THE FOUNDING OF NYANA:
An Historical Overview

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The creation of the New York Association for New Americans (NYANA) was an historic event in the nearly two decade-long campaign by American Jews to rescue, resettle, and rehabilitate refugees from World War II. Established in 1949 to resettle Jewish displaced persons, European Jews left homeless at the end of the war, NYANA helped over 40,000 refugees to start their lives over in New York City by 1952. Having outlasted its original mission, over the next 50 years, NYANA had a tremendous impact on the lives of thousands upon thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants who settled in New York.

NYANA was established in 1949 with the mission of helping European Jews uprooted by World War II and the Holocaust settle in New York City. Since the early 1930s, when American Jews created the first of a succession of communal organizations devoted to helping Jews fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe, a chain of organizations had cared for the stream of Jewish refugees fleeing to the United States from persecution abroad. NYANA emerged at the tail end of this evolution of refugee resettlement services, one year after Congress passed historic legislation to bring "displaced persons," homeless survivors of World War II, to the United States.

Between 1949 and 1952, NYANA helped over 40,000 Jewish survivors find new homes and occupations so that they could start their lives over again (NYANA, 1953). The agency ultimately outlived its original mission and became a permanent part of the landscape of New York's social welfare agencies, serving over a half-million newcomers of all faiths from Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America over the next fifty years.

AN EVOLVING CRISIS

In the years leading up to World War II, thousands of Jews battled great odds to escape persecution and emigrate abroad. Although many German Jews resisted the notion that longstanding German prejudice against Jews could be manifested in violence directed at their elimination, others left Germany to escape the increasingly powerful and anti-Semitic Nazi Party. After Adolf Hitler became the leader of Germany in January 1933, violent attacks on Germany's Jewish population became widespread. The institution of a nationwide boycott against Jewish businesses in April further undermined the security of Jews, and by the end of 1933, some 37,000 Jews emigrated from Germany to find a refuge from Nazi persecution (Goldhagen, 1996; Sachar, 1992).

America's restrictionist immigration policies did not welcome these German refugees. Between 1890 and 1920, America's liberal immigration policies allowed the admission of over two million Jews to the United States (Wischnitzer, 1956). However, seizing on rising public hostility to immigrants fueled by the popularization of scientifically based racial theories, lawmakers took steps in the early 1920s to close down America's open door immigration policy. Claiming that unfettered immigration over the previous thirty years had fundamentally changed America and its national character for the worse, Congress passed the Immigration Act of 1924 and brought America's liberal immigration policy to an historic halt (Higham, 1955; Sachar, 1992).

Unless otherwise cited, information in this article was obtained from the NYANA Archives, New York.

The Immigration Act of 1924 placed a total annual cap on immigration, thereby reducing the number of refugees that the United States would accept, and established the national origins quota system. Individual countries were apportioned quotas based on the percentage of persons of each nationality believed to have resided in the United States in 1890; the law provided that after 1927, quotas would be based on the 1920 Census. In practice, the largest quotas were assigned to Northern European countries (and went unfilled), whereas smaller quotas for Southern and Eastern European countries, from which most Jews emigrated, were quickly filled up. The law also made permanent the exclusion of Asian immigrants from the so-called "Asiatic Barred Zone." Laws excluding Chinese immigrants had been passed as early as 1892 (Bernard, 1950).

German Jews who sought refuge in the United States were thwarted not only by the restrictions of the 1924 Act but also by additional hurdles placed before them by President Herbert Hoover's expansive interpretation of the "likely to become a public charge" clause in American immigration law. Fearing that newly arriving immigrants would be jobless in the Depression economy, the Hoover administration began to reject visa applicants under the "public charge" clause, a provision of the Immigration Act of 1917. According to historian David S. Wyman (1968, pp. 3–4), before the Hoover presidency, "American officials took it for granted that any healthy alien who had enough money to reach the United States would be able to earn a livelihood after arriving." In contrast, Hoover used the provision to effectively bar large numbers of immigrants from entering the United States. In September 1930, the White House issued instructions for consular officials to refuse visas to any applicant who it was suspected might possibly become a public charge once in the United States. As a result, an immigrant hoping to enter the United States had "either to possess enough money to support himself without a job, or he had to produce affidavits showing that relatives or friends in the United States would provide for him if he found no work," according to Wyman. As a consequence, "the State Department reported that underissue of the immigration quotas for October and November had been 78 percent and 85 percent respectively" (Wyman, 1968).

The impact of the public charge clause on immigration, both Jewish and non-Jewish, was severe. While the United States admitted some 242,000 immigrants in 1931, only 35,000 were accepted in 1932. "Public charge" had a particularly deleterious effect on Jewish admissions. When the Nazi Party took power in 1933, only 1,372 German Jews were admitted to the United States, and the admission of German Jews increased only minimally over the next two years. German quota numbers went unused each year (Sachar, 1992).

