In the December 21, 1945 Miami Temple Israel bulletin, the Rabbis message makes mention of a letter from the HUC librarian which asked congregations to collect books and send them to European Jewish communities in need. In announcing that the congregation is about to mount just such an effort, the message explains that:

"This is now an opportunity to show that we really believe that "men do not live by Israel alone." Undoubtedly we shall support to the fullest extent the coming campaign for relief and

¹³⁵. For examples see: Keneseth Israel bulletin, Philadelphia, Pa, October, 1946, and Free Synagogue, New York, NY, December 9, 1947.

¹³⁶. Beth Israel Bulletin, Hartford, CT, October 1948

rehabilitation. Prayer books are badly needed.

Please send your volumes to Temple Israel. We shall see to it that they reach their proper destination."

The very same congregation included, a few months later, a call to the religious school children to bring to the temple Purim gifts to be distributed to Jewish children overseas.

This appeal came in the form of a speech to the children by the president of the Temple sisterhood. The following report of that speech appeared in the Temple's bulletin:

"She requested that each and every child of the Sunday school be sure to bring some little gift for some poor unfortunately in Europe for Purim. Gifts are to be one of two articles: either two candles or a box of crayons. Be sure to wrap it nicely and put your name and address on it. Maybe someday you'll receive a letter of thanks from some boy or some girl in Europe."

A reminder of this effort was included in the Purim party announcement which followed the report.

As plentiful as these general appeals were, even more numerous and intensive were the appeals which were tied to national relief organizations. The appeals of this type which were found prominently included appeals for the Jewish Welfare Fund (JWF), the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), and the SOS (Save our Overseas Survivors) Campaign of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC).

One of the earliest such Jewish Welfare Fund appeals was this one found dated January 2, 1942.

"Now, more than ever, in addition to our duties as Americans, we must make sacrifices and give

generously to the Jewish welfare fund which, through the Joint Distribution Committee, will feed and clothe Jews in all parts of the world who suffer because of cruel tyrants..."

The appeal concludes by reminding the reader that we, living in America are the only hope of our fellow Jews in war torn countries.¹³⁷

Appearing later in the war-time period was this even more forceful JWF appeal from the Worcester, Massachusetts Temple Emanuel bulletin.

"Never in human history have Jews faced an hour as dark as this one. Only shame for the name of man keeps one from describing the brutality and savagery of the attack upon the Jews of Europe.

The Jews are further described in this appeal as "the supreme victims of this war."¹³⁸

How deeply those Jews were victimized, however, was not completely clear to those congregants until a time closer to the war's end (at least as reflected in the reporting described in previous chapters). Therefore, it should come as no surprise that not only did the frequency of these JWF reports increase after the wars end, but their tone became more urgent. A perfect example of this is a post-war JWF appeal from Emanu El bulletin of San Francisco. It announce a city-wide JWF appeal for \$2,150,000. which the temple is participating in. The money is being raised to "succor European Jewry in its fight for survival." No longer is it

¹³⁷. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, January 2, 1942

¹³⁸. Emanuel bulletin, Worcester, MA, April 30, 1943

just a matter of raising money to alleviate their suffering, it is now a case of giving the remnant of European Jewry *the means to survive*. As further incentive, the appeal also includes this message from President Truman:

"In your effort to alleviate the plight of the victims of Hitler and place them on the road to recovery, you are performing tasks which will contribute to the reconstruction of countries and people shattered by war and persecution."¹³⁹

Appeals on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal's efforts for European Jewry were even more widespread than those of the JWF, and they often appeared with more frequency. But, they did follow much the same course of development as those of the JWF.

One of the first UJA appeals of this nature found in the material under investigation was found in the Sisterhood News section of the February 12, 1943 issue of New York's Central Synagogue bulletin. It comments that the money being raised on behalf of the UJA will support the "work of saving the lives, binding up the wounds and reviving the hope of the pitiful victims of the Nazi mad cruelty." Only one month later the Sisterhood UJA chairwoman emphasizes the above appeal by calling for "instantaneous and enthusiastic support in the task of helping save our stricken brothers and sisters who are being tortured across the seas."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹. Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, May 14, 1947

¹⁴⁰. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, March 12, 1943

As with the first JWF appeal presented, there was a UJA appeal which made mention of the readers' obligation as Americans to help out. In this case, that obligation was seen as growing out of a thankfulness for the liberty enjoyed in this land which is denied to those in Europe. It states "let us do our full share in proportion to our abundance". The appeal concludes by appealing to a desire to counteract Hitler in its ending statement: WE will feel better by doing the opposite of Hitler and his gang, not hurting, but helping."¹⁴¹

With the revelations of the actual condition of European Jewry as the war in Europe ended, the UJA appeals also became more frequent and far more urgent. A prime example is the following report by Dr. Jonah Wise on the 1946 UJA campaign which appeared in his congregation's bulletin.

