

2011

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Recommended Citation

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Theses. 197.
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**Personal and Political Advocacy: Displaced Persons and the Diplomacy of International Relief
1938-1948**

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August, 2011

Introduction

World War II set the stage for a level of international planning that had been foreseen in the aftermath of World War I and heralded by the founding of the League of Nations. The scope of involvement on the global level during the Second World War was such that a method of facilitating and underwriting aid for war torn countries and devastated populations mandated a coordinated response. Participation in the negotiations in Paris after the First World War contributed to the development of a working relationship between members of the Anglo-American diplomatic community. The experience garnered from the treaty negotiations would play an important role in the formulation of working committees to address long term problems of reconstruction and recovery.¹

The onset of World War II solidified the relationship between the war departments of Great Britain and the United States. It had become apparent that for Great Britain to sustain a successful effort against the Axis powers a commitment from the United States to provide material support would be crucial. The relationship between the formal structures of the two nations would be fundamental to the prosecution of the war on the European continent.

The situation in Europe became increasingly dire for the indigenous populations of successive sovereign countries as both the Nazis and the Soviet Union aggressively pursued territorial expansion. The years between 1933 and 1939 were difficult at best for the Jewish populations of Germany and Austria and various national constituencies in the Soviet orbit. Policies restricting the rights of various minorities in eastern and central Europe resulted in the dislocation and persecution of a significant percentage of the region's people. The ability to secure refuge and sustain livelihood became a problem of increasing severity as the war progressed.

¹ Michael Wala, *The Council on Foreign Relations and American Foreign Policy in the Early Cold War* (Providence: Berghahn Books, 1994) pp.5-10.

With the entrance of the United States into the war in December, 1941, policy planning, both for battlefield logistics and relief considerations became a concern that would occupy multiple agencies within the United States government apparatus.

The issue of Palestine as a destination for the persecuted Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe divided the policy establishments of the Anglo-American alliance. The British Mandate for Palestine, confirmed in 1922 by the League of Nations, had addressed the question of immigration in the British White Paper of 1939, in which limited numbers of European Jews were allowed to immigrate. The United States had lobbied for an increased level of immigration to Palestine as the war reached its apex and the extent to which the Jews of Europe had been subject to dislocation and extermination became widely known.²

Worldwide depression during the 1930s had contributed to public antipathy to increased immigration to the United States. Support for the Allied cause did not necessarily translate into a more liberal attitude toward those seeking refuge from Nazi oppression. It would not be until three years after the war ended that the United States Congress would see fit to legislate a plan to correct this injustice. Congressional action was a result of extensive lobbying efforts on the part of the American Jewish community in combination with an alliance of Christian organizations throughout the country.

Trade and finance considerations by the economic ministries in both countries, in cooperation with the Soviet Union, led to the formulation of guidelines for stabilization of trade and currency valuations under the aegis of an international agency. This structure was elemental to the eventual establishment of the United Nations as a forum for international cooperation.

When World War II came to an end on the continent in May, 1945, the number of people on the move in Europe was staggering. The ability to establish safe havens and provide the necessary food and medicine for the European population was compromised by competing priorities on the part of the Big

² Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) p. 123.

Three: the Soviet Union, the United States and Great Britain. The most vocal contingent of the various subject people was the *surviving remnant* of European Jewry. Efforts on their behalf by representative survivors and advocacy by Jewish military attaches brought the situation to the attention of the United States government and the U. S. public. The story of this successful advocacy constitutes the basis of the investigation herein.

Within the context of the story of European Jewry is the examination of the United Nations' role in the establishment of a safe haven for this cohort of survivors. Engraved on the cornerstone of the United Nations is Resolution #181, calling for the partition of Palestine and voted upon by the General Assembly on November 29, 1947.

Framing the governmental, diplomatic and military initiatives are the stories of three individuals whose personal experiences as refugees from war-torn Europe illustrate the catastrophic situation that defined the lives of a large portion of the European population during and immediately after World War II.

Advocacy, be it on a personal level and/or through the channels of governmental agencies is an absolute requirement for sustained action. Public advocacy, such as that provided by the media, can serve as a conduit by which information becomes coordinated action.

Policy Development and Post-war Planning: International Relief Efforts

German forces surrendered to the Allied Powers on May 8, 1945, bringing an end to hostilities in Europe. A war-torn continent, besieged from all directions, presented a daunting challenge to the victorious allies. Planning for this day had begun years earlier as the *United Nations*, the nomenclature in use to describe those free unoccupied countries opposed to Nazi hegemony, began the arduous task of postwar planning. Before the United States had taken on the role of belligerent nation, policy was being devised at the Department of State to account for the needs of war ravaged peoples. Trade and international finance concerns played a significant role in the initial formulation of policy directives. The supply of raw materials and munitions was foremost in the minds of the countries at war with Germany. The United States responded to Great Britain's request for military aid with the well-known Lend-Lease program. Providing relief, particularly food and medical supplies, to refugee populations was secondary to the requirement for *total defeat* of Nazi Germany. Prime Minister Churchill had taken an uncompromising stance in response to questions about food supplies subject to the blockade of occupied Europe. In tempering this position Churchill promised a far reaching program of aid to be initiated upon the defeat of the Third Reich. Great Britain retained a bargaining chip in international trade talks: rising stores of export surpluses in the many British possessions created a negotiable resource. The United Kingdom reached out to the United States requesting cooperative measures for control and use of these materials and to institute planning for a resumption of normalized international trade at war's end.³ It was this appeal by Great Britain in the early months of the war that gave rise to the establishment of multilateral infrastructure for international relief efforts. Prior to the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration in 1943, two policy groups were formed to study the issues and implement planning strategies. The first organization was

³ Robert H. Johnson, "International Politics And The Structure of International Organization: The Case Of UNRRA," *World Politics*, vol. 3 No. 4 (July, 1951) pp. 520-538.

constituted by the British and known as the *Inter-Allied Committee on Post-war Requirements* and began the process in late 1940. The British forces were steadfast in their determination to repulse the Luftwaffe and the ability of the RAF in maintaining air superiority during the Battle of Britain helped to solidify American opinion in support of the Allies. Britain's stolid defense of the island nation secured American public opinion in favor of materially supporting the Allied cause. When Sir Frederick Leith-Ross, Chief Economic Advisor to the British government requested the assistance of the State Department with regard to management of war surplus, the result was an approval to begin estimating post-war requirements for basic necessities. European governments in exile, in London, were instructed to begin the accounting work.

Work begun in England under the auspices of the *Inter-Allied Committee on Post-war Requirements* brought together representatives of eight European allies, the Free French, the British Dominions and the United Kingdom. Alone among the delegates to the conference, held at St. James Palace on September 24, 1941, the representative from the U.S.S.R. was not in accord with the decision to establish a headquarters for relief planning in London. Questions of supply and demand notwithstanding, the Soviets were looking to maintain the mechanics of equal representation within all policy making bodies with international reach. The position of the Soviet Union with regard to national sovereignty and its prerogatives was to become a frequent stumbling block as the practice of international relief became a reality in the aftermath of the war.

The United States followed up the initial discussions on post-war requirements by taking the necessary steps to establish minimum estimates for wheat reserves. A meeting was held in Washington in July, 1941, to ascertain the specifics for intergovernmental relief in war-torn countries. This standing assembly of major wheat producing nations was in the process of establishing the International Wheat Council when the United States was attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor. The Wheat Council

would serve as the precursor for subsequent international aid agencies established in the wake of World War II.⁴

The development of international agencies to provide relief in the aftermath of World War II was begun as the international stage was being redrawn. The power inherent in providing the basics of survival was a tangible asset for the global powers. The phrase *great power* was a signifier in flux. Determining the structure of aid distribution and the mandates for cooperation of previously occupied sovereign nations would be a major quantifier in the measurement of power.⁵

Setting the stage for a new post-war world was the mandate understood to be the province of the United States State Department. The U.S. led the world in GDP and technical prowess and, in so doing, assumed the role of leader of the free world. Business expertise and technical innovation underwrote American power and the forces of capitalism were firm in their commitment to maintaining the power base of American enterprise. Leaders in international trade and finance were influential in the decision-making process and had direct channels of communication with the State Department. The Council on Foreign Relations had been established in 1921 in the wake of the Paris Peace Conference. Populated by a privileged elite who were prominent in business, industry, academia and journalism, this institute was based in the experience of the American delegation to Paris. On September 12, 1940, members of the Council contacted the State Department to offer the services of a research committee to be called *War and Peace Studies*. The expertise and importance of the Council had been well established in the two decades since its incorporation and was grounded in the respect accorded to its quarterly publication: *Foreign Affairs*. The State Department unofficially accepted the

⁴ Grace Fox, "The Origins of UNRRA," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Dec., 1950), pp. 561-584.