The few Jewish refugees who successfully obtained American visas during the 1930s were initially assisted by Jewish communal agencies that had come to the aid of earlier waves of Jewish immigrants. The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) Service to Foreign Born and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) provided reception work for arriving refugees and gave advice and assistance to New York residents who wanted to file affidavits and help their friends and family in Europe migrate to the United States. In addition, the Jewish Social Service Association (JSSA) of New York City, the Jewish Family Welfare Society of Brooklyn, and a number of other local social agencies provided relief, medical care, and casework services to immigrants who settled in the United States after fleeing anti-Semitism in Europe (White, 1959).

The Joint Clearing Bureau

Worsening conditions in Europe spurred the American Jewish community to develop a more coordinated effort to assist Jews escaping anti-Semitism. The Joint Clearing Bureau, the first organization to coordinate the effort to help German Jewish refugees and plan their resettlement in the United States, was constituted in September 1933 by the

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), an organization deeply involved in providing overseas relief and rehabilitation to Jewish victims of persecution in Europe. The Joint Clearing Bureau functioned as a clearinghouse for information about German Jewish immigrants and referred refugees arriving in New York and needing social services to the JSSA, which created a special "German Department" in 1933 to meet the particular needs of German Jewish refugees.

The National Coordinating Committee

The Joint Clearing Bureau only lasted one year. In 1934, its activities were taken over by a new organization, the National Coordinating Committee (NCC) for Aid to Refugees and Emigrants Coming from Germany. The NCC was organized as a nonsectarian organization that would coordinate the network of immigrant agencies serving German refugees in New York and provide an array of social services that would enable refugees admitted to the United States to resettle in New York City and throughout the country.

Cecilia Razovsky, executive director of the NCJW Service to Foreign Born, was named executive secretary of the NCC. Razovsky had long advocated for the establishment of a nonsectarian agency that would be involved in all areas of German immigration and replace the confusing collection of agencies that provided relief and social services to German immigrants, sometimes duplicating their efforts. Under her leadership, the NCC counted some twenty organizations and refugee-aid associations as members and served as a national clearinghouse for information about Jewish and non-Jewish refugees seeking admission to the United States. However, the NCC became more closely identified with the Jewish community over time. By 1938, representatives of only one non-Jewish agency, the International Migration Service, remained on its board of directors. In addition, when the NCC established the National Coordinating Committee Fund, Inc. in 1938 to finance the NCC and the services that were being provided to refugees by a network of social agencies, it did so as an exclusively Jewish institution. The NCC Fund provided financial support for the resettlement services provided by the JSSA, the Jewish Family Welfare Society of Brooklyn, the New York and Brooklyn Sections of the NCJW, German-Jewish Children's Aid, Inc., the Committee on Refugee Jewish Ministers, Placement Committee for German Austrian Musicians, the Emergency Committee in Aid for Displaced Foreign Medical Scientists, the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars, and the National Committee for the Resettlement of Foreign Physicians (White, 1957).

The NCC's overriding objective was the resettlement of Jewish immigrants in communities outside of New York City. Razovsky argued in 1934 that New York "has carried the major part of the burden up to this time, and if we can induce local communities to form local committees to take care of the refugees who are in those communities and if we can carefully redistribute the refugees who are now in New York City, we will really make progress."

In his history of immigration services during World War II, *300,000 New Americans*, Lyman Cromwell White (1957) suggested that the NCC's orientation toward national resettlement was intended to relieve New York of its traditional burden of caring for immigrants and to deflect anti-Semitic critics who steadfastly opposed Jewish immigration and resettlement in New York City:

> This activity was based on the desire to distribute the burden of caring for the refugees equitably throughout the country, the assumption that the process of adjustment and Americanization would be more rapid in smaller communities, the belief that the resources of other Jewish communities could be mobilized more effectively than those of New York, and the impression of the time that trade and industry were recovering more rapidly from the Depression in the smaller communities. It was feared that concentration of the refugees in New York City, with resulting job competition, might increase anti-Semitism, and it

> was understood that only a sustained effort to distribute the refugees throughout the country would prevent the great majority from remaining there (pp. 40–41).

However, despite the NCC's efforts, between January 1935 and August 1936, only 48 immigrants were actually resettled outside New York City, and local coordinating committees were established in only nine cities. In order to expand the national resettlement program, the NCC established a Resettlement Division in October 1936. William Rosenwald, the son of philanthropist Julius Rosenwald, who built Sears Roebuck & Company and was a prominent figure in the JDC, chaired the Resettlement Division. Under his leadership, it developed relationships with some twenty-five communities by May 1937 (Bauer, 1974). Each community agreed to accept a "quota" of refugees that would be filled by matching the skills of refugees arriving in New York City with specific job vacancies in communities across the country. Progress in resettling refugees nationally remained slow, however, because individual communities tended to be highly selective in choosing the refugees they would agree to resettle. In order to accelerate the national resettlement program, the guidelines for filling quotas were later loosened to enable matching the skills of refugees with the "occupational possibilities" of a given locality rather than actual job openings (White, 1957).