"By far the weakest of all Europe's elements today is the Jew. Many have neither country, nor home, nor friends. Anti-semitism has destroyed every vestige of human relations in many countries in which the Jews have lived for centuries.

The United Jewish Appeal is his friend and the United Jewish Appeal must come to his rescue or else he will perish in the festering mess of a diseased and defeated continent."¹⁴²

A similar urgency was expressed in an appeal entitled "Remember the Children". This appeal spoke of the 185,000

¹⁴¹. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, September 1944

¹⁴². Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, December 9, 1946

Jewish children in Europe who were totally dependent on American Jews for the food, clothing, shelter, and medicine they needed to *survive* until such time that they were given the opportunity to emigrate.¹⁴³

The UJA appeals exhibited one more trait common to many of the Jewish Relief Organization appeals of this period, a significant change in tenor with the establishment of the State of Israel. With the establishment of the new Jewish state, both the situation of the Jewish displaced persons in Europe and types of needs that had to be met with money raised by American Jewish organizations were altered significantly. This change of events was reflected in the UJA appeals among others.

A July 1948 appeal in the Free Synagogue's bulletin stressed that even with the new state of Israel, the war for Jewish survival continued. There were still Jews in the DP camps and in East Europe who were in need of aid and relief according to this appeal. However, toward the end of 1948 and onward there is a switching of gears. The focus moves from DP's in Europe to DP's emigrating from Europe (especially to Israel) and also away from DP's altogether and a total focus on Israel's needs.

This progression is especially evident in the three following UJA appeals from 1948, 1951, and 1952. 1948: A UJA appeal suddenly switches gears and appeals for help for

¹⁴³. Free Synagogue, New York, NY, Oct 12, 1948

Israel and problems arising from mass immigration to that country.¹⁴⁴ 1951: The women's UJA drive reports a need for vast funds because of the "pressing deadlines for immediate removal of European Jews to Israel."¹⁴⁵ 1952: The UJA women's appeal now uses descriptions of Jews in Israel, Arab countries, and behind the Iron Curtain, as examples of the need for money - It no longer relies on appeals for the survivors.¹⁴⁶ While the last of these reports may have merely reflected the fact that by 1952, DP's were no longer a grave problem, the first two certainly show the significant effect the establishment of Israel had on the appeals on behalf of European Judaism, moving the focus of such appeals from survival in Europe to life in a new homeland.

Finally, the last of the three most significant organizational appeals found in the literature examined was the Save our Overseas Survivors campaign adopted by the Temple Sisterhoods and administered through the Joint Distribution Committee. The SOS was the most important of all the charity campaigns participated in by American Reform Jews of this period. Reference to it and participation in it was found in every one of the temple bulletins studied for this project. No other appeal of any kind was as

¹⁴⁴. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, November 19, 1948

¹⁴⁵. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, May 16, 1951

¹⁴⁶. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, April 2, 1952

prevalent as the SOS was during this period.

The SOS was begun after the war's end to aid and relieve the last remnants of European Jewry. From the very beginning of 1946, SOS appeals were found everywhere in large quantities. These appeals were mainly for goods as opposed to money. They asked for such things as food, clothing, medicine, books, and layette supplies. Even with the emotional effect of the Holocaust on American Reform Jews, the campaign must have gotten off to a slow start in some places causing the publication of appeals which would express disappointment at the difficulties the campaign was having. One such report concluded: "We have forgotten all of our pious promises to save lives."¹⁴⁷

From the end of 1946 until the campaign's conclusion in 1949, however, participation by American Reform Jews in SOS seems to have been widespread and vigorous as reflected in the materials studied. These materials revealed both intense appeals and, as will be examined later, intense participation. The following SOS appeals culled from a number of different congregations are typical of the SOS appeals found throughout this period.

A 1946 appeal in the San Francisco Emanu El bulletin announces that the "Yamim Noraim" (the week from Rosh Hashana to Yom Kippur) are being designated "SOS week". A goal of 10 million cans of food collected was set for this

¹⁴⁷. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, May 24, 1946

campaign. The appeal entreated the congregants to participate saying:

"Responsibility for the survival of the present generation of Jews in Europe rests almost completely with us. Without us, they may die. With us, they can still become healthy, happy citizens, able to take their rightful place in the sun."¹⁴⁸

Another SOS appeal which tied itself to a proximate Jewish holiday was an April appeal from the Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin. This appeal made use of the coming observance of Passover:

"As we commemorate the exodus from the tyranny of Egypt, our hearts go out to the Jewish people of Europe. Especially to the children. What can we do to help them forget the horrors they have suffered?"

