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American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee Oral History Project interview with Herbert A. Friedman. 1984.

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December 3, 1984

Rabbi Herbert Friedman
Executive Vice President
American Friends of Tel Aviv University
342 Madison Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

Dear Herb:

Enclosed herein is a typescript of the interview you gave us in September of your experiences with JDC in Germany. It is first rate reading and I want to thank you again for your time and contribution.

Would you please go over the typescript and make whatever changes or corrections you deem appropriate before we put it into our permanent files.

Enclosed herein is also the standard release form which I would ask that you please sign and return to me.

I am sure that long before now you received a copy of the tapes of your conversation with us.

Thanks again and with best wishes.

Cordially,

Herbert Katzki

En cl.

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RELEASE FORM

Dec 10, 84
(date)

Mr. Herbert Katzki
American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
60 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10165

Dear Herb:

Having reviewed the edited manuscript of my Oral History interview, I find that (please check):

a) _____ It is acceptable with the additional changes I have made.

b) ✓ It is acceptable as edited

c) _____ Other (please explain): _____

_____

Therefore, I am signing this release permitting the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) to consider further use of my Oral History interview as long as such usage is in accordance with the best interests of the JDC and its legal status, and that any usage be under its supervision.

Sincerely,

Herbert Friedman
(please sign your name)

JDC ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
First Draft - Verbatim Transcript
Interview with HERBERT FRIEDMAN

HERBERT KATZKI:

This is Herb Katzki and Marc Tabatchnik, and we are interviewing Rabbi Herbert Friedman, a good friend of the JDC. In Germany, Rabbi Friedman had been in contact with the JDC, knew its programs very well; and indeed was involved in collateral programs of his own which were pretty much along the lines of what JDC was interested in. Rabbi Friedman will tell us about some of his experiences for our Oral History. Herb, glad to see you here. Suppose you start in and tell us how you got into Frankfurt? I suppose that was your first post in Germany, wasn't it?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, Herb. Frankfurt was not. Munich was. The first time I ever saw anybody from the JDC in Munich was September of '45. The war was finished in May.

HERBERT KATZKI:

That was Lavy Becker?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes, it was Lavy Becker. Eli was later on in Berlin. It was Lavy Becker, and he walked into this house we had at Number 3 ~~Grebe~~strasse, which was a great big house in a lovely upper middle class area. The house was empty. Ultimately, it came to be the Jewish headquarters in the city. The Central Committee came in there, Chaplain ~~Krogsner~~ came in there, I came in there, the JDC guys came in there.

Lavy Becker showed up wearing an UNRRA uniform, and he had a knapsack over his shoulder. This was symbolic to me. It was dark, we had no electricity in the house, no heat. It was getting cold. I asked, "You're from the Joint?"

He said, "Yeah." I said, "Well, what did you bring?" He opened up the knapsack. He had a chocolate bar in there. I said, "Well, that's gonna help a lot of people, isn't it?" So he started to tell me a long story about how there are no ports open in Europe. "Bremen is closed, Le Havre is bombed, and you can't get a ship in. The Jews of America and the Joint have got a long history -- " he started telling me, about Morgenthau and so on. I said, "Come on. Tell me, when are you going to start bringing stuff?" He said, "When we can get a port open."

Well, apparently it was going to be months. So - what we saw about JDC at the very beginning was extreme good will, marvelous intentions, and yet - objectively - the circumstances were blocking any heavy flow of supplies. However, within some months it began to develop; and so, later on, it became a joke: at first the JDC shows up with an empty knapsack, but after a while it shows up with shiploads and shiploads of supplies. That was my first introduction to the Joint, and gradually I got to meet the people. Later on I was transferred to Berlin through an arrangement which has no relevance to this story. I was recruited into the Haganah by a lady by the name of Ruth ~~Krueger~~ Kluger - later on she changed her name to Ruth Aliav. ~~She was it's "secretary."~~

HERBERT KATZKI:

I knew her in Paris.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

OK. She recruited me in the Royal ~~Monocle~~ מונסו Hotel in Paris, in Ben-Gurion's room. I didn't know what she wanted and I didn't know what the Haganah was, but she asked, "Will you help us?" I said, "Who's us?" She said, "Get yourself transferred to Berlin. We want to set up a movement out of there. Get yourself some trucks and gasoline tickets, and we'll send over some drivers from the

Palestine Brigade." - which was in Belgium at that time - "We'll send you six guys, so you get six trucks. Get a house in Berlin with four walls and a roof." You know, the structure. Easy thing to do.