In November 1935, the Nazi Government enacted the Nuremberg racial laws, which formally stripped Jews of their constitutional rights and further restricted their activities. In response to the growing crisis of Jewish flight from Germany, President Franklin D. Roosevelt removed Hoover's restrictions on filling national quotas. The State Department instructed its consular officers to provide refugees from Germany "the most generous and favorable treatment possible under the laws." Consuls were instructed to strictly interpret the "public charge" clause and only refuse visa applications if there was an actual likelihood that individuals would become public charges, reversing Hoover's expansive use of "public charge" to restrict immigration. Total U.S. immigration increased during 1936 and 1937, and German immigration rose by 20 percent between 1935 and 1936 (Sachar, 1992). Despite Roosevelt's actions, however, Germany's national quota still remained unfilled.

In late 1938, *Kristallnacht* brought additional international attention to the plight of Jews under Nazi rule. President Roosevelt responded to the refugee crisis by combining the Austrian and German national quotas. His actions led to a substantial increase in the number of Jewish refugees settling in the United States and in need of social services. Some 104,310 Jews arrived in the United States from Europe between 1939 and 1941. During 1940 and 1941, representatives of HIAS met 1,500 ships that docked in American ports carrying refugees from Nazi persecution. HIAS gave temporary housing to thousands of refugees in the HIAS shelter on Lafayette Street in New York City (Wischnitzer, 1956). The activities of the NCC also expanded. In just one week in 1939, over 7,000 immigrants applied for services from the NCC and its affiliates (White, 1957).

The National Refugee Service

In 1939, Harry Greenstein, executive director of Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore, was commissioned to evaluate the efficiency of the NCC and its associated agencies. Greenstein found that the provision of services by so many different organizations was poorly coordinated, leading to costly and inefficient duplication, and recommended that the rising number of Jewish refugees settling in the United States mandated the establishment of a single Jewish agency to provide resettlement services directly to refugees. He argued that the NCC was not adequately prepared to deal with the influx of refugees that arrived after the *Anschluss:*

> The volume of work has so increased, especially during the past year, that no agency however well organized, whose primary pur-

pose is one of *coordination* rather than of *functional operation* and *direct control*, can possible deal efficiently with that many administrative problems which present themselves (quoted in White, 1957, p. 48).

The Greenstein Report led to the termination of NCC operations and the establishment of the National Refugee Service (NRS) in 1939.

The NRS consolidated the refugee services provided by several social agencies: the JSSA German Department, the Jewish Welfare Society of Brooklyn, and the Brooklyn and New York Sections of the NCJW. William Rosenwald, who directed the national resettlement program of the NCC, was elected as the first president of the NRS, and William Haber was selected as the executive director who would administer the new agency. In July 1939, the NRS had a staff of 428 employees providing centralized and comprehensive resettlement services to refugees. The Relief and Service Department provided financial support for refugees, and the Employment Department helped refugees find jobs, retrain for new careers, and start small businesses. The NRS' Migration Department provided information about affidavits and quota restrictions. The NRS also established a Division for Social and Cultural Adjustment that worked with several local organizations to provide English classes and courses in American civics and history. Financial responsibility for German-Jewish Children's Aid, Inc., an agency that placed refugee children in foster homes, was transferred from the NCJW to the NRS.

As the number of refugees settling in New York City increased, the NRS also relied on the assistance of several small New York agencies that were given "subvention" budgets.[1]

Arrangements were made to reimburse the Jewish Family Service of New York for casework services provided to immigrants who had resided in the United States for more than one year. The NRS also expanded the national resettlement program that had been initiated by Cecilia Razovsky and the NCC. Unlike the NCC Resettlement Division, which attempted to create local resettlement agencies that would be responsible for resettling refugees in communities outside of New York City, the NRS worked with already existing community agencies to resettle newcomers throughout the nation. In 1939, the NRS had developed relations with some 700 local communities that helped resettle refugees.

The NRS received its funding through a joint philanthropic appeal by the two major Jewish agencies involved in war-time relief, the JDC and the United Palestine Appeal (UPA). To respond effectively to the dire conditions in Europe and the influx of refugees into Palestine and the United States, the JDC and the UPA unified their fund-raising efforts and formed the United Jewish Appeal for Refugees, Overseas Needs and Palestine (UJA) in September 1939. Funds raised by the United Jewish Appeal were used to pay for the overseas programs provided by the JDC and UPA, and the domestic resettlement of Jewish refugees by the NRS.