⁵ Johnson, pp. 520-538.

offer of the Council. The relationship would result in more than 680 background reports sent to State between 1939 and 1945.⁶

Committees within the State Department worked in concert with the outside study group on war production and economic reconstruction. In November, 1943, President Roosevelt appointed Herbert H. Lehman as Director of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations, a designation within the State Department. It was this policy planning apparatus that laid the groundwork for the establishment of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. The Allied invasion of North Africa had brought the issue of international aid, to areas liberated from the Axis powers, to the fore. Lehman had a broad mandate from the President. He held discussions in London with the Allies about military and civilian requirements and maintained a working relationship with the political office of the State Department.⁷

In align with governmental action taking place at official levels, disaster relief organization among the civilian population gained momentum throughout the years 1941 and 1942. In excess of ninety-six million dollars had been raised for international relief by May, 1942 and the activities of the voluntary agencies were being coordinated by the Department of State's Committee on War Agencies. A special committee appointed by President Roosevelt, it was later merged into the War Relief Control Board. The work of the volunteer organizations was catalogued for use in the structural guidelines developed by Lehman and his Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation (OFRRO).

As the groundwork for a formal international aid agency was being done at State, U.S. military planners were vocal in their advice as to the place of the military in any ongoing relief directive. Successful prosecution of the war effort was dependent upon organized and timely distribution of food and medical supplies. After some consternation on the part of the various agencies at the State

⁶ Wala, p. 32.

⁷ Fox, p. 566.

Department, President Roosevelt decided that the military would be in exclusive control of initial relief in previously occupied areas.⁸

Estimates of the necessary minimum requirements for international relief were refined throughout 1943. Combined analyses from the British Ministry of Production, the U. S. Army and from OFRRO resulted in a baseline number and six month schedules. Conditions on the ground were calculated in the equation, which used the comparative terminology of “scorched” and “unscorched.”⁹

All of this preparatory analysis made it abundantly clear that for any relief operation to be successful, the responsibility for management and distribution in post-conflict areas had to remain in the hands of the Allied military command.

⁸ Fox, p. 568.

⁹ Ibid. p. 569.

United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration

The Inter-Allied Committee on Post-war Requirements was established after the initial meeting in September, 1941, in London, attended by the *United Nations*, exclusive of the United States, at which the Soviet Union participated but chose not to follow-up with representation. Opposition by the U.S.S.R. to issues of central command and control in the area of relief distribution resulted in a memorandum being submitted by the Soviets which addressed these aspects of the overall relief directive. The Soviet Union did not include the United States in its governing structure because at the time of its drafting the United States was a non-belligerent. Specifics of this draft included the establishment of an international bureau to deal with operational day-to-day business. When the proposal was submitted to Great Britain in January, 1942 the U.S. was now at war and in a position of leadership, given its military strength and financial resources. The Declaration of the United Nations on January 1, 1942, brought the weight of a new international alliance to bear upon post-war policy planning. Sir Frederick Leith-Ross saw fit to inquire as to the United States' opinion on the recently submitted Soviet document, adding a brief of his own to the memorandum to the United States State Department in which he conferred leadership of the proposed agency to the United States.

On May 7, 1942, the State Department formally responded to the British with structural formulations and operational guidelines. The U.S. State Department made clear its preference for an American as agency executive. Immediate action in the area of material procurement was required, given the looming crisis in the stockpiling of commodities. National purchasing for current and post-war needs was presenting itself as a threat to the war effort. The United Kingdom and the United States were able to forestall purchases by Allied countries with the promise of organized international relief.¹⁰

¹⁰ Fox. P. 572-574.

It is at this juncture that the rising importance of one man on the international diplomatic scene becomes increasingly evident. Throughout negotiations in the latter part of 1942 and into 1943, Dean Acheson, then Assistant Secretary of State, was the leading diplomat driving the discussions and fostering the consensus for a binding agreement. Battlefield reversals had contributed to a slowing down of the diplomatic process, war aims were all encompassing. Significant improvement at the front by the beginning of 1943 brought the discussion back to the table and Acheson was able to facilitate an agreement. Structural elements agreed to in these negotiations laid the foundation for the emergence of the United Nations as a functioning international body.

One of the most important aspects of the final agreement had to do with the independence of the Director General and his administrative authority. Acheson stood firm in his position that regional committees would remain advisory and was able to secure the functional authority of the Director General.¹¹

Protecting UNRRA from political interference was another goal of Acheson's, and one in which he was again able to bring about the necessary compromises. UNRRA employees were to be international civil servants, not beholden to national interests.

Upon the signing of the agreement President Roosevelt reiterated the need for international cooperation and Allied unity in winning of the war and securing the peace.

¹¹ Ibid.

Winning the War

Providing relief and maintaining the perquisites of national sovereignty for European countries under the heel of Nazism was not the primary concern of the United States government, the U.S. Military or the general populace. Containing the Third Reich and protecting the national interest was paramount. Understanding the depth of the refugee situation in Europe and the singular nature of the plight of Europe's Jews did not dominate the discussion on the home front. Putting the country on a sustainable war footing and supplying the Allied powers with the necessary raw materials and military transport were all consuming requirements. Policy decisions with regard to the need for relief and refuge for millions of suffering Europeans were the result of a complex stream of information and events.

Public opinion in a democracy is a powerful determinant of policy development. The influence of the press cannot be discounted. Of particular import was the position taken by *The New York Times*, considered by many in the international diplomatic community, during the period under discussion, to be the foremost conduit of reliable objective information on international affairs.¹² Throughout the 1930s and during World War II the *Times* was guided by Arthur Ochs Sulzberger as publisher. A Jew, Sulzberger was a committed believer in Reform Judaism and his belief system was grounded in the benefits of assimilation. Sulzberger was a well respected, prominent member of the German Jewish community based on the Upper West Side of New York City. He counted among his friends important members of the Roosevelt Administration. Close to both Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau, Jr. and Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter, his range of influence and access to government policymakers was significant. Sulzberger's proclivities were such that he was adamant in his opposition to singling out Jews for special treatment of any kind. In his mind, seeking assistance on the part of displaced and

¹² Laurel Leff, *Buried by the Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005) p. 5.

persecuted European Jews amounted to *special pleading* and served only to reinforce racist ideology. Sulzberger's sensibilities dictated the tone of the *Times* editorial policy and certainly affected the placement of stories. Not averse to helping individual Jewish relatives and members of *The New York Times* family to escape the horrors of Nazi rule, he nevertheless adhered to the rigidity of his thinking as regards the paper's reporting.

In December, 1942, the United States State Department confirmed the Nazi extermination campaign of European Jewry. Reports of mass deportations and atrocities had been received with increasing frequency but the willingness of the Allied governments to acknowledge the extent of the crime had been held hostage by what was considered to be a lack of reliable sources. A declaration was drafted by Great Britain condemning the mass murder campaign and eleven Allied powers, *the United Nations*, were signatories. Competing for the country's attention at the time of the declaration was the news of American forces landing in North Africa and the British defeating the Axis powers at El Alamein.

Calls for safe haven were issued by many in the media and Jewish organizations increased the pressure on the administration to pursue a method of providing refuge for the European Jews who remained alive and in increasingly dire circumstances. *The New York Times* editorialized about "the world's helplessness to stop the horror while the war is going on."¹³

Continued press releases by the Jewish media did not result in the expected coverage from the *Times*, indeed within two months the plight of the Jews in Europe had once again been relegated to a position in the margins of the paper.

¹³ "Hitler's Terror", *The New York Times*, December 18, 1942, p. 26.

An undeniably necessary part of the war effort was the garnering of public support, both at home and abroad. Established in June, 1942, the Office of War Information was created “to facilitate understanding of the war effort and coordinate government information activities.”¹⁴

Propaganda policies were built around bolstering the war effort and *the Jewish question* was fraught with ambiguities. Not knowing how the population would react to stories about atrocities committed against the Jews contributed to a policy of avoidance in the government’s dissemination of facts about the worsening situation for European Jewry. Comments about the “Semitic question” and “the Jewish aspect” proliferate in the statements documented by the World Jewish Congress in its meetings with OWI director Elmer Davis. It was apparent that Davis was not inclined to highlight atrocities perpetrated against the Jews; he was of the mind that such reporting would not be productive.¹⁵

Anti-Semitism at the State Department also presented itself in a rather salient manner: Breckinridge Long, who served as deputy to Cordell Hull, was reported to be an anti-Semite. The New York Times Washington Bureau Chief, Arthur Krock, who disputed his own Jewish origins, was instrumental in supporting Long’s position at the State Department. Gate-keeper Long was steely in his resolve to prevent an increase in Jewish immigration.

It would become the purview of the Treasury Department to initiate and oversee a commitment to mitigating the refugee crisis. Winning the war required forceful interference on the part of Allied financial markets in the blockading of Axis assets. Treasury stepped up to the plate and became involved in the flow of monies to European relief efforts. The first step in this regard was the licensing of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee in the fall of 1942, allowing the JDC to send

¹⁴ Leff, p. 243.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 246-47.

supplies to Poland. The officials at the Treasury Department who became involved in this process were instrumental in the development of a working strategy and a concrete policy for refugee relief.

Under the auspices of Secretary Morgenthau and General Counsel Randolph Paul, the foreign funds control section, lead by John Pehle, became active behind the scenes. By the Fall of 1943, the goals of the Treasury Department and Jewish organizations began to dovetail. Rallies, advertising and congressional lobbying stepped up the pace of public advocacy while at the same time stonewalling by the State Department continued. Josiah Dubois, an assistant general counsel at Treasury, drafted a memorandum to President Roosevelt in which abuses by the State Department, with regard to visa irregularities, were outlined. The Treasury Department had used press leaks to accomplish the necessary publicity and Drew Pearson of the Washington Post wrote a column detailing the denial of visas to a cohort of French rabbis destined for the death camps.