The appeal continues with the announcement of an intensive spring SOS campaign at the temple.¹⁴⁹ Though this campaign made mention of spring, winter was the season that brought out some of the most intense campaigns.

Winter, with its harsh conditions, was the time of the DP's most urgent needs. This appeal from November of 1947 makes prominent mention of the season:

"Another winter of distress and lonely isolation now confronts victims of the Hitler program. The evil that man did lives after him. As a matter of fact, it has grown in effectiveness after his death and the death of his trusted confederates. The SOS of the Joint Distribution Committee offers

¹⁴⁸. Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, September 13, 1946

¹⁴⁹. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, April 11, 1947

a means of immediate help."¹⁵⁰

One of the most poignant SOS appeals found in the bulletins was this winter appeal:

"A little Girls Coat from America - It wasn't a new coat. But it was warm and clean. And it came from America.

An so a little girl in France clapped her hands with joy because there was someone who cared.

If your time and whatever you give can bring new life, new hope, and perhaps a smile to a face that has known no expression for years, isn't that a magnificent return for a small deed?

Remember that little girl and the thousands more like her who need your help - and get your bundle together for the SOS."¹⁵¹

This use of children in the SOS appeals was not unusual, in fact it was quite frequent.

The distressed Jewish Children were often spoken of in the SOS appeals as a way of tugging at the heart strings of the readership. Babies were mentioned with a special frequency as the need for layette supplies was especially great. One such appeal called these babies being born in the DP camps the survivors' "answer to Hitler". While participation in the efforts of relief organizations could be called the American Reform Jews' "answer to Hitler", not all national organizations raising funds for the relief of European Jewry were supported.

In point of fact, one organization was warned against

¹⁵⁰. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, November 5, 1947

¹⁵¹. Beth Israel bulletin, Hartford, CT, December 1947

across the board. This was the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe, a Revisionist Zionist organization which sponsored large ads in major newspapers during 1944 which sought funds to save Jews from death at the hands of the Nazis. The focus of this study is not to make judgments as to the validity or lack thereof in the efforts of any of the national relief organizations, it is only interested in the American Reform Jews relationship to those organizations. As such, no judgement of the Revisionists efforts is implied in the following review of American Reform Jewish warnings against contributing to this effort.

Typical of the warnings published in the bulletins was one from the KAM bulletin which stated that the "Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe" is not an endorsed agency, nor does it seem to be involved directly in any relief efforts in Europe.¹⁵²

The strongest warnings against this group were found in a couple of issues of Liberal Judaism. An article outlining criticisms of the "Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish people of Europe" characterized the group as one without mandate to speak for the community. It states further that the group uses unethical methods to gather money (e.g. implying money will be used to ransom individual Jews and using signature of congressmen without authorization). Lastly, it is called an organization whose activities had

¹⁵². KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, November 1, 1944

caused "discord, resulting frequently in a disservice to the cause they had assumed to represent."¹⁵³

An editorial in a later issue warns off readers from giving support to groups sponsored by the Revisionists and Irgun. One of these is the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People of Europe. They are called a "self-appointed" group without mandate and with unscrupulous methods. The editorial states that there is no evidence of their having used money raised for rescue of Jews. The group is said to have only jeopardized the cause by disrupting Jewish solidarity.

This one group aside, American Reform Jewish response to these appeals, as evidenced in the bulletins' reporting of their participation, was widespread and intensive. Paradigmatic of participation in these efforts is the congregations' reported participation in the SOS campaign. Reports of participation in this campaign will now be examined with the understanding that the types of participation outlined here were similarly repeated in reports of participation in other organizations' relief efforts.

Reports of participation in the SOS campaign were especially prevalent as it was the adopted campaign of most of the Temple Sisterhoods of the congregations studied. There were reports of participation of a general nature and reports of participation by various temple groups such as

¹⁵³. Liberal Judaism, January, 1944

the sisterhood, the youth, and the religious school.

There were many reports of general participation in the SOS campaign thanking the congregants for their generous donations and their active volunteer efforts.¹⁵⁴ There were also reports of a number of rather different campaign efforts. One of these was a door to door canvassing effort on behalf of SOS mounted by KAM in Chicago.¹⁵⁵ The volunteers for this effort chose a different section of the city in which to canvass for donations each week.