After the United States entered World War II in 1941, total U.S. immigration declined, Jewish immigration slowed, and the activities of the NRS diminished as well. While the NRS provided relief for some 8,175 refugees at its peak in 1939, only 872 immigrants were assisted by the NRS in 1944. Throughout this period the NRS continued to help refugees who struggled with emotional, financial, and health difficulties. The NRS also kept refugees informed about new changes in alien

[1]These small agencies included the National Committee for Resettlement of Foreign Physicians and Dentists, National Committee on Refugee Jewish Ministers, National Committee for Refugee Musicians, Emergency Committee in Aid for Displaced Foreign Scholars, Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Medical Scientists, Committee for Displaced Foreign Social Workers, Brooklyn and New York sections of the NCJW, the Committee for the Study of Recent Immigration from Europe, the Committee for Refugee Education, the National Committee on Post-War Immigration Policy, the Common Council for American Unity, the Central Location Index, the Westchester Committee for Refugees, the Jewish Vacation Association, Self-Help of Emigres from Central Europe, and European-Jewish Children's Aid (formerly German-Jewish Children's aid) (White, 1957, pp. 55–58).

status that were enacted by Congress under several war-time enemy alien laws (White, 1957).

THE AFTERMATH OF WORLD WAR II: THE DISPLACED PERSONS CRISIS

When Germany surrendered in May 1945, the Allied armies were caring for seven million homeless persons. These displaced persons (DPs) comprised a diverse group of World War II survivors. Among them were Jewish concentration camp survivors, persons used by the Nazis as forced labor in German farms and factories, prisoners of war, and Eastern Europeans who fled into Western Europe to escape advancing Soviet armies in 1944. Between May and September 1945, Allied armies successfully repatriated about six million DPs. Those refugees who could not be repatriated or refused to return to their home countries remained in some 900 displaced persons camps located primarily in Germany, Austria, Italy, and North Africa in the custody of Allied armies and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) (Dinnerstein, 1982).

Jews initially made up only 50,000 to 100,000 of the one million DPs (5 to 8 percent of the total DP population) who were not repatriated and continued to be sheltered in DP camps. However, the concentration of Jews rose dramatically as time passed. In the months following the end of fighting, survivors of the Holocaust emerged out of hiding across Europe and entered the DP camps.

In late 1945, they were joined by large numbers of Jewish refugees who fled a series of violent pogroms in Poland: Twenty-six pogroms took place in Poland between September and December 1945. While *B'rhia*, a clandestine Jewish organization, helped bring some 250,000 Jews from Poland to Palestine between 1945 and 1948, another 40,000 Polish Jews, named "infiltrees" by Allied authorities, escaped into Western Europe and entered the camps by January 1946. The DP camps began to swell after the influx of additional "infiltrees" in the summer of 1946, when a series of brutal pogroms occurred in the Polish city of Kielce. Over 100,000 Jews left Poland after the Kielce pogrom, of whom 10,000 arrived in the DP camps during the first week of August alone. The addition of more Jewish refugees to the camps heightened the need to find a permanent home for Jewish DPs.

Conditions for Jews in the DP camps were particularly poor. Allied military authorities refused to distinguish German Jewish DPs from other German nationals as a matter of administrative policy and, hence, treated them as the enemy. A handbook of the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces in Europe stated, "Military government action should stress treatment of Jews equal to that of other citizens of the Reich." Consequently, Jewish survivors were typically placed alongside non-Jews, many of whom had been concentration camp guards and Nazi collaborators during the war. According to historian Leonard Dinnerstein (1982, pp. 28–31),

> Allied authorities officially opposed religious discrimination and assured these survivors that they would be treated in exactly the same fashion as others of their nationality. Hence the German Jews were regarded as former enemies....The policy of nondiscrimination on religious grounds was carried out to such lengths that German Jews released from concentration camps in Poland and Czechoslovakia were denied ration cards on the grounds that they were "German" and not entitled to any consideration.

In July 1945, Earl Harrison, dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a former U.S. Commissioner of Immigration, was dispatched by the U.S. Department of State to investigate conditions in the DP camps. Harrison was joined by Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz of the JDC, Patrick Malin of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, and Herbert Katzki of the War Refugee Board. After touring the DP camps throughout the summer, Harrison reported on camp conditions in a September 1945 report to President

Truman. Writing from London, he decried the treatment of Jewish DPs in the camps:

> We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them. They are in concentration camps in large numbers under our military guard instead of S.S. Troops. One is led to wonder whether the German people, seeing this, are not supposing that we are following or at least condoning Nazi policy....
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> In conclusion, I wish to repeat that the main solution, in many ways the only real solution, of the problem lies in the quick evacuation of all nonrepatriable Jews in Germany and Austria, who wish it, to Palestine....The civilized world owes it to this handful of survivors to provide them with a home where they can again settle down and begin to live as human beings.