Roosevelt agreed to the recommendations proffered by the Treasury Department, including, on January 22, 1944, signing an executive order creating the War Refugee Board. John Pehle was named Director and although the WRB was jointly administered by the departments of State, War and Treasury, it was Treasury in control.

Aggressive tactics on the part of the WRB are noteworthy to the degree to which they were successful in publicizing the plight of European Jews. Attempts to provide safe haven and transport to Palestine through Turkey in early 1944 did not come to fruition. The German killing machine was much more aggressive and single-minded in its mission to exterminate the Jews of Europe. The Nazis invaded Hungary on March 20, 1944. By the middle of July, half of the Hungarian Jewish population had been deported to Auschwitz, at which time the Hungarian government halted the mass deportations. Responding to international calls for refugee aid, the Horthy government negotiated with WRB representatives about providing exit visas to Palestine.

The War Refugee Board *was* able to secure a safe haven for one thousand Italian Jews. This group of refugees arrived in the United States under an initiative known as the “Free Ports” scheme, which allowed for a limited number of people to gain access to a U.S. port and be kept there until the war was over. This plan was put into place at Fort Ontario, New York in May, 1944. The Allied landing at Normandy on June 6, 1944, commanded the attention of the various government agencies involved in the relief effort and the military advances took precedence over further rescue attempts while the war continued.

Attempts to provide other locales for refuge did not succeed. Conversation turned to Palestine as the only real destination for Europe’s remaining Jews. The British White Paper of 1939 had established immigration guidelines for the Palestinian Mandate and the numerical structure had a five year term which expired in March, 1944. Calls to extend the period for entrance to Palestine met with resistance from the British Colonial Office. It was at this time, however, that the Jewish Brigade became a reality. Allowing the formation of a regiment of Palestinian Jews to form under the auspices of the British and to function under Allied command was a clear acknowledgement of the singular plight of European Jews. The WRB and the Jewish Agency worked in concert to establish ties to the surviving Hungarian Jews and to determine their situation. At war’s end 180,000 Jews were alive in Hungary, a number which represented less than one quarter of the Jewish population living in the country at the beginning of 1944.

Outreach efforts on the part of American officials on the War Refugee Board and continued pressure on the media by the WRB to acknowledge the Jews’ dire situation were integral to a widening scope of attention placed upon what would come to be known as the *She’erit Hapletah* : the surviving remnant of European Jewry.

The War's Aftermath

Once the Allied Powers had established themselves as the victors in May 1945, the problem of resettlement of millions of displaced persons presented itself. Nazi rule had dictated the elimination of European Jewry; National Socialism had instituted the policy of *lebensraum*, whereby the populations of eastern Europe were designated as expendable for purposes of German exploitation, i.e. forced labor or migration. The displacement of occupied peoples, the evacuation of German nationals from urban centers subject to allied bombing raids and the westward flight of many from their homes as the advancing Red Army took hold of eastern Europe resulted in the migration of 20 million people in the aftermath of the German surrender.

Responsibility for law and order, food and shelter, clothing and medicine presented itself as a daunting task for the newly victorious powers. Competing priorities and political imperatives created a vortex into which the lives of a significant portion of the European population fell victim.

Creating a viable environment for sustainable living is terminology more readily associated with 20th century eco-environmentalism than post-war diplomacy, but elemental to the discussions among the victorious Allied Powers was the necessity of dealing with a refugee crisis of immense proportions. The situation presented by the Jewish populations who remained in Europe after the German defeat was problematic. Assuming responsibility for the survival of these destitute and persecuted people did not immediately present itself as a priority for the organizing military apparatus of the various Allied Powers. Planning and coordination for the management of refugee populations was addressed at both the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, as part of the dictates for administration of the occupied zones by the Big Three. Military chain of command was dealing with a war ravaged continent and a defeated country whose infrastructure had been decimated by Allied bombing raids. Respect for the immense tragedy that had befallen the Jewish populations of Europe was not a uniform priority for the Allied

military powers. Preference for those having been the most victimized by the Nazi regime was also not a unanimous predisposition. Management of limited resources and maintenance of law and order seemingly proscribed the inclination to care for one group as opposed to another when scarce provisions and medical access were at a premium.

Response to the crisis took on a few different incarnations, formal and informal avenues of supply and demand became the crosscurrents in an economy ravaged to unparalleled levels.

One route that became salient in providing safe passage was that carved out by the Jewish Brigade and *the Bricha*, a cadre of committed Zionists established in Europe in 1944 as the Red Army liberated the eastern frontier. The reality for the surviving remnant dictated organized underground movement out of the Diaspora, also known as the Pale of Settlement, which had been home to millions of Jews for five hundred years. Repeated persecution had been a fact of life in the Diaspora; the end of the war did not negate anti-Semitism or its many dangerous manifestations. It became incumbent upon those with the wherewithal to provide assistance and the means and method of escape to organize and operate with great alacrity. Led by the Jewish Brigade, (created in September, 1944 as a British regiment: significant numbers of Palestinian Jews having served with the British forces and involved in survivor outreach mandated the brigade's formation, many of whose members were also members of *Haganah*, the Jewish armed underground in Palestine) the coordinated efforts of these groups gave rise to an exodus of rapidly swelling dimensions in the final stages of the war and its aftermath.

The situation on the ground in Germany as the Allies subjugated the country in late Spring, 1945 was nothing short of chaos. Infrastructure was destroyed, communities had been dispersed, food and housing were at a premium. The term "displaced persons" became the catch phrase to describe more than ten million people in search of a home. Train stations became the waiting rooms of the future. Many railways had been laid to waste but there remained those in service that were the focal point of

all travel in the country. Gasoline was not readily available or had been appropriated by the military, so available methods of public transportation were severely limited. On May 5, 1945, a few days before the formal surrender of the Wehrmacht, General Eisenhower broadcast orders for people to stay in place and await further instructions.¹⁶ Many foreign laborers did not heed the Allied Supreme Command and left in search of a way home. Repatriation was a concept given great merit at Yalta and was presumed to be the best solution to the roving hordes of humanity. There were those people, however, who were not in any position to search for a home no longer there. For many the option was that being provided by the military: assembly centers for displaced persons. These facilities were under the authority of the military commands until November, 1945, at which time they were placed under the control of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).

The vast majority of displaced persons were repatriated by the military occupation authorities during 1945 and into 1946. A massive operation, it was an enormous logistical undertaking, made all the more urgent by the approaching winter months and the need for adequate food and shelter.

It was the *She'erit Hapeltah*, the surviving remnant of European Jewry that would remain in the displaced persons camps, in a holding pattern, waiting for some direction to a new home.

The DP camps, as they were known, became holding pens for transit to Palestine. The British White Paper of 1939 had limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to seventy-five thousand over a five-year period beginning that year. The British remained intransigent with regard to any modification of this number. It had become apparent during the Summer of 1945 that the condition of the surviving Jews in the occupied zones was marginal at best. Having been through the deprivations of concentration camps and death marches their physical and mental health was in need of immediate attention.

¹⁶ Richard Bessel, *Germany 1945* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010) p. 256.

A cadre of young rabbis serving as American military chaplains became the frontline in the battle to save the surviving remnant of European Jewry. Abraham Klausner joined the U.S. Army in June, 1944. He was among the many American Jews, on the scene in Europe, who were astounded by the conditions in which they found the survivors. Arriving in Dachau, in May, 1945 and confronted with the overwhelming devastation of camp life, Klausner became in Atina Grossman's recounting, "A strange kind of Army officer, without a unit, without a commanding officer, even without an official billet."¹⁷ The chaplain visited seventeen displaced persons camps in Bavaria in a six week period over May and June of 1945, cataloguing the condition of approximately 14,000 Jews. He initiated a letter writing campaign to Jewish community groups in the States in which he vividly described the horror of the conditions in the liberated camps. He shone a light on the situation in the U.S. Zone of Occupation and hastened the political response from Washington. Klausner was instrumental in the creation of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria, the group was formed at a special conference convened by Klausner on July 1, 1945. The violence, due to rising nationalistic tensions, which had erupted in many of the camps in Bavaria, prompted Klausner to begin the process of seeking separate facilities for the surviving Jews. The U.S. military was receptive to a plan to reduce the ongoing violence. Relocating and consolidating by nationality was a realistic goal to curb the outbreaks of violence. Dachau had been designated as a holding center for captured Nazis, which entailed relocation of the remaining Jewish inmates. Klausner came up with a plan and used military ambulances to transport the remaining Jewish population to three locations in Bavaria: St. Ottilien, Gauting and Feldafing.¹⁸ Realizing the psychological benefits and physical security separate camps would afford the displaced Jews, Klausner approached the officer in charge of displaced persons in Munich, a Captain McDonald. Maintaining law and order, in addition to feeding and clothing a significant portion of the civilian population, required preemptive measures not always in the military rule book. Klausner's recommendations about specific

¹⁷ Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007) p. 136.