Emanu El in Dallas, Texas, made use of their observance of Sukkot to collect cans of food for the SOS campaign. In the October 8, 1946 issue of their bulletin congregants were asked to bring cans of food to Sukkot services and place them around the Sukkah from which they will be collected and sent to the SOS. The bulletin's Sisterhood report repeats this appeal for canned food. A message in a subsequent issue of the bulletin tells of a great response to the call for canned food to be placed around the Sukkah. It also makes note of a renewal of collection of shoes and clothes with a similar generous response. A report follows entitled "SOS Needs Generously Met" which states that 3,347 cans of food and a large quantity of medical supplies

¹⁵⁴. For examples see Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, February, 1946, and Bnai Abraham Zion, Chicago, IL, April 23, 1948

¹⁵⁵. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, March 16, 1948

were collected over Sukkot.¹⁵⁶

Other special general efforts included the declaration of a special SOS collection day at Emanu El in San Francisco¹⁵⁷ and the formation of an SOS literature committee at the Central Synagogue in New York City. This literature committee was able to mount a highly successful drive for books (especially medical and professional journals) for Jews in the DP camps.¹⁵⁸

As was intimated earlier, the sisterhoods of the congregations were heavily involved in the SOS campaign. Examples of thank you notes from the JDC to the sisterhoods abounded. Most took the form of one such note reprinted in the Central Synagogue bulletin which thanked the sisterhood for their "continued and devoted service" and concluded with an appeal for further donations to the SOS campaign.¹⁵⁹

Some sisterhoods were also awarded certificates of merit for their exemplary efforts on behalf of the campaign. One sisterhood awarded such a certificate was the Emanuel Sisterhood of Greensboro, NC. They were awarded the certificate "for oversubscribing the 1947 quota of 20,000 lbs...(the sisterhood) sent 21,328 lbs."¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶. Emanu El bulletin, Dallas, TX, November 1, 1946

¹⁵⁷. Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, November 2, 1948

¹⁵⁸. Central Synagogue bulletin, New York, NY, May 5, 1948

¹⁵⁹. Central Synagogue, New York, NY, September 6, 1946

¹⁶⁰. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, February, 1948

In addition to collecting food, the sisterhoods were active in collecting medical items and clothing. Not only did many sisterhoods collect clothing, some formed SOS sewing groups to repair old clothing and make new pieces.¹⁶¹

Another item the sisterhoods were active in collecting were layettes. Many children were being born in the DP camps and the need for layette supplies was great. The sisterhoods answered that need by raising money to donate to the SOS which was earmarked for layette supplies.¹⁶²

Another sisterhood technique used to secure donations to the SOS was to sponsor programs whose admission fee was an SOS donation. The Emanu El sisterhood of Dallas, Texas sponsored just such a program. The published agenda for that sisterhood's annual mother and daughter service and luncheon, to which layette articles were a portion of the admission price, included: "Prayer and dedication of SOS layettes . . . (please bring used and new layette articles to be placed on the altar before the morning service.)"¹⁶³

This method, of making SOS donations the admission price for an event, was the most widely employed of the methods used by the temple youth groups to participate in the SOS campaign. Some youth groups made the donation of

¹⁶¹. For examples see Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, January, 1948, and Emanuel bulletin, Worcester, MA, January 23, 1948.

¹⁶². Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, March, 1948

¹⁶³. Emanu El bulletin, Dallas, TX, April 7, 1948

food or clothing to SOS a part of the admission fee for every event they sponsored during the period of the campaign¹⁶⁴, while others sponsored special events to which the admission was a donation. The Junior Alumni group of Emanu El in San Francisco, California sponsored a dance with this purpose in mind¹⁶⁵; similarly, the Keneseth Israel Alumni advertised an annual turkey dinner whose admission price in 1947 was \$.50 and two cans of food for SOS.¹⁶⁶

Other efforts made by temple youth organizations included canvassing for donations and volunteering their time to congregational SOS campaign efforts.¹⁶⁷

One other major group within the congregations which actively supported the SOS campaign was the religious school. The children of the religious school were frequently being asked to bring articles into school for donation to the SOS. At times these collections were tied in with a holiday observance such as Sukkot¹⁶⁸ and Thanksgiving.¹⁶⁹ In other cases, the religious school children would participate in the campaign for pedagogical reasons. This was

¹⁶⁴. Keneseth Israel, Philadelphia, PA, November, 1946

¹⁶⁵. Emanu El, San Francisco, CA, December 27, 1946

¹⁶⁶. Keneseth Israel bulletin, Philadelphia, PA, December, 1947

¹⁶⁷. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, July 1, 1947, and February 10, 1948

¹⁶⁸. Emanuel bulletin, Worcestor, MA, October 9, 1946

¹⁶⁹. Temple Israel, Miami, FL, November 21, 1947

expressed in a report of one religious school's participation in the campaign which noted that participation in the SOS campaign was making "the full meaning of Tzedakah" a reality for the children.¹⁷⁰

One final and rather unique example of religious school participation in the SOS campaign was found in the bulletin of KAM in Chicago. In the April 8, 1947 issue there was included a notice to the effect that all the clothing in the religious school's lost and found will go to SOS unless claimed by the end of the week.