President Truman responded to the Harrison Report by actively seeking an international solution to the DP crisis. On December 22, 1945, he issued an executive order that relaxed some obstacles to the immigration of DPs to the United States. The order, which became known as the Truman Directive, was intended to facilitate the immigration of additional DPs without altering America's basic immigration laws. The directive expedited the admission of DPs by requiring that priority be given to DP visa applications when filling quotas. The Truman Directive also enabled voluntary agencies to sponsor visa applicants with a "corporate affidavit" guaranteeing that prospective immigrants would not become public charges. This provision was a landmark in American immigration policy and paved the way for increased admissions of DPs. It also enhanced the role of voluntary agencies in U.S. immigration policy. According to Dinnerstein (1982, p. 113), "For the first time in American history the government sanctioned the idea that social agencies could accept responsibility" for visa applicants.

The Truman Directive also had an immediate effect on the lives of 919 Jewish and 65 non-Jewish refugees who were interned during the war at an abandoned U.S. Army camp in Oswego, New York. These refugees were rescued and brought to Oswego as part of a U.S. government plan to provide them with temporary shelter during World War II, but they were to be deported after the war ended. During the war, Jewish agencies supplemented the basic maintenance provided by American authorities by taking responsibility for the physical rehabilitation of the refugees, providing them with medical and surgical care, cultural and recreational programs, and vocational training. The Truman Directive provided that the Oswego refugees would be made permanent legal residents if they were to re-enter the United States from Canada. With the assistance of HIAS, the refugees travelled to Canada where they received immigration visas that allowed them to legally enter the United States (Wischnitzer, 1956).

The United Service for New Americans

After the Truman Directive and the emergency program for the Oswego refugees, the Jewish community anticipated a dramatic increase in the need for resettlement services for Jewish DPs. To efficiently serve the potentially large number that could arrive in 1946, the operations of the NRS were terminated and taken over by a new organization, the United Service for New Americans (USNA). USNA was established on August 1, 1946 through a merger of the resettlement programs of the NRS and the NCJW Service to Foreign Born. The merger provided that all of the national refugee programs that were being provided by the NCJW Service to Foreign Born would be assumed by USNA, although local sections of the NCJW would continue to provide any services and migration planning that was done on a local basis.

The merger began functioning unofficially in June, one month after the first Jewish DPs arrived in New York City aboard the *Marine Flasher*. HIAS and the JDC provided most of the corporate affidavits that enabled the admission of the DPs under the Truman Direc-

tive (Genizi, 1993). The array of resettlement services that had been provided by the NRS when Jewish immigration peaked after the *Anschluss* were revived by USNA to assist the DPs. After the DPs disembarked, they were given temporary housing in USNA's shelter. Those DPs who were destined for communities outside New York received the assistance of USNA's Resettlement Division. The Rehabilitative Services Unit provided family services, vocational services, and business and loan services to DPs settling in New York City. By the end of 1947, USNA had a staff of 600 people helping Jewish DPs settle in America, becoming the second largest social service agency in the United States after the American Red Cross.

Although the Truman Directive led to an expansion of immigration, the total number of DPs who were actually admitted to the United States failed to live up to expectations. Only 12,649 Jewish DPs were brought to the United States on corporate affidavits between May 1946 and October 1948. In total, by June 1948 only 41,000 Jewish and non-Jewish DPs were admitted to the United States. The DP camps in Europe remained filled with refugees applying for oversubscribed immigration quotas.

The American Jewish community rapidly mobilized to bring additional Jewish DPs to the United States. In late 1946, two leading American Jewish organizations, the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and the American Council for Judaism (ACJ), established the non-sectarian Citizen's Committee on Displaced Persons (CCDP) to advocate the admission of larger numbers of displaced persons to the United States. The CCDP lobbied for special legislation that would allow a total of 400,000 DPs of all faiths to enter the United States over and above existing quotas.

The persistent lobbying efforts of the CCDP led to the introduction of legislation in April 1947 that would allow the immigration of 400,000 DPs over four years beyond regular quota immigration. The measure was denounced by opponents who erroneously claimed that the proposed legislation would bring 400,000 Jewish DPs into the United States, rather than DPs of all religions and nationalities, 80 percent of whom were not Jewish. Over the next 11 months, a heated debate ensued in Congress and in the public over the creation of any special immigration program for DPs (Loescher & Scanlan, 1986). The legislation was not acted upon until June 1948.

CREATING A NEW YORK RESETTLEMENT AGENCY

As Congress began consideration of special DP legislation that could bring thousands of DPs above and beyond quota limits, Jewish leaders became concerned that USNA's capacity to provide resettlement services could be strained by an influx of Jewish immigrants. As Jewish immigration to the United States had expanded during 1946, the cost of providing resettlement services also increased dramatically. It was expected that expenditures for 1947 could reach $10 million, three times the largest amount ever spent by USNA's predecessor, the NRS.