¹⁸ Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993) pp17-18.

camp populations made sense to McDonald. Klausner advised creating an organization to represent all the Jews in southern Germany and Austria. This organization could then mediate with the military and reduce the number of individuals seeking the attention of the overwhelmed military relief units. Securing approval for this plan included visiting all the DP camps to build support. Meeting with a group of representatives from the camps who had come to Flak-Kaserne, a DP camp near Munich, to welcome members of the newly arrived Jewish Brigade, the decision to convene on July 1, 1945 at Feldafing was agreed upon by Klausner and members of the group. Approval for the plan was forthcoming from the occupation authorities and the organization would become known as the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Bavaria.¹⁹

In addition to his organizational skills, Klausner's energy and powers of persuasion were unmatched in his theater of operations. The theater included the home front as well. Not one to leave his constituency at home uninformed, Klausner sent detailed information to CANRA: Committee on Army Navy Religious Activities. CANRA, originally established as the Committee on Chaplains by the JWB (Jewish Welfare Board) in 1917, had been authorized by the U.S. government to recruit and endorse chaplains from among the three rabbinical associations-Conservative Rabbinical Assembly of America (RAA), the Reform Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR), and the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). Military authorization mandated ongoing endorsement by CANRA, which required the submission of monthly reports by the chaplains on relevant activities.²⁰ Klausner did not hesitate to publicize what he viewed as the untenable situation at the displaced persons camps and, in particular, the condition and treatment of the Jewish refugee population.

Klausner did not stop with his reports to CANRA, but put forth a summary of his findings entitled, "A Detailed Report on the Liberated Jew as He Now Suffers His Period of Liberation Under the

¹⁹ Grobman. P. 60.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 3.

Discipline of the Armed Forces of the United States.” This report was sent to prominent members of the Jewish community in the U.S. Philip Bernstein, the executive director of CANRA and a well-known Reform rabbi, responded positively to Klausner’s entreaties. Bernstein reached out publicly for support. This outreach included soliciting the assistance of congressional representatives. A number of congressmen from the New York metropolitan area cabled General Eisenhower with a request to appoint a special liaison for Jewish affairs. This cable was sent on May 10, 1945, and was to begin a process that would breathe fire into the Jewish question and ultimately harness a diplomatic movement that would offset the intractability of the British Foreign Policy establishment with regard to the mandate in Palestine.

Special Liaison for Jewish Affairs

Building a foundation for the future on the ruins of the past could not have been more dramatically demonstrated than by the establishment of the *hakhsharot*. Zionist youth movements had a foothold in Eastern Europe before the war and were instrumental in providing support and direction for resistance activity during the war. Surviving Zionist youth leaders did not waste any time in pursuing their goals after liberation. Informal arrangements between the Jewish survivors (it is estimated that eighty per cent of those in the U. S. Zone of Occupation, immediately after the cessation of hostilities, were under the age of 40) and the U.S. Army resulted in the first *hakhsharah*.

Kibbutz Buchenwald became the first agricultural training farm for survivor youth in Germany. The squalor of Buchenwald and the seeming lack of outsider assistance in mitigating the circumstances, in which they found themselves, motivated the young Zionists in the camp to find other means by which to survive. Persuasive arguments convinced the Colonel in charge to allow a cadre of youth to move elsewhere. Overcrowding was the number one problem in the camps. Violence associated with idle youth could be reduced significantly by farm apprenticeship. Productive farms meant available food in a country soon to be at the mercy of a long cold winter. Zionist tenets rested on the social benefits of collective living. The availability of a life-affirming environment after the depths of camp life was elemental to the project's success. In addition to being overwhelmingly young, Jewish survivors were overwhelmingly alone. Oftentimes the sole remaining member of their families, the promise of a supportive community was critical to their ability to function emotionally. Represented at the first meeting of the Conference of Liberated Jews on July 25th 1945, Kibbutz Buchenwald members advocated for themselves and the conference was duly supportive. In addition to working the land the youthful cohort was immersed in living and learning. Whether or not the young survivors had been

religiously observant prior to the war, the tenor of kibbutz life resounded to the sights and sounds of cultural Judaism. Exhorting them to ensure a rebirth of their people, Samuel Gringaus, Jewish leader at Landsberg DP camp, spoke to them on Yom Kippur in September, 1945, “For you, our people, are the agents of our revenge which ought to be a proud assertion to continue life. You must readily show the world and all our enemies that despite everything we are here to stay. Your revenge must be in the working and the toiling for your own land. You must create and build, dance and sing, open yourselves to life, to living and labor.”²¹

On June 22, 1945, President Harry S. Truman sent Earl Harrison, dean of the University of Pennsylvania Law School, to Europe to investigate conditions at Displaced Persons camps in the U. S. Zone of Occupation. Truman had instructed Harrison to ascertain the needs of the stateless and non-repatriable refugees and to make recommendations about the action required and under whose auspices it should be rendered.

It was this directive of Truman’s that brought Earl Harrison and Adam Klausner together. Originally accompanied by Joseph Schwartz, European director of the JDC (American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) at the behest of the State Department, The Third Army planned tour of facilities was not inclusive of those camps most in need of attention. Colonel Milton Richmond suggested Klausner intervene. Klausner met Harrison that night at his hotel room in Munich and subsequently was invited to join the inspection tour. Harrison toured Germany and Austria over a two month period and submitted a preliminary report to the president at the White House. Truman released the report on September 29, 1945, and the next day it made front page news across the United States.²²

²¹ As quoted in Avinoam J. Patt’s, “Living in Landsberg, Dreaming of Deganiah” *We Are Here* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010) p. 107.

²² Grobman, pp. 72-73.

Travelling with Harrison throughout the U. S. Zone of Occupation, Klausner's influence on Truman's representative was no doubt compelling. Harrison's report has been described as scathing in its criticism of relief efforts, relative to the conditions of the camps and the status of the Jewish DPs. The use of term *status* requires discussion and analysis. Physical well-being and living conditions were in need of prioritized action on the part of the US military and UNRRA. Additionally, the determination of the need to recognize the unique position of the Jewish survivors as stateless persons became an overriding concern as Harrison developed his critique. Harrison stated, "it is not a case of singling out a particular group for special privileges. It is a matter of raising to a more normal level the position of a group which has been depressed to the lowest depths conceivable by years of organized and inhuman oppression."²³ The consideration of nationality and citizenship were also foremost in Harrison's analysis of the situation. It was clear to Harrison that repatriation to inhospitable lands was not an option. Anti-Semitism remained an ongoing problem in Eastern Europe and expecting the survivors to fend for themselves in increasingly hostile post-war venues was unrealistic. The existence of the Kibbutz groups in the camps and the burgeoning *hakhsharot* were indicative of a reawakening of the Jewish people and a sincere desire on the part of the young people to renew the option to live a normal life. Normalization could only be obtained in an environment providing physical and psychological support. It was apparent to Harrison that the issue of emigration to Palestine by those who wished to make *aliyah* had to be resolved.

Hakhsharah is the Hebrew word for preparation and in the context of Jewish DPs refers to the agricultural training that was provided to the surviving youth by the various Zionist organizations operating in the American zone of occupation. The training farms were called *hakhsharot*, it was at these locations that the reality of a new homeland coalesced. The word *aliyah* means "ascent" and is

²³ Earl G. Harrison, *The Treatment of Displaced Jews in the United States Zone of Occupation in Germany, 1945* Report of Earl G. Harrison to President Truman (the full report was published in *The New York Times* on September 30, 1945). P. 9.

the term used to describe Jewish immigration to the Land of Israel. Historically, Zionism was promulgated on the basis of a return to *the Promised Land*. The commitment of a cadre of dedicated Zionists to the realization of this goal played an integral part in the progress made by youthful survivors in their pursuit of a new home in Israel. The word *flight* is indicative of the nature of the journey travelled by most refugees in World War II and its aftermath. Often without warning and under severe duress, people were forced to take to the road. The Jewish organization created in Eastern Europe as the war ended in the wake of the Red Army's advance, in 1944, went by the name of *Berihah*, which means *flight* in Hebrew and those belonging to this group were known as the *Bricha*, which translates as escape. The reality for *the surviving remnant* dictated organized underground movement out of the Diaspora.

Given the persuasive talents of Klausner, the conclusions drawn by Harrison about the necessity of a Jewish homeland, must certainly have been abetted by the arguments put forth by the young Jewish rabbi. Harrison did not hesitate to broach the tough questions which would rankle both the diplomats and the immigration authorities as the issue took on increasing visibility in the United States and Great Britain. Harrison tackled the issue forthrightly and gave concrete consideration to the humanitarian aspects inherent in defending his recommendation that certificates for immigration to Palestine be made more readily available and in greater number. He asserted that, "some reasonable extension or modification...ought to be possible without serious repercussions."²⁴

Determining eligibility for benefits and thus granting a certain status to a group or an individual is a process often rife with controversy. Competing priorities and political imperatives weigh mightily in the decision-making. Organizational rivalries and turf battles can delay forward movement. Forceful voices, however, continued

²⁴ Harrison, p. 6.

to have an impact and served to maintain the momentum. General Eisenhower was sent a summary of Harrison's report on August 3, 1945. The report came by way of General George C. Marshall, Army chief of staff; on August 10, Eisenhower received a cable from Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson relaying his concerns about the report's conclusions. Concurrently, Stephen S. Wise, President of the American Jewish Congress, was attending the World Zionist Conference in London and on August 3, he received the following cable from Chaplain Robert Marcus,

There is urgent necessity to assign liaison officer to Headquarters G-5 for purpose of coordinating activity of Jewish displaced persons. Such officer would aid in the establishment of all Jewish camps, including religious program for these people. Immediate action advisable in order to avoid suffering next winter and remedy deplorable conditions in some camps as reported by the daily press. Respectfully submit that Captain Robert. S. Marcus be assigned said post²⁵.