By May of 1949 the JDC brought the SOS campaign to an end. Announcements from the JDC stating this were reprinted in a few bulletins. The message informed the congregations: "mission accomplished - project ended". The message also gave the information that only 75,000 DP's were still left in European camps and they were being evacuated at a rate of 7,000 per month. The message concluded by reporting that in three years of operation, 26,000,000 lbs of supplies were sent to Europe.¹⁷¹

Another type of relief effort that many congregations participated in did not involve collections, instead it involved personally helping people. Many American Reform Jews were involved with helping Jewish refugees who had

¹⁷⁰. Keneseth Israel bulletin, Philadelphia, PA, December, 1947

¹⁷¹. Bnai Abraham Zion, Chicago, IL, May 20, 1947

immigrated to the United States. Sometimes these refugees were orphaned children to whom these Jews gave foster homes or adopted.¹⁷² Other instances involved whole refugee families whose settlement in a given town was assisted by a congregation in that town.¹⁷³

An unusual example of aid to a group of refugee Jews who had immigrated to the United States was found in the Keneseth Israel bulletin of Philadelphia. It contained an acknowledgement of a gift from Congregation Tikvah Chado-shah. The members of this congregation were all refugees forced out of Europe by Hitler. The report notes that they have been holding their services and meetings in Keneseth Israel's buildings ever since they had emigrated from Europe.

Finally, a number of congregations conducted relief efforts that took the form of "special projects". A special project in which many congregations participated was the donation of Torah Scrolls to liberated Jewish communities attempting to reorganize in Europe. An item in the May, 1945 issue of Liberal Judaism lists seventeen U.A.H.C. congregations who gave a total of 19 Torah Scrolls to such communities. Temple Emanuel of Worcester, MA reported on

¹⁷². For examples see: KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 5, 1946 and December 10, 1946, and Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 5, 1945, and March 8, 1946. Also see Liberal Judaism, February, 1949 for a report of a refugee Jewish child being adopted by a Miami couple.

¹⁷³. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, September, 1949

its participation in this effort as follows:

"The Temple Donates a Sefer Torah - With the liberation of many peoples of Europe, the Jews are once again creating their lives in more normal patterns. The wanton destruction by the Nazis was directed not only upon life and goods, but upon spirit as well. Synagogues and their sacred scrolls were burned and pillaged. Now, in their new free lives, these people need many things - food, clothing, shelter, schools, synagogues, scrolls. In cooperation with many of the congregations of the country, we are sending one of our scrolls to a liberated area of Europe. This action was taken by a vote of our board of trustees."¹⁷⁴

Another type of special project involved the "adoption" of a Jewish group overseas such as a Jewish children's organization.

The November, 1945 issue of Greensboro, North Carolina's Emanuel bulletin contained the following report:

"Special Project: Council - Sisterhood has adopted a children's home in France. We want to do something for the Jewish children who have survived. Encourage your children to donate toys . . . council will box and ship."

The response to this adoption was generous and as a result the children of the religious school received a thank you note from the Jewish children in the French home a few months later. That thank you note is credited with inspiring the children of the religious school to "devote" the charity collections for the next two months to taking care of some of the needs of these children in France.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴. Emanuel, Worcestor, MA, December 15, 1944

¹⁷⁵. Emanuel bulletin, Greensboro, NC, November, 1945

Another "adoption" of this type was carried out by the KAM religious school. They report adopting a Budapest Jewish religious school composed of children who lost their parents during the Holocaust. The KAM children pledged themselves to trying to supply the Hungarian students with needed educational and relief supplies.¹⁷⁶ A few months later the KAM bulletin published a thank you note from the school in Budapest to the Kam children which included the following:

"During the Nazi regime, we have collected 340 children, whose parents have fled, been deported or killed outright, from the flats abandoned, in the streets left alone, or from the police stations. We gave them a warm home and much more....

We shall all be greatly thankful for every bit of help you so generously suggested - and I give you the names of four children to start correspondence with."

The note is followed by a report that total donations thus far include \$25 and a large number of toys.¹⁷⁷

Relief efforts were not the only tangible reactions to the Holocaust by American Reform Jews. Another type involved the use of the Holocaust in propaganda efforts for various organizations or appeals.