In 1947, UJA's three constituent agencies—the JDC, UPA, and USNA—requested that the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJFWF), the umbrella organization for all federations, study the efficiency of USNA's operations and administration. The CJFWF organized a team of experts to prepare individual reports analyzing USNA's family services, child care services, vocational and unemployment services, migration services, services to yeshivah students and religious functionaries, and its public and communal relations program (NYANA, 1949).

The CJFWF survey of USNA recommended a fundamental reorganization of the way in which the Jewish community was assisting Jewish DPs. The survey affirmed the role of USNA in assuming responsibility for helping Jewish immigrants and also found that the services that USNA provided to newly arriving immigrants were sound: "In general, the social work program of USNA and

the basic approaches involved are sound in terms of current social welfare theories and attitudes. Personnel dealing with immigrants understand their needs and are generally aware of the methods suitable for helping them in the process of adjustment." However, the survey recommended that USNA should no longer be responsible for providing resettlement services to DPs who settle in New York City. It concluded that "clearer differentiation needed to be developed between those services of the USNA which were national in scope and those which were essentially continuing local services to immigrants who were remaining in New York City." The report suggested that USNA's mission be strictly limited to resettling refugees in communities across the country.

Therefore, a new agency would need to be created in order to serve DPs settling in New York City; the report proposed that it be established on a temporary basis. Services for refugees in New York had developed *sui generis* as the only local services that were not planned on a communal basis. In fact, the CJFWF survey criticized USNA for failing to coordinate the provision of local resettlement services with agencies serving native-born Jews. Having now established resettlement services in New York on a local basis, it was hoped that there would be improved coordination of services for Jewish refugees and, ultimately, the integration of New York's resettlement services into the Jewish communal network of New York.

Proposals for the creation of a separate agency to assist refugees resettling in New York had also been made five years earlier. In 1942, the NRS established a "Fact Finding Committee" to investigate the establishment of a separate agency to assist immigrants settling in New York. The committee found that the NRS was providing services to refugees that duplicated those already being provided to native-born Jews by other agencies. The committee also identified the heavy burden of providing local resettlement services as an historically determined "functional problem" of American immigration. During both World War II and in previous waves of Jewish immigration to the United States, immigrants settled in New York City in disproportionate numbers because the majority of them arrived through the port of New York. In 1943, the Fact Finding Committee recommended the establishment of a separate resettlement agency for New York City. However, the proposal was never implemented. In the foreword to the 1949 USNA Survey, CJFWF executive director Harry L. Lurie wrote that the "recommendations made in 1943 were not put into operation and may not have been workable largely because the underlying policy for distributing financial responsibility for the New York City program was unacceptable."

In June 1948, Congress finally passed special legislation that mandated that 205,000 immigration visas be made available for the DPs over and above quotas. However, these visas would be "mortgaged" against the number of immigration visas to be allocated under national quotas in future years. The legislation was a landmark in American immigration policy, representing the first time that special provisions were made to exceed annual immigration limits in order to admit refugees. However, many criticized two provisions of the law as discriminatory. First, the law gave preference for the admission of DPs who were agricultural workers. This provision disproportionately favored non-Jewish DPs from the Baltic countries who had these agricultural skills. Second, the law's cut-off date prevented any person who had entered the DP camps after December 22, 1945 from being eligible to receive an immigration visa. This provision effectively barred the large numbers of Polish Jewish "infiltrees" and Russian Jews released from the Soviet Union who entered the camps in 1946. Although most Jewish leaders publicly supported the law, many remained critical of it. William Haber, executive director of the NRS from 1939 to 1941, called the DP Act "the most anti-Semitic bill in U.S. history" (quoted in Dinnerstein, p. 176). The discriminatory provisions of the law, including the cut-off date, were ultimately modified in legislation passed in June 1950.

The initial planning for the separation of USNA's national and local resettlement services began in June 1948 and continued for the next 13 months. The CJFWF brought together representatives of the UPA, JDC, USNA, and the New York federation to discuss the organization of the new agency. They formally established the Operating Organizational Committee as a decision-making body on June 28, 1948. At a November 10 meeting, members of the committee reaffirmed that the agency must be organized on a temporary basis, agreeing that the ultimate objective was its "self-elimination through the transfer of its functions to local permanent agencies."

In December, the committee began assembling a board of directors for the new temporary agency. It was agreed that the individuals invited to sit on the board of directors should include New York Jewish leaders who were involved both in local and national affairs. The board included Jewish philanthropists, businesspersons, and civic leaders, many of whom had developed years of experience in the resettlement of World War II refugees while serving on the boards of USNA, the NRS, and the NCJW.