Marcus was another Jewish rabbi active in the European theater of operations. He was peripatetic, managing one program after another and remained steadfast in his belief that the Jewish DPs future lie in the actualization of Zionist aspirations. His request, however, for assignment to the liaison position was met with opposition from the JDC. Marcus had Zionist affiliations, specifically with the World Jewish Congress, and it is likely the JDC wanted someone less political.

Eisenhower originally rejected the request on August 9; he then received the cable from Stimson on the 10th and thought twice. Agreeing to the need for a liaison, Eisenhower believed it best to keep the position within the military chain of command and felt a chaplain on the scene would best qualify. In addition to the JDC, opposition to Marcus was voiced from within the ranks. *Standard Operating Procedures* was a phrase seemingly at odds with the reality Marcus encountered on a daily basis and he readily rejected the directive to follow such guidelines. The JDC wanted to maintain a good working relationship with the military and knew the Army opposition to Marcus was not helpful. Asked for a recommendation, the JDC director of mission in Germany advised on behalf of Judah Nadich. Nadich

²⁵ As quoted in Grobman. P. 76.

was serving as theater chaplain and was considered a reasonable choice by all parties. The appointment was made and Nadich transferred from Paris to Frankfurt on August 22, 1945.

The immediate response of the U.S. military to the Harrison report is evidenced also by the formal establishment of separate Jewish camps and new mandates issued regarding minimum requirement for material needs. All of these developments occurred before the publication of the report in *The New York Times* on September 30, 1945.

The British were not forthcoming with the necessary immigration certificates and instead called for an Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry. Said committee was set up in November, 1945. As the year ended and the severe winter of 1945 took hold, the Jewish question remained prominent on the world stage. A special adviser on Jewish affairs had been deemed necessary by October, 1945, and Judge Simon Rifkind was appointed to the position, replacing Judah Nadich.

Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry

On October 22, 1945 David Ben-Gurion, representing the Jewish Agency for Palestine, visited the Landsberg DP camp and was introduced to the various projects initiated by the *She'erit Hapletah*. The evident progress of the *hakhsharot*, combined with the vibrant political life underwritten by the activities of the Central Committee, encouraged the emissary from Palestine to submit suggestions to General Eisenhower and General Walter Bedell-Smith on improving Jewish DP morale. The implementation of self-rule in the camps and the provision for additional agricultural training were presented by Ben-Gurion as practical steps in alleviating the desultory aspects of DP life. Release of the Harrison Report to the general public through publication in *The New York Times* on September 30, 1945 put conditions in the DP camps front and center in the worldwide press. Seizing the opportunity to influence the occupation authorities at a time when public sympathy for the survivor's plight was considerable, Ben-Gurion was persuasive. He was also able to ascertain that the U.S. military was not going to prevent continued infiltration by survivors into the American zone. Another ally in the burgeoning support for *hakhsharot* was the UNRRA zone administrator, John Whiting. In stating his position about the benefits of appropriating land from former Nazis, Whiting was clear in his reasoning: 'It is, in my opinion, a fact that the use of the properties by the Jewish displaced persons would increase the productivity and actually contribute more to the local German economy than present usage does.'²⁶

Microeconomics and global political concerns began to dovetail as the various parties to the discussion looked to find workable solutions for the many problems posed by the existence of the DP population in occupied Germany. Not the least of which was the pressing issue of long-term settlement for these stateless persons. Increased involvement at this time by members of the Jewish Agency on the ground in Germany coalesced around the movement to organize *aliyah*. These workers called *shlichim*

²⁶ As quoted in Patt, p. 111.

(emissaries) from the *Yishuv* (settlement... the Jewish community in Palestine), in cooperation with and under the auspices of UNRRA, underwrote a concerted effort to found an increasing number of *hakhsharot*. The increase in the flow of refugees from Eastern Europe began to accelerate with each passing month. The demographic shifts and the diplomatic exigencies were beginning to dictate what variables would be kept in play as the decision-making process evolved.

Called to the table in January, 1946, the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry (AACI) surveyed the situation in Germany, Austria and Poland and on April 20, 1946, recommended immediate authorization of 100,000 certificates for immigration to Palestine. Influenced by the totality of factors, the evident success of the agricultural training farms, now numbering over thirty, was nonetheless instrumental in convincing the Committee of both the work ethic and the enthusiasm for making *aliyah* that the motivated young Jews demonstrated.

To the chagrin of President Truman and the Americans, the British Foreign Policy establishment declined to implement the recommendations proposed by the AACI. The summer of 1946 was a violent one in Poland and in Palestine. Anti-Semitism turned deadly in Kielce, Poland, where on July 4th, forty-two Jewish Holocaust survivors were killed in a pogrom. The activities of *Berihah* and *Haganah* in Europe came under the direction of the Mossad, which established a secret high command in Paris to facilitate the illegal movement of Jewish refugees out of Europe. The status of the stateless Jews in Europe had become increasingly problematic and no solution was forthcoming. The Jewish armed underground in Palestine ratcheted up the level of hostilities directed against the British presence. Violence accelerated to an exceedingly deadly pitch with the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on July 22, 1946, in which ninety-one people died.

The ongoing British policy of intercepting and detaining Jews attempting to immigrate to Palestine by ship was being met with an aggressive counter effort on the part of the Mossad. The Mossad was successful in facilitating the arrival of twenty-two ships in Palestine in 1946, carrying 21,711 Jews.

Personal Diplomacy

On October 24, 1946 Abraham Klausner was released from military service. He had been instrumental in assisting Dr. Zalman Grinberg in entering the United States in early 1946. Dr. Grinberg, concentration camp survivor and Central Committee for Liberated Jews spokesperson travelled to the United States with false documents secured by Klausner. Although detained for questioning by the FBI for questioning, Grinberg was released after the intervention of the American Jewish Conference. He was subsequently able to make the rounds of the various Jewish organizations and visited with the Army General Staff in Washington and with Herbert H. Lehman, director general of UNRRA, as well as Jewish members of Congress.

Klausner, however, had antagonized his superior officers one too many times, and he was denied an extension of his tour of duty. Upon return to the United States Klausner remained in contact with the DPs and JDC personnel. On January 21, 1947, Klausner received orders recalling him to duty. His return to duty had occurred at the behest of Senator Robert A. Taft (R-Ohio).²⁷

Conditions in the Jewish DP camps had deteriorated during the winter of 1946-47. The need for a solution was sorely evident and the depths to which many of the survivors had fallen caused Klausner to lament their loss of a moral compass, such was the despair and depravity.

Though not a Zionist himself, Klausner had come to believe that the only solution for the displaced Jews was Palestine. Germany held out no hope but the illegal realms of society for these dispossessed people. Attempts at rehabilitation notwithstanding, those not in the *hakhsharot* were, in large part, rotting in the camps.²⁸

²⁷ Grobman, p. 180.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 186.

World Jewry and the Nation of Israel

The British Labour Party was out of power in the 1930s and was not held accountable for the misfortunes of European Jewry. The fortunes of Labour, however, were on the rise as World War II drew to a close. In July, 1945, the Labour Party came to power with Clement Attlee as Prime Minister. On November 13, 1945, Ernest Bevin, the New Foreign Secretary announced that the Labour government would stand by the White Paper of 1939.²⁹

The violent birth of the state of Israel in May, 1948 was prefaced by international diplomatic efforts to find resolution to the Palestinian situation under the auspices of the newly created United Nations. Interviews conducted in 1990 with various representatives of the diplomatic community closely involved with the Palestine initiative at the UN in the years 1947-1948 open a window onto the most pressing considerations. The interviews include conversations with the late Abba Eban, former Israeli Ambassador to the United States and Foreign Minister of Israel, the late Shabtai Rosenne, Israeli diplomat and eminent international legal scholar, and the late William Epstein, UN civil servant for fifty-four years and a specialist on disarmament issues. These three men were intimately involved in the negotiations at the UN in their various affiliations with The Jewish Agency for Palestine and the United Nations.