Anyhow, I got settled in. Now. The Joint guys came into the city. You mentioned Phil. Skornik. He worked very closely with us on the trucks. The truck system was like this: they left from my house - the six drivers with the six vehicles - every day at dusk, and rode about 150 kilometers through the Russian Zone of Germany up to the Polish border, to the town of Stettin. They got there about midnight. The six trucks were loaded with 50 people on a truck - 300 people every night - and got back into Berlin by dawn. Now, what do you do with them? That's where the Joint really came in, in a marvelous way. We had two camps - one large, one small. The large one was out in Schlachtensee, down in the southwestern corner of the city in the American Zone, which was a former German POW camp. It had room for about 5,000 people, mostly in barracks with stone floors. At the beginning, we just put down straw. We also had a small holding camp up in the northeastern corner of the city in a section called Wedding, which was the French part of the town. When the trucks came in at dawn, the first thing we did was simply delouse everybody at Wedding before we would mix them in with the big crowd down at Schlachtensee. This was the first food, the first blanket, the first penicillin, the first DDT powder and so on - and this was not part of Army supplies. There was no UNRRA functioning yet. UNRRA didn't mean anything that early in the game. So, it was basic food rationing. 2,000 calories a day came from the Army, and was fed to the people in Schlachtensee camp. Joint supplemented this with about 1,000 calories a day. Up in the Wedding place, all the important little things - penicillin and all that kind of stuff (which was like gold, because in those days penicillin was the first antidote for syphilis and gonorrhea, so all the soldiers in the Army wanted it), was brought in by

the Joint for these refugees. The operation stabilized itself. JDC had a big, elaborate house - it had ~~no~~ an incomplete roof - but it had a big marble staircase. You mentioned Eli Rock - he was there; Max Helvarg; Henry Levy was there. Those were the three guys I remember. Eli was the boss, ~~but~~ he was cool. And I was never sure what the heck the strength of his Jewish feelings were. Henry Levy was hot, a passionate Jew. And inbetween was this guy Max....

MARC TABATCHNIK:

How about Sadie Sender?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

....he was the ~~crook~~ wheeler-dealer, the hondler, the guy who made the deals, who stole the stuff, he's the guy who black-marketed. So, it was a beautiful team. We really worked so well together. I used to keep them informed every single day about the numbers coming in, and then they knew to plan how much food to schlepp in. They were fighting their own organization. The Berlin team was fighting for the most it could get for Berlin. And Sadie Sender down in Frankfurt was doing the same. Sadie Sender was a spunky little woman, running that Frankfurt office.

So, they were a marvelous team, and we worked very well together. I was in Berlin for about a year. We had wonderful cooperation and, as far as JDC was concerned, that was the period when the "Joint" was a holy word. When you said, "Joint," you were saying something that brought an image into the minds of the people: of some great big overarching friendly father who was going to help you, keep you alive and take care of you. The Joint. And it was said almost in the same way as they used to use another term - ~~this is simply a story~~ - the first time I ever heard the word "stefanka," which was their code name for an American dollar bill. It meant help coming from America. It was derived from Stephen Wise, the only name they knew of some great American Jewish leader.

So, I heard "Joint" and stephanka." The Joint was bringing the stephankas.

HERBERT KATZKI:

That was one of Saly Mayer's inventions - the use of "stephanski" over the telephone. Did you have any contact with Colonel Howley in Berlin at that time? He was the Berlin Governor or whatever they called it, who was in charge of operations in Berlin.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Well, which operations? I dealt with General Barker, who was the American commanding general. There was a G-5 section, of which he was the officer. That meant dealing with civilian refugees.

HERBERT KATZKI:

There's a reason I mentioned Howley. One time I went up to see him - very early on - with Phil Skornik, and he raised a kick about the refugees being brought into Berlin. We asked him what he was kicking about, and he said, "Well, you don't know how you're impinging on the economy. For example, if they take the streetcar, it uses electricity; and if they do this, it uses something else." We weren't getting anywhere with him, so we went over his head and saw his general. And the general told Howley what to do, and that took care of that. So I wondered if you had any contact with Howley, or know the name.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, I don't know the name. I dealt with Parker, and dealt with him in the way I always dealt with Army officials all the three years I was there. Which was very clear and simple: tell them everything. Tell them everything. Bespeak their cooperation, ask for their help. If they would give it, good. If they wouldn't give it, at least ask them to be neutral, not interfere and not complain. And most of the time, that policy was the best policy.

HERBERT KATZKI:

I found that usually the franker you are, the more people are prepared to work with you. If you weren't frank with them, if they never knew what was in the back of a guy's head, then they were always very reserved in their treatment, their attitude.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Right. Well, eventually we opened up a third camp in Berlin, in Tempelhof, at the airfield where there were a lot of empty, unused hangars.

HERBERT KATZKI:

That was East Berlin, wasn't it?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, no, that was West Berlin. East Berlin, the airfield was called - I don't remember the name. (Tegel ?)

The Joint was helpful in many of what I called "personal problems." I'll just give you an example of one kind of thing. This occured with some frequency. Somebody in the camp at Schlachtensee would see a face he recognized as having been a Kapo in one of the German camps. Well, then a lynch mob would form in 15 seconds. The ~~other guy resident~~ UNRRA director in the camp was Harold Fishbein. Fishbein knew to call me or Eli, and he did. The Kapo would be rescued from the mob and taken either to Eli's house or mine, and then a trial would be held. These people wanted drumhead justice. 10 minutes, 15 minutes: "Was he there? Did he do such-and-such? Did you see him do such-and-such? Guilty? Take him out in the back yard and shoot him." Well, we weren't going to shoot anybody. But, putting oil on the ~~water~~ fire - this was always the question. All I had was the individual influence of one man: myself. Uniformed, loyal to the people, they

knew it. I was in the camp every day and they knew me. But I was only one guy. Henry Levy from the Joint would be the best one. Henry Levy would stand up and he would yell at them in Yiddish: "