The Board of Directors held its first meeting on February 17. They took over the responsibilities of the Operating Organizational Committee, which subsequently disbanded after the February meeting. However, the board agreed to keep Morris Zelditch of the CJFWF as an interim administrator until a permanent executive director was chosen to run the agency. The board discussed possible names for the agency at its first meeting. One member objected to using the word "immigrant" in the name for the agency. Other members expressed their concern with naming the organization a "Jewish" agency. They felt that although the agency was created by the Jewish community to help Jewish DPs, it would not in any way discriminate against serving non-Jews. In fact, the agency would later inherit from USNA large numbers of non-Jewish clients who were refugee physicians. After additional debate, the name, "New York Association for New Americans," was offered for consideration.

The first officers of NYANA were elected when the board met in March. Adele Levy, the daughter of Julius Rosenwald and the sister of William Rosenwald, the former president of the NRS, was elected as NYANA's first president. A leader in Jewish philanthropic organizations, Levy was the first chairman of the national women's division of the UJA. She was also actively involved in post-war international affairs as a member of the board of JDC, and she served as the American delegate to the first World Health Organization conference held in Geneva in 1948. As the vice chairman of the CCDP, Levy also lent her support on behalf of the lobbying effort to bring Jewish DPs to the United States (*American Jewish Yearbook,* 1961).

Dr. I. Edwin Goldwasser, a businessman with the Commercial Factors Corporation, was elected acting treasurer. Before he entered business in the 1920s, Goldwasser was a teacher, principal, and superintendent in the New York public school system. He published several educational texts, including *Methods in Teaching English* (1912) and *Yiddish English Lessons* (which he co-authored with Joseph Jablonower in 1914). After leaving education, he became the first executive director of the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York City in 1917 and was a leading figure in Jewish philanthropy when he joined NYANA's board of directors. Goldwasser served as treasurer until 1972 and was named NYANA's first and only Honorary Treasurer in commemoration of his twenty-three years of service as an officer (*Encyclopedia Judaica,* 1971; *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1941).

Morris Zelditch continued to administer the decisions of the board of directors until Louis L. Bennett was hired to run the agency. Bennett was assistant executive director of the American Jewish Committee when he was appointed executive director of NYANA. He received a law degree in 1931 and a master's degree in social work from Columbia University in 1941. During World War II, he was the assistant regional director of the U.S. Office of Community War Services and

later the executive director of the Veteran Service Center in New York City. In 1945, he wrote an article for the *Service Quarterly* on the social needs of soldiers returning from World War II (*Who's Who in American Jewry*, 1991). Over the next few months, Bennett, Zelditch, and NYANA's board of directors prepared for the formal division of USNA's national and local resettlement services.

NYANA officially opened its doors and began helping resettle Jewish refugees on July 5, 1949. Although the separation from USNA was nearly compete, during NYANA's first month, 18 members of its 481-person staff still remained on USNA's payroll, and both agencies leased space in the same office buildings.

A press release announcing the establishment of NYANA described its mission—"in its service to clientele the character of its activity is on a relief and rehabilitation basis, seeking to help integrate the immigrants as rapidly as possible into the community"—and its three essential objectives:

> A. To give voluntary financial aid, support, and assistance and to furnish advice, information, and guidance primarily to Jewish immigrants who reside in the City of New York and its immediate vicinity.
>
> These services shall be provided only as long as necessary after arrival of the immigrant in this country, but the aid is intended for persons who have been in the country less than 5 years, after which they become normal members of the community. Occasional exceptions may be for individuals who are in the United States on temporary visas.
>
> B. To provide the services in a manner which most speedily effect the integration and adjustment of the immigrant in the American community.
>
> C. To assist the immigrants so that they may become self-maintaining as soon as possible.

The press release also reaffirmed that NYANA would operate only on an emergency basis, noting that the ultimate goal was to incorporate its resettlement services into the network of permanent public and private social welfare agencies in New York.

Some 3,735 Jewish immigrants arrived in the port of New York during July 1949. By the end of the year, 37,700 Jews had immigrated to the United States, including 20,571 who resettled in New York City. Most of these immigrants had been living in DP camps in Europe for as long as five years before coming to the United States with the assistance of HIAS. Others immigrated after fleeing their homes during the war and finding temporary haven in China, unoccupied Europe, Latin America, and Palestine.

Over 2,000 Jews who arrived in July applied for assistance from NYANA. Most of these immigrants entered the United States under provisions of the Displaced Persons Act. A smaller number were able to obtain visas under the regular quota laws. Additional refugees were admitted with temporary, transit, and student visas.

When they arrived in New York City, Jewish immigrants applied to NYANA and USNA for assistance in starting their new lives. The leaders of both organizations agreed that NYANA should assist all Jewish immigrants who had sponsors or first-degree relatives living in New York, as well as any immigrants admitted with temporary, student, visitor, and transit visas who were applying to change to permanent visa status. Immigrants who were to be resettled outside of the New York area were referred by NYANA to USNA's National Reception Center, located at the Marseilles Hotel on the Upper West Side. The Marseilles Hotel contained shelter services that provided temporary housing to homeless Jewish refugees while they looked for permanent living accommodations and jobs ("Displaced Persons," 1949). Jewish immigrants also resided at shelters operated by USNA at the Whitehall Hotel on Broadway and 100th Street and by HIAS at 425 Lafayette Street.