A brief description of The Jewish Agency proffered by Mr. Rosenne as an introduction to his personal history is worth recalling:

I was demobilized from the Royal Air Force—I remember the date very well—on the first of April 1946. On which date I went into the Political Department of the London office of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. That was an agency that was established in 1929 under the specific provisions of the Palestine mandate and represented the Jewish people as a whole vis-à-vis the British government, the mandatory and the League of Nations as the supervising authority of those days. Its main office was

²⁹ Geoffrey Alderman, *The Jewish Community in British Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983) p. 123.

in Jerusalem. Its second main office was in London. And its third main office which existed right through the whole period was in Geneva.³⁰

The establishment of the United Nations and the subsequent dissolution of the League of Nations in 1945-46 would play into the legal representations of the British government with regard to ongoing responsibility for the mandate for Palestine. Mr. Rosenne's explanation of the bureaucratic structure relating to the Jewish Agency, the League of Nations, the United Nations and the British policy establishment categorizes the nature of the interaction:

The League of Nations was dissolved later in 1946 and replaced by the United Nations and the British maintained their position as mandatory until, of course, 1948. The office in London carried the burden of direct representation with the British government as opposed to the Jerusalem office which was related to the Palestine government. And, of course the two were distinct. The Political Department carried the burden of the work of relations both with the British government which was primarily either the Colonial Office in those days or the Foreign Office depending really which level was being discussed. And if it was sort of detailed Palestinian level it would probably be the Colonial Office. If it was a broader political level it would have been the Foreign Office. It dealt also with Parliament. It also did the public relations job in connection with both Houses of Parliament, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, and with the press on the major Palestinian issues, issues related to Palestine's events.³¹

According to Mr. Rosenne, the specifics of the Palestinian Mandate were not on the initial UN agenda. When the UN did take up the issue of Palestine the calculations were very much equated with the DP problem, "There was this terrible connection all the time of the DP problem with this. If you go into the records, for instance, of UNSCOP you would see that there was tremendous opposition in UNSCOP and by the Arabs to UNSCOP visiting any DP camp."³²

³⁰ YUN Interview with Shabtai Rosenne, Charlottesville, VA. 06/12/1990. Introduction.

³¹ Ibid. p.2

³² Rosenne, p. 10.

In May, 1947 the United Nations formed the Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) in response to a request made by Great Britain that the General Assembly “make recommendations under article 10 of the Charter, concerning the future government of Palestine.”³³

William Epstein was the acting chief of the Middle East section of the political division of the Department of Political and Security Council Affairs at the time Resolution 106 was passed setting up the UNSCOP. Mr. Epstein was asked to write a paper on the Palestinian question from the Jewish point of view by Ambassador Arkady Sobolev, head of the Political and Security Council Department. A special session was called in April, 1947, the First Special Session of the United Nations, to address the issue of Palestine. Mr. Epstein was of the opinion that the British Colonial Office had instituted a policy of divide and rule over the course of the two decades following the imposition of the mandate in 1922. Epstein also maintained that the immigration restrictions issued in 1939 in the White Paper were “contrary to the mandate. The League of Nations Mandates Commission said they had no right to do that under the mandate. It was contrary to the traditional interpretation that had always been accepted and passed by the majority vote. They did not accept it.”³⁴

UNSCOP came up with the plan for partition with economic union. According to Epstein, “The Americans and the Russians both favored and accepted the partition plan. It was just a question of working out the boundaries and the rules. The commission had recommended that Jerusalem be a ‘corpus separatum,’ an international city.”³⁵

When asked about the British intent at the time, given the British had chosen to refer the issue to the UN, Epstein said,

³³ UN Resolution 106, May 15, 1947.

³⁴ YUN Interview with William Epstein, New York, NY. October 22, 23, and 25, 1990. p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 7.

They didn't want to pull out. They were asking the UN for advice on which was the best way to proceed. They were hoping they'd be asked to stay on....After the report of UNSCOP was submitted calling for the separate states, the British said, 'We will have nothing to do with it. We will leave on May 14th and let them take over. They left under such circumstances that they gave the military advantage to the Arabs. They pulled out of the Jewish areas first and the Arab areas last. That gave the Arabs the advantage in the fighting...The Jordanians and the Arab legion were organized and operating under the British in the West Bank and were, in effect, permitted to take over the West Bank. It was like leaving the keys in the door.³⁶

³⁶ Epstein, p.11.

Resolution, War and Statehood

Abba Eban discusses the historic implications of the UN vote to approve the **Partition Plan for Palestine (Resolution #181)** on November 29th 1947:

...it was a new challenge in the open arena and it was completely different working with a multilateral international organization than in a kind of exclusive relationship with one power-two completely different techniques...the first meeting was in New York and it only had a procedural purpose, which was to appoint a committee which would investigate and then make its recommendation. It became very substantive not only because most countries gave some indication of their predilections or tendencies, but because the Soviet Union ignored completely the normal procedural limitations and made a very dramatic and far-reaching announcement of a change in its policy. In fact the Soviet Union was the first great power which openly said that Israel should be a Jewish state-admittedly is an alternative to the ideal of living together. In expressing skepticism about that, they said quite openly that if the two parties cannot live together either federally, or as a unitary state, then Palestine should be divided into states. At that stage the United Nations sprang into the headlines as the forum from which a very monumental transition was made in the policy of one of the great powers.³⁷

In addressing the issue of history as biography, Eban remarks on the nature of politics, "We no longer wanted a continuation of the mandate because Ernest Bevin was very abrasive toward the Zionist point of view. Nobody understood why he was with such radical extremism. It can only be understood in terms of individual psychology. I believe in the role of the personality of history. "³⁸

Abba Eban had a different perspective on the wishes of the British with regard to Palestine than that espoused by William Epstein,

...they didn't really want to stay on. I understood because if they had given up India, what's the use of Palestine? Palestine was regarded as one of a series of bases. Malta, Cyprus, and Palestine were stepping stones on the way to India, and if you don't have India, what's the point of having the others? You would be on your way to nowhere. If you are going to have a major decolonization, these places weren't important enough for 100,000 British troops to be

³⁷ YUN Interview with Abba Eban New York, NY. April 16, 1990. p.4-5.

³⁸ Eban. p.11-12.

tied down when the war was ended. It was a country that could sustain massive losses if there were a war, but the war had just ended. And they were getting killed and the public just wouldn't stand for it. Or they said, "what for?" and it was very hard to say what for. It wasn't a source of mineral wealth or oil. I would say it was like a beehive without honey. You've got the stings and you've got nothing out of it.³⁹

Mr. Eban is clear about the role Harry Truman played when the score got really close:

Truman made a dramatic gesture on the 14th of May...You must remember that this Israeli invincibility was a myth. Our military situation was very, very bad, and we were going to lose and even our own *Haganah* leaders were saying that it's not sure that we can do this. Here we are only fighting volunteers, and not the official Arab armies. They hadn't reached the frontier. Yet Jerusalem was cut off. The Negev was cut off. The Arabs had seized points of communication, the Jewish state was fragmented. The Arabs very cleverly didn't try to defeat the Israeli armies but to seize communication points. The United States was watching us with skepticism, and that's on the local scene. They thought there was going to be a massacre and they would have to come in and rescue us. They were getting reports from people like Marshall, General Montgomery, saying in March that the Jews were really (it's a slang phrase) they've got a hot potato there. They can't do it. The French were always saying it was absolutely impossible. On the international level the Soviet war pressure was intense; there was a prospect of war. Czechoslovakia was invaded, NATO was established. People like the Pentagon—Forrestal—were saying the Arabs were beginning to cancel oil contracts. So there was a feeling that it was beyond Israel's power, to implement partition and it was against America's interest to fight for it. So they said, "let's have another look." The other look was a little bit absurd—the trusteeship—but at any rate, let us halt the dynamism with which the state is established...I think after November 29 Truman thought the matter settled and he would go on to deal with other matters. But he left the whole thing alone. It doesn't figure in history very much between November and March. And then when he heard of this, "oh my God, what's happened?" And it's then that he very conscience-stricken, about to see Weizmann, sent John Rosenmann (Judge Samuel I. Rosenmann) to see Weizmann to say "if you've decided nevertheless to establish a state I'll recognize it. I won't take responsibility, but if you take responsibility, it's OK."⁴⁰

³⁹ Ibid. p. 21.

⁴⁰ Eban. p.22-24.

Truman's decision to recognize the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 as the British pulled out and the new nation declared its independence was instrumental in helping to establish the legitimacy of the new state. According to Shabtai Rosenne, the declaration of independence,

... turned underground forces who had only been partly well disciplined into a national fighting force, a national army which could unite the people. Here Ben Gurion was very far sighted when he disbanded forcefully what was the elite force in the underground, the Palmah, because it was too left-wing for him. He was a socialist himself but middle of the road. Ultimately, the right wing, too, the Altalena incident, with Begin and Shamir and so on, he disbanded them both. He insisted on a single national army. All that was only possible because of the Declaration of Independence. It was the supremacy of the government, the supremacy of the parliament, and the control, such as it might be, of the government by the Knesset, by the parliament.⁴¹

⁴¹ Rosenne. p. 34-35.

Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons

On October 2, 1946, the American Jewish Committee (AJC), in administrative session, recommended the undertaking of a concerted effort to enable the passage of a liberalized policy of immigration into the United States. Growing awareness of the worsening situation for displaced persons in Europe prompted action in America. Remedying the existing restrictive policy through bureaucratic channels ran into stiff opposition in The State Department. It became imperative to seek redress through the passage of new legislation in Congress. Concentrating on a way to secure admittance for 100,000 Jewish DPs would cause much consternation in Congress as well as the general public. Generating the necessary public support would entail a program based on a non-sectarian approach to the problem.

