

Musical Mission: JDCs Musical Performances in European DP Camps and in the Cyprus Detention Camps, 1947-1948

(in Hebrew)

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English abstract: After World War II, JDC, the Jewish-American aid organization, brought musicians to perform in the DP camps in Europe and the detention camps in Cyprus. Holocaust survivors who sought their next step gathered in European DP camps at the end of the war. The detention camps in Cyprus held Jews who tried to reach Palestine by illegal means and were arrested by the British government. Despite the similarities and sometimes the affinity between the DPs and the detainees, there is a difference between the groups. The people of the DP camps were still searching for their past while the detainees in Cyprus had almost reached their new home. During the survivors sojourns in camps in both Europe and Cyprus the JDC hosted many musicians. These visits played a part in the aid organizations strategy to help raise morale among Holocaust survivors and assist in their mental rehabilitation. The JDCs music program, bringing artists to perform in the DP camps in Europe and in the detention camps in Cyprus, was successful only because it was attentive to the different needs of the target audience. When used as a restorative force, music must be tailored to the target audience. Performances in the DP camps reflected the yearning for nostalgic music in the form of Yiddish songs, which sought to bring the listener back to the pre-war period. In contrast, in the Cyprus camps the music performed tended to advance the listener towards the future, to transfer him from detention in Cyprus directly to the atmosphere of the nascent state. The difference in thematic emphasis between the nostalgic music in the DP camps, and the music of Eretz Israel in Cyprus, shows the balance required by the aid organizations seeking to use music as a means of humanitarian assistance.

Keywords: Cyprus Detention camps, DP camps, Shoshana Damari, nostalgic music, Sidor Belarsky, JDC, Herman Yablokoff.