Between 1949 and 1951, nearly 55 percent of all Jewish immigrants admitted to the United States settled in the New York area.

More than 45,000 refugees were assisted by NYANA at a cost of over $20 million. NYANA's Youth Services provided aid to 717 refugee children, job counseling services were provided to 19,181 persons, and 8,453 job placements were made by employment counselors. The Physicians' Unit helped place 672 physicians and dentists in internships, residencies, and in private practice. NYANA's Business and Loan services provided 275 clients with loans for small businesses and professional training.

By 1952, NYANA was operating in a much more diminished role. The caseload was largely made up of hard-core clients—elderly, disabled, and otherwise unemployable clients who would be placed in jeopardy of deportation if they were to seek public aid. The size of NYANA's staff shrunk from a high of nearly 600 during the peak of operations to only 183 in January 1952. By the end of 1952, NYANA employed only 71 people.

NYANA's leadership also underwent a transformation. Lou Bennett left NYANA in 1952 and was replaced by Philip Soskis, who had previously worked at USNA. Soskis would remain in charge of NYANA's operations until he retired in 1975.

In 1959, the *New York Times* published an article entitled "Displaced Persons of '48 Fulfill Their Hopes in U.S.," which surveyed DPs eleven years after they arrived in New York aboard the *General Black*. The article profiled Anna and Steven Gure, a sister and brother who immigrated to New York in 1948. The Gures escaped from a Nazi concentration camp in their native Lithuania during the war. They fled to the United States after Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union. Anna Gure recalled her initial adjustment: "There were personal problems at first.... We had lost everything—our culture, our language, our family.... Our first two years in New York were the hardest.... But then you just learn what you must do and you just do it." The author of the article concluded that many of the DPs had been successful in their resettlement:

> In general, the findings are that the *General Black* passengers quickly discarded their identity as displaced persons and took on the manners of average Americans.
>
> Almost all have become American citizens. Some over the age of 45 had trouble learning English, but most gained a working knowledge of the language fairly quickly.

Fifteen years after NYANA was founded to rescue the Holocaust survivors, Philip Soskis organized a study to find out what had happened to these families and evaluate NYANA's impact on their rehabilitation. Over 300 families were contacted by NYANA's staff. All of the families who were surveyed were found to be fully self-supporting in 1964, and nearly all of the heads of household had moved beyond their first unskilled jobs in New York into skilled trades and occupations. Even more remarkable, some 45 of the 100 heads of household also owned and operated their own businesses. Thirteen opened their own retail stores, including clothing shops, laundries, groceries, bakeries, delicatessens, and stationary stores, whereas others started their own manufacturing companies or became contractors in a range of industries.

Yet, despite the economic success and security attained by many of NYANA's first clients, some remained scarred by their experiences during World War II. Several survivors still suffered from ailments they developed during the war, including circulatory problems caused by exposure to freezing temperatures in the concentration camps. Two of the women had experienced mental breakdowns after their arrival. The Holocaust also affected many of the DPs in more subtle ways. Soskis reported, "A good many spoke of vague feelings of 'nervousness' and fear as after-effects of wartime experiences. The loss of youthful opportunities is still keenly felt, even by those who have done very well materially" (NYANA, 1964).

The important role that NYANA played in the rehabilitation and recovery of Jewish refu-

gees was fondly remembered by these families that were helped. With NYANA's assistance, they were able to find a final respite from the terrible conditions that caused them to be homeless after World War II. In 1973, a NYANA staff member related the sentiments of a Polish Jewish family that was assisted by NYANA in November 1949:

> Mrs. T. continued to stress how fortunate they have been since coming to this country and their gratitude toward NYANA, not only for themselves, but for being available to immigrants who need counseling as well as financial assistance. She mentioned that they know many people who came about the same time as they did and she believes that most immigrants have done well; at least they are making a living and being good citizens of a country which permitted them to escape the horrible conditions then prevalent in Europe.

The establishment of NYANA was an historic event in the nearly two decade-long campaign led by American Jews to rescue, resettle, and rehabilitate the victims of Nazism. Since the creation of the National Coordinating Committee, the first organized Jewish response to refugees from Nazism, Jewish leaders sought to streamline services for immigrants, eliminating duplication and consolidating efforts of the disparate organizations available to Jewish refugees. Although NYANA was essentially conceived as a temporary agency, created to relieve USNA of the strain that the newly arriving DPs were placing on its finances and manpower, its creation had a lasting impact on the lives of the thousands upon thousands of Jewish and non-Jewish immigrants who settled in New York City over the following five decades.

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