Rallying organizational backing encompassed a wide-ranging outreach to Christian church leaders. In November, 1946 the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons (CCDP) was founded. On December 20, 1946, an organizational meeting of the CCDP was held, at which Earl G. Harrison was elected chairman. "Like the 'nonsectarian' refugee relief committees of the 1930s, the CCDP was basically a Jewish committee operating for DPs, four-fifths of them Christians."⁴² On April 1, 1947, a bill was introduced in Congress calling for admission of 400,000 DPs during four years. The attempt at new legislation met with opposition in the House of Representatives, particularly from Republicans, who were in the majority. Continued lobbying efforts and a significant uptick in the percentage of Christians, notably Midwestern Catholics, who came to support the essence of the bill, resulted in a circumscribed piece of legislation. The revision capped the number of DPs to be admitted at 50,000 per year for two years and reduced eligibility to those persons who had been in DP camps on December 22, 1945.

⁴² Haim Genizi, *America's Fair Share: The Admission and Resettlement of Displaced Persons, 1945-1952* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993) p. 71.

Reactions against the influx of Eastern European Jews with possible Communist affiliations contributed to the downsizing of the annual quota. The bill which emerged from the Senate was known as the Wiley-Revercomb Bill and subsequently was passed with an increase in the annual quota to 200,000 over a two-year period and became known as the DP Act of 1948.

At issue also was the question of the admittance of possible Nazi collaborators. Much vitriol was spewed about the effectiveness of the non-sectarian approach to the lobbying effort given the eventual equation used to calculate admission quotas: provisions of the Wiley-Revercomb Act were designed to limit the number of Jewish immigrants. Included in the legislation was an article that permitted the entrance of *Volksdeutsche*, which would mean possible Nazi sympathizers.

When the smoke had cleared, the actual success of the legislation was acknowledged. Liberalization of the immigration laws was effected: "...the DP Act of 1948 must be recognized as a landmark in the history of American immigration policy." Continued lobbying on the part of the CCDP resulted in passage of the DP Act of 1950. The 1950 Act extended the time period for immigration and increased the annual quotas. "Altogether, under the Truman Directive and the DP Acts of 1948 and 1950, almost 100,000 Jews entered the United States, numbers that represent a real achievement."⁴³

⁴³ *ibid.* p. 111.

Stories of Survival

Policies formulated by the National Socialists were instrumental in the displacement of significant numbers of the European population between 1938 and 1945. Resettlement of ethnic groups, deportation of Jews and forced migration of civilians in occupied countries for labor purposes culminated in a mass disruption of population centers relative to pre-war configurations. Allied occupation authorities were not uniform in their approach or treatment of displaced persons. Lingering anti-Semitism served to create a dangerous environment for the surviving remnant of European Jewry. Flight from Nazi persecution began with the rise of National Socialism in Germany in 1933. The first concentration camp was established by the Nazis within weeks of their assumption of power in the Spring of 1933. Imposition of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935 provided a platform from which the National Socialists could systematically restrict the rights of its Jewish population. *Anschluss* in 1938 began a movement of aggressive annexation on the part of Germany with regard to its European neighbors. Austria was absorbed into the Greater Reich on March 12, 1938. The Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 was a short-lived treaty of non-aggression between the Soviet Union and Germany. In June of 1941 Germany invaded Soviet Ukraine. The borders of Eastern Europe became shifting sands in the wake of German expansion. The end of World War II brought further upheaval to the concept of national borders. Loss of home and citizenship were the reality for millions of people in post-war Europe. Those who had suffered most egregiously, the surviving Jewish remnant, were truly the dispossessed. Lacking family and the wherewithal to continue in a hateful environment forced many Jewish survivors to seek refuge in the American zone.

Three stories resonate with the echoes of liminal moments in this treacherous period in European history. The year 1938 would prove to be a decisive one for Jews living in Austria and

decisions about emigration were fraught with emotion. The Siege of Stalingrad was lifted in February 1943 forcing the retreat of the Wehrmacht and the evacuation of many in Eastern Europe as the Red Army advanced westward. Soviet liberation of eastern Poland in the winter of 1944-45 presented returning Jewish survivors with the oftentimes virulent anti-Semitism of the Polish population. Avenues for escape at these critical times were few and decisions to flee were difficult at best. Seemingly the only hospitable destination for many on the move in Europe after the cessation of hostilities was the U.S. Zone of Occupation. The United States was a beacon of light in an extraordinarily dark epoch. The light shone brightly in 1938 for Hedi Pope and her sister, Eva, and the United States became their adopted homeland in 1939. A series of fortuitous meetings, in combination with her beauty, talent and love of dance, landed Hedi in a Broadway show in the summer of 1939. John Kushnir and his family were in transit in war torn Eastern Europe from 1943 to 1945. At war's end the Kushnir family faced forced repatriation to Soviet Ukraine but were spared that unwanted move and found refuge in a displaced persons camp in the American zone. In 1950 the Kushnir family immigrated to the United States, where John served in the United States Army as a young man. Gail's parents' story, that of Max and Clara Frisch, is vividly recounted through the extensive documentation and family photos Gail was able to provide. Germany, in the last year of the war, is a story best told in the first person narrative: a twenty-eight minute film entitled *The Road West*, culled from a series of interviews with John Kushnir over the span of three months this past year, gives ample evidence to the indefatigable ability to survive and prosper that is inherent in the human condition.

Keeping the Beauty *and* the Memories Alive

Hedi Pope, neé Politzer, was born in 1920, in Vienna, the younger daughter in a non-observant Jewish family of means. Her father, Oscar, ran a thriving silversmith business. An artisan in a centuries old guild, Oscar Politzer, was a master craftsman. Jewelers to the throne of the Hapsburg Empire, the Politzers were a well respected and cultured family with deep roots in Vienna society.

Hedi has vivid memories of the year 1938, particularly Friday afternoon, March 11th, when the Austrian Nazi Party staged a coup d' état. After Heinrich Himmler and members of the SS had cleared the way on Friday by arresting opposition leaders, Hitler sent an ultimatum to the Austrian chancellor, Kurt Schuschnigg, demanding capitulation or invasion. After many trying hours of futile attempts to generate support for the Austrian Republic from among the European democracies, Schuschnigg resigned. On Saturday morning, March 12th, the Wehrmacht marched uncontested into Vienna.

Hedi had a date for the opera on that Saturday evening with her boyfriend, Gunther. The couple walked to the Vienna State Opera House on the Ringstrasse. When the Opera House came into view Hedi remembers taking note of the massive swastika draped on the concert hall's portico. An eerie quiet had settled on the city that weekend: the somnolence of capitulation enveloped the city. It was not long before palpable fear became an everyday accompaniment to city life for those opposed to the new regime or those in the crosshairs of Nazi hegemonic policy. As a young Jewess, Nazi racial policies began to dictate the choices Hedi would be able to make as graduation from gymnasium grew closer. Hedi described the pervasive sense of *Verzweifelt* that had taken hold in Vienna. Her parents, Oscar and Marie, neé Berger, did not succumb to this omnipresent sense of despair prevalent in the Viennese Jewish community. Oscar was a man of action, whose wife Marie spoke fluent French and had exposed the Politzer girls to a classical education in the arts. The elder Politzers had made the decision to seek emigration visas for Hedi and her older sister, Eva. They had been able to obtain the necessary affidavits

from relatives in the United States; the documentation provided initial sponsorship for the young ladies. Hedi has kept her diaries from those years and the word written repeatedly, day after day, across the pages of the little leather bound book is: *“warten, warten.”*⁴⁴ The long days of waiting for the necessary paperwork to be approved and the visas to be issued from the United States embassy were interminable. The situation took a decided turn for the worse when her father was arrested on the night of November 9th, in a mass round-up of Jews, during the rampage that was Kristallnacht. Oscar Politzer had been attending classes in English and Spanish as well as plumbing at a special school set up by the Jewish community in Vienna with the express purpose of providing instruction for vocational training. The group supported immigration for those in the community and hence became an immediate and visible target in the premeditated attack on Jewish property on those nights in November 1938.

“Vater nicht nach Hause gekommen”: *Father did not come home that night.*⁴⁵ Her father was subsequently interned in Dachau and died there in January, 1939. The family did receive correspondence from him in Dachau in which he insisted that the girls must emigrate as soon as they were in receipt of the necessary papers. Eva and Hedi were issued passports on November 17, 1938. The young ladies set sail, in a pouring rain, from Rotterdam, on the S S Veendam. It was January 23, 1939, and the trip aboard the Dutch cruise ship would be an exhilarating experience for twenty-three year old Eva and young Hedi. Unbeknownst to the girls their father had died earlier in the month while incarcerated at Dachau. The first letter they were to receive from their mother, upon their arrival in Newark, New Jersey, informed them of the sad news.