Use of the Holocaust as a Support Vehicle

The Holocaust was used as a vehicle to inspire the

¹⁷⁶. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, December, 10, 1946

¹⁷⁷. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, March 11, 1947

support of a number of appeals or organizations during the period under examination. One of the earliest instances of this usage found appeared in the May 7, 1942 issue of the Chicago Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin. In this case, mention of the actions of the Nazis was used in order to gain support for the war bond drive. The appeal for this drive mentioned that:

"meetings have been held all over the country protesting the atrocities of the axis powers.

A meeting was held last Wed. at the Washington Blvd. Temple and our protest will be in the language our enemies understand: to furnish the wherewithal which will lead to their destruction."

Another type of effort that made such use of the Holocaust were various educational efforts.

Some of these efforts were promotions for the observance of Jewish Book Month. An apt example comes from the November 1, 1945 issue of Philadelphia's Keneseth Israel bulletin. The following passage was run under the banner "The Parchment Burned, But the Letters Soar Upward - Talmud"

"The holocaust which withered the Jewish communities of Europe, and destroyed generations - old centers of study and research, makes even more important than formerly the preservation, by the Jews of America, of the ancient Jewish tradition of learning. This tradition finds further expression in the observance of Jewish book month

. . . "178

Another type of educational effort which made use of the

178. Other examples can be found in the Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, May 1945, and in Liberal Judaism, November, 1944 (which includes an illustration of a poster for Jewish book month showing a Torah Scroll being cremated in Europe).

Holocaust was one which merely promoted the taking of advantage of Jewish educational opportunities.

An article run under the title "Is Jewish Education the Means Toward Jewish Survival" states that:

"Education has been the fortress of Judaism. Today the great citadels of Jewish learning in European countries have been totally annihilated."

The article continues by pointing out that Jewish educational opportunities are abundant in the United States and must be taken advantage of them to insure Jewish survival.¹⁷⁹

Appeals for increased temple attendance also made use of the events of the Holocaust to drum up support. One message that decried low temple attendance recalled that "We overcame destruction and dispersal and deportation and all manner of evil things, and still retained our religion". It then concludes, rather sarcastically, "I am sure we will find a way to overcome the influence of football and basketball too."¹⁸⁰

A bit more serious was an article in the KAM bulletin on the poor attendance at services by Jews as opposed to other faiths. This article concludes that:

"In our day with millions of our brethren dead, martyrs to God's name, it is our duty as the strongest Jewry in the world to keep flying the banner of faith which our people have followed throughout the ages."

¹⁷⁹. Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, November 22, 1946

¹⁸⁰. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, April 1945

Under the articles conclusion is then run the banner "Where do you plan to be next Friday evening?".¹⁸¹

Finally, the Holocaust was found being used to cull support for various Reform Jewish organizations. For instance, an appeal for the World Union of Progressive Judaism declared that "The value of this organization becomes increasingly evident for the spiritual readjustment and well-being of the dispossessed of Europe who have been forced to find refuge wherever unkind fate has cast their lot."¹⁸²

Another organization which included in its appeal a Holocaust related statement was Hebrew Union College. In an appeal for support that found its way into a number of bulletins, the college reminds the prospective donors that HUC "PROVIDES a haven in Cincinnati for eleven famous scholars driven from their home by Hitlerism, the last remnant of the great Jewish culture of Europe".¹⁸³

The combined campaign of the U.A.H.C. and the College also included a mention of the events of the Holocaust in one of its appeals. This appeal noted that the loss of Europe's centers of Jewish culture necessitated the strong support of HUC-JIR as one of the citadels of Jewish learning

¹⁸¹. KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, February 26, 1946

¹⁸². Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, April, 1945

¹⁸³. Emanu El bulletin, San Francisco, CA, January 4, 1949

in the world.¹⁸⁴

A final call for support that made use of the post-war events related to the Holocaust is a very intriguing twist on the use of the Holocaust to cull support for American Reform Jewish institutions. These appeals made note of the fact that with all the relief efforts which were focused on the situation in Europe, support of American institutions was becoming perilously low. A message from President Eisendrath in the April/May, 1949 issue of Liberal Judaism calls for a reapportionment of peoples giving from groups such as the UJA to support of American Reform Jewish institutions (such as HUC and UAHC). He notes that money is now needed more here and needed less in Europe and that all that has been done in the past few years (in terms of Jewish relief and rehabilitation) will be for naught if American Judaism is allowed to perish. Eisendrath's message is written very carefully, he seems very aware that he is walking on political eggshells here!

Eisendrath's message is reiterated in an item in the next issue of Liberal Judaism entitled "Rabbis decry religious starvation". This article repeats the plea that "overseas relief and philanthropy must not be allowed to enfeeble . . . American Jewish religious and cultural institutions."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴. Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, March 21, 1952

¹⁸⁵. Liberal Judaism, June/July, 1949

All of the American Reform Jew's tangible reactions were not comprised of appeals or participation in appeals of one sort or another, there were also reactions such as those which involved public memorial observances.

