

Joint Distribution Committee

(full name: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; also known as the JDC or the Joint), American Jewish philanthropic organization, founded in 1914 to send money to needy Jews abroad. During the Holocaust, the JDC served as American Jewry's central relief and rescue body for their European brethren. At its helm during World War II was Joseph J. Schwartz, who headed the JDC's European offices (located in neutral Lisbon, Portugal). Schwartz often stretched the limits of what the American JDC headquarters called legal, in order to get the organization's money to where it was truly needed.

Soon after the Nazis rose to power in Germany, they began issuing Anti-Jewish Legislation that struck at the Jews financially. The JDC took on a major role in helping German Jews find new ways to survive economically. In addition, the JDC helped those Jews emigrate who could no longer stay in Germany.

During the war, JDC funds were used to help French Jews—partly through legal means, and partly through underground channels; small groups of surviving German Jews in Berlin; and the surviving members of the Jewish community in Zagreb, Croatia. In addition, aid packages were sent to various concentration camps and to the Theresienstadt Ghetto. The JDC also sent food and money to Poland before the United States entered the war in late 1941; supported the evacuation of thousands of Polish Jews in Lithuania to East Asia; supplied large sums of money to aid Romanian Jewry; raised funds for Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto; and was active in the attempts to save Slovak Jewry. After the Germans occupied Hungary in 1944, the JDC supplied large amounts of money to set up shelters for Jewish children and to fund the rescue efforts of neutral diplomats such as Raoul Wallenberg of Sweden and Carl Lutz of Switzerland. After the war, the JDC was the main Jewish agency supporting Jewish Survivors in Displaced Persons camps. In fact, between 1946 and 1950, a total of \$280 million was spent by the JDC on rehabilitating survivors.