⁴⁴ Interview with Hedi Pope, Alexandria, VA 12/09/2010, at which time Hedi made her diaries available for close reading.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Life took on an extremely fast pace for Hedi once she began auditioning in New York City. Living for a short while with their aunts, Anne and Helene, in Newark, Eva and Hedi soon moved into Manhattan and were able to find accommodations in a hotel for young women. Having been trained as a dancer in Vienna with a prominent choreographer, Hedi was a disciplined and talented young girl. Andreas, a young composer and nephew of a good friend of her parents, introduced Hedi around town. She said she learned the fine art of networking as an ingénue in New York in the Spring of 1939. The critical element of timing showed its hand, in all its glory. She made contact with the Refugee Artist Group, whose membership list included a host of luminaries. The refugee group had been constituted in New York from among those artists who had become exiles from Vienna in the wake of the *Anschluss*. The artists had been part of a renowned cabaret troupe, *Weinerkleinkunstbuehne*, or *Vienna Little Art Theater*, whose satirical sketches drew quite the extensive audience in Vienna before the dissolution of the Republic. Political critique and musical frivolity combined to make for entertaining theater. Successfully auditioning for the group, Hedi was enlisted in the cast and the revue opened on Broadway at the Music Box Theater on West 45th. Opening night was June 20, 1939; coverage in the press was extensive, both in terms of artistic criticism and political comment.

The Summer of 1939 would prove to be a pivotal one in Hedi's life. The show ran through the end of August. Hedi, meanwhile had received sponsorship from the International Student Service, an NGO that was instrumental in obtaining placement for refugee students. "From Vienna" closed on Saturday night, August 26th; Hedi had received news of a full scholarship to Miami University in Oxford, Ohio on August 12th. Auditions for television programs were forthcoming and Hedi had to make the tough decision. She packed her bags and headed to Ohio on September 18, 1939. From Vienna to New York to the cornfields of Ohio, Hedi was just nineteen years old. Hedi would graduate from Miami University and go on to earn her Master's at Wellesley College. After earning her Master's degree in Physical Movement, she accepted a teaching position at Converse College in Spartanburg, South

Carolina. Hedi orchestrated the dance program at Converse College before moving to Alexandria, Virginia with her husband, Bob Pope, and establishing The Dance Studio in Alexandria, a venue patronized by Betty Ford during her tenure as First Lady.

The Road West

The Kushnir family became evacuees from Ukraine in the spring of 1943. Their story of transit through five central European countries that were serving as fronts in the ongoing battle that was World War II is a harrowing tale of fortitude, courage and decisive action. John Kushnir tells the story as only he can (see *The Road West*). As a ten year old boy, he saw his home village in Soviet Ukraine become the front line when Germany invaded the Soviet Union in June of 1941. He subsequently would serve as scout and translator for his extended family as they sought refuge in a quickly deteriorating war zone. Interned in occupied Poland as a forced laborer he experienced firsthand the brutality of the Nazi regime and witnessed the barbarity to which the Jewish population was subjected. Avoiding forced repatriation at war's end, the family found refuge in the U.S. Zone of Occupation. A master at the game of survival, John worked for OMGUS (Office of Military Government, United States), UNRRA, IRO (International Refugee Organization) and LSU (Labor Service Unit), all of which were involved in refugee assistance in post-war Germany. John drove trucks for all of these various entities throughout the five years he lived in displaced persons camps in the American zone. All the while thinking, "I'll never see the United States." On December 23, 1950, John and his parents arrived in New York harbor aboard a U.S. troop transport ship, the USS Blatchford. Met in Hoboken by a representative of Church World Services, the Kushnirs were given train tickets to Philadelphia and were escorted to the train which left for Philadelphia on Christmas Eve, 1950. John's older brother, Peter and his wife Vera, had arrived in Philadelphia a few months earlier and were waiting for them that night in downtown Philly. John was drafted into the United States Army in 1956, became a United States citizen that year, and as he so poignantly stated to me, "I've been fed well, I've been dressed well and I've served well."

New Americans

Gail Bogner was born in a displaced persons camp in the United States Zone of Occupation on April 19, 1951. Her parents were members of the She'erit Hapletah. They were both from the same village in Eastern Poland: Borszczow. Her father, Max, saw his first wife and child killed by the SS. He buried them both by hand in what had been the old Jewish cemetery and today is a football field. He escaped through the sewers of the work camp, in which he had been enslaved, as the camp was being liquidated in the face of the Red Army's advance into eastern Poland. Klara Kowalek had been able to obtain false documents and was then hidden by a Gentile family for the duration of the war. Max and Klara returned to their village looking for family members. Klara's older sister, Rose, had been interned in the same camp with Max and had also been among those to escape as the Soviets liberated eastern Poland. Rose was sure that Klara had survived in hiding and had promised Max he could marry her younger sister. On March 25, 1945, Max and Klara were married. When anti-Semitic violence broke out again in Poland after the war ended, the newly married couple and Rose were among those surviving Jews who crossed over into Germany, into the American zone. They were among a cohort of young East European Jews who were looking for some semblance of normality, for the promise of a new life. Seeking to emigrate to the United States, they spent 6 years in DP camps in Germany. They were among some of the last to leave for the United States, beneficiaries of the DP Act of 1950. The family was sponsored by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and was able to initially settle in St. Louis, Missouri. They found the St. Louis Jewish community to be a welcoming one. They moved to Lakewood, New Jersey in a rather short time. With her sister's family they were able to start a chicken farm in South Jersey. Lakewood has a very large population of Jews of Eastern European ancestry and the Frisch family prospered. They cultivated a legacy of adaptability: in answer to any complaints about everyday life, the Frisch parents would say to their children (Gail's siblings were all born in the United States), "You've got it made... are you warm...is anyone trying to kill you?" The sound of planes overhead would

cause them to shudder and the sight of policemen in uniform was a fearful proposition. They never succumbed to their fears, all of their energy was focused on creating a *normal life*. Max and Klara became United States citizens on March 6, 1961 in Freehold, New Jersey. Their story of survival and success is documented on a PowerPoint presentation entitled "New Americans."

Conclusion

A man of great energy and ability, Abraham Klausner dedicated himself to the welfare of the *surviving remnant* of European Jewry. He entered the army in June, 1944; he was thirty years old. He spent the next four years focused entirely on the issue of the *She'erit Hapletah*. The period in history in which Abraham Klausner lived and worked was a critical era in contemporary Jewish history. Lack of qualified personnel in the theater of operations as the immensity of the problem became known added to the desperate nature of the situation. The pressures of competing organizational jurisdictions created a vacuum that required novel solutions. Klausner and Robert Marcus were men of strong conviction and courageous action. They responded to the needs of their people with the sense of urgency the problem demanded. Earl Harrison became a visible and vocal proponent of providing immediate remedy for the unacceptable conditions in which Jewish DPs were living. Under the auspices of the executive branch of the government, at the behest of the commander-in-chief, Harrison spent two months investigating the system in place under U.S. occupation and found it to be sorely lacking. He was accompanied on this tour by Abraham Klausner. Earl Harrison submitted a report that would become the basis for policy decisions that impacted the status of Displaced Persons and the subsequent political and humanitarian responses to the refugee crisis in Europe. Klausner was instrumental in the formation of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Germany and was a conduit for their voice in the United States. He went so far as to smuggle Zalman Grinberg into the United States, so that proper argument to the discussion could be given by a credible party. Illegalities notwithstanding, the trip was an overwhelming success. The tone of political conversation in the United States became inflected with the appropriate urgency the crisis mandated. Legislative action proceeded apace.

By and large, the most incendiary issue to come to the fore in relation to the DP problem was the question of increased immigration to Palestine under the existing British Mandate and the structure attendant to the White Paper of 1939. The British were not forthcoming with increased numbers of certificates and the newly formed United Nations was challenged to secure a solution. The United Nations Special Committee on Palestine was faced with the holding pens in Cyprus and the transient and volatile nature of the remaining camps in Germany. It is evident that the existence of the *She'erit Hapletah* was a major factor in the momentum which helped to underwrite the United Nations Plan for Palestine adopted by the UN General Assembly as Resolution 181 on November 29, 1947. A Jewish homeland had been the subject of discussion in the global forum since the First World War. The British were of the mind to abrogate responsibility. The Security Council had both, what would become known as *superpowers* in the waning days of the twentieth century, voting in favor of partition in Palestine.

The scales were weighted with the legacy of a European bloodbath and the presumption of a new balance of power. It became incumbent upon the new foundation of world cooperation to determine how the Jewish Question would be addressed. As Shabtai Rosenne said, "There was this terrible connection all the time of the DP problem with this." The Arabs notwithstanding, the issue of the Jewish Question had expended all remaining international capital as of 1947 and called for resolute action on the part of the world community. Fortunately, Jewish agency on the ground in Europe and in Palestine created an avenue for action. If the war in Europe had bequeathed a lesson, it appeared to be fend for oneself and hope the United States is in your corner.

Individual responsibility and collective action were the hallmarks of the crisis which became known as the **DP** problem. In a vacuum of enormous proportion there were certain people who effected a collective consciousness whereby action became possible.

Dean Acheson represented the United States at the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944.

Bretton Woods was the staging area for the formulation of post-war economic policy. The International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and what would become the World Trade Organization all saw their inception in the final stages of World War II. The conceptual framework underlying the diplomatic effort to stabilize markets was developed in the throes of international crisis relief and with growing awareness of the need for multi-lateral organizations. These agencies of international relief would encounter ever expanding obligations. The directives of stable international trade and finance have remained subject to the exigencies of sovereign prerogatives.

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