Memorial Observances

Such memorial observances were performed during the war on behalf of those such as the Warsaw Ghetto fighters.¹⁸⁶ They also took place in great numbers after the war in memory of the six million Jewish martyrs of the Holocaust.¹⁸⁷

A unique observance was held at Temple Israel of Miami, FL in April of 1945 in commemoration of the Warsaw ghetto uprising. This observance was unique in that it concluded with the adoption by those present of a series of resolutions on behalf of European Jewry to be forwarded to the President, Congress, and State Department.¹⁸⁸

Declarations and Resolutions

There were other Reform Jewish groups in America which composed declarations and resolutions to be forwarded to their government representatives. In 1944, Temple Israel of

¹⁸⁶. Emanu El bulletin, Dallas, TX, 1944

¹⁸⁷. For examples see: Beth Israel bulletin, Hartford, CT, May 1945 and KAM bulletin, Chicago, IL, September 25, 1945.

¹⁸⁸. Temple Israel, Miami, FL, April 23, 1945

Detroit, Michigan adopted one such resolution at their annual meeting. The resolution begins: "Whereas, it has become a matter of public knowledge that the Jews of Nazi-occupied countries are marked for extermination..." It then called for the establishment of free ports in the US for refugee Jews and advocated the establishment of the same in other countries noting it is still possible for some Jews to escape through underground avenues.¹⁸⁹

A report of a similar declaration was published only one month later in the bulletin of Beth Israel of Hartford, CT as follows:

"By vote of the Trustees of the congregation, President Hartman and Rabbi Feldman sent a formal declaration to the President of the United States and to the Senators and Representatives in Congress from the state of Connecticut, asking their good offices to establish free ports for refugees in the United States. The petition of the congregation was published in the congressional record.¹⁹⁰

Lastly, a report in Liberal Judaism, May, 1947 tells of a declaration adopted by the U.A.H.C. executive board which dealt with providing a haven in Palestine for the remnant of European Jewry that remained homeless and wandering.

The declaration demands that Palestine, "the chief haven of refugee now possible for the pitiful remnant of Jews, especially those in the DP camps...", be open to the

¹⁸⁹. Liberal Judaism, August 1944

¹⁹⁰. Beth Israel bulletin, Hartford, CT, September, 1944

admittance of as many Jews as possible during the period that the Palestine question is being considered by the UN. Copies were sent to the US President (Truman) and US representative to the UN (Austin) and the Secretary of State (Marshall).

One final type of tangible response to the Holocaust remains to be examined, that of the collection of artifacts of European Jewry by American congregations.

Collection of Artifacts of European Jewry

In the period of the liberation of parts of Europe and in the years following the end of World War II, many objects from the destroyed Jewish communities of Europe made their way to American Reform congregations for preservation, display, and use. Congregations added many of the religious objects to their temples for use in regular religious observances, while other artifacts were put on display or in congregational Holocaust museums.

Examples of these acquisitions include a silver yad by Beth Israel of Hartford, Connecticut in 1944,¹⁹¹ and a yad and breastplate acquired in 1951 by Temple Israel of Miami.¹⁹² All of these items are described as having originated in destroyed European synagogues.

A most interesting example of such collecting of

¹⁹¹. Beth Israel bulletin, Hartford, CT, September, 1944

¹⁹². Temple Israel bulletin, Miami, FL, November 2, 1951

artifacts comes from the October, 1952 issue of Hartford, Connecticut's Beth Israel bulletin. It reports on the Simchat Torah dedication of a newly acquired "Holocaust" torah scroll. The Scroll plaque inscription identifying it as such is printed in the bulletin. Also obtained from the destroyed European synagogue was a yad and a spice box. The report concludes with the mention of the acquisition of a rather unusual and gruesome Holocaust "artifact": 3 bars of soap made by the Nazis from Jewish bodies, they are marked RIF for Reines Juden Fett (clear Jewish fat).

With this last report, this examination of American Reform Jewish Reporting during the Holocaust comes to a close. All that remains is the conclusion which will attempt to use the picture presented by the reports in this examination to sum up its answer to three questions about the American Reform Jewish laity: When did they know about the Holocaust?, What did they know?, and How did they react to that knowledge?.

Chapter V: Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, the inspiration for this study was found in earlier studies on a similar subject. In these earlier studies, the knowledge of and reaction to the Holocaust by American Jewish leadership of that period was studied. Many of these studies were critical of the ways in which this leadership acted upon information of the Holocaust which was received early in the period. These studies did not, however, attempt to examine the knowledge and reactions of the American Jewish laity. Little attention was paid in these studies as to what the average layperson knew of the Jewish persecutions in Europe, when that knowledge was such that the person was aware of the magnitude of the Holocaust, or what that layperson's actions and reactions to that knowledge were.

So inspired, this study chose to examine the knowledge and reactions of one portion of that laity, the American Reform Jew. Through the preceding study of American Reform Jewish reporting of the Holocaust, an interesting picture of the understanding and actions of the American Reform Jew in relation to the Holocaust came into focus.

As to knowledge of the Holocaust, the reports studied showed that the majority of American Reform Jews had knowledge of Nazi persecution of European Jewry from the very beginning of period in question for this study (1942-

1952). This did not, however, mean that, at that point in time, they had any understanding of the magnitude of this persecution, which is a central characteristic of any definition of the Holocaust; nor does it mean that the American Reform Jew had an early knowledge of the methods of murder being used, those methods being another unique aspect of the Holocaust's definition.

While these reports showed knowledge of Jewish persecution to be widespread early on in the period of study (by the end of 1943, every source studied had published at least one report which evidenced such knowledge), the same was not true of knowledge of the Holocaust.¹⁹³ Only one temple bulletin examined contained a report prior to the time of the earliest Allied liberation of a death camp that could be said to have evidenced knowledge of the Holocaust.¹⁹⁴

The story was a bit different in terms of the magazine published by the U.A.H.C., the American Reform Jewish lay organization. The first such report found in this publication appeared in the July 1943 issue of Liberal Judaism. However it must be pointed out that this was a unique report and reports in the magazine which evidenced knowledge of the Holocaust did not appear in any quantity or with any great

¹⁹³. Knowledge of the Holocaust being defined as an understanding of the unique methods and magnitude of the Nazi persecution in Europe, including that it was a systematic plan of extermination.

¹⁹⁴. Bnai Abraham Zion bulletin, Chicago, IL, January 8, 1943

frequency until the later half of 1944.

Between the last few months of 1944 and the first few months of 1945, most every publication examined gave evidence of knowledge of the Holocaust. Given that reports from the liberated death camps were appearing generally around this same period this is not unexpected. The reports do paint an unexpected picture of very little early knowledge of the Holocaust (as opposed to knowledge merely of Jewish persecution) by the American Reform Laity of the period.

This being said, what kind of reaction did American Reform Jews have to the knowledge they were receiving. The reports showed reactions both of an emotional type, and of a tangible type. The most prevalent emotional reactions included disbelief and despair. Many American Reform Jews seemed to have a problem believing the reports they were receiving, either because of the magnitude of these reports or the incomprehensibility of that being described. This problem was demonstrated by the numerous types of reporting, such as religious analogies, personal reports, and literary reports, which were used to make the events in Europe more comprehensible and thus more affecting.

The other prevalent emotional reaction, despair, was rather expected given the almost total universalism prevalent amongst Reform Jews of this period; once again their people was being set apart for persecution and murder. The

great despair among American Reform Jews was evidenced by the mass of reports found whose central purpose was encouragement. These reports attempted to strengthen the American Reform Jew through the strength of his tradition and reports of non-Jews defiantly aiding his brethren in Europe against the Nazis.

Tangible reactions found included prayer, support of the war effort, support of relief efforts, political declarations and resolutions, and preservation of what remained of the destroyed European Jewish community in the aftermath. One source even reported that Reform Judaism's return to tradition could be attributed, in part, to the situation of world Jewry.¹⁹⁵ One thing is clear from the reports of tangible reactions outlined in this study, as the American Reform Jew gained knowledge of the Holocaust in 1945, that persons action on behalf of efforts to help his brethren was vigorous and enthusiastic.

The answers given to the questions raised at the beginning of this study raise questions for further investigation. It would be interesting to examine whether the knowledge and reactions evidenced by the reporting of American Reform Jews is similar to, or different from that of other sectors of the American Jewish laity. Even more intriguing, given the criticisms raised by previous studies

¹⁹⁵. The Synagogue, May 1942, "Yardstick for Reform Judaism" by Rabbi Harvey E. Wessel

of American Jewish leadership, would be a study as to how these laypeople might have reacted had they received information leading to knowledge of the Holocaust earlier than the reports show them to have. These questions, among others, raised in the preparation of this study point to the wide range of subjects open to examination in the study of the American Jewish laity of this period.

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Temple Emanuel, Greensboro, NC

Temple Israel, Miami, FL

Congregations with 300 - 700 contributing members:

Central Synagogue, New York

Emanuel, Dallas, TX

Isaiah Israel, Chicago, IL

K.A.M., Chicago, IL

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Emanuel, San Francisco, CA

Free Synagogue, New York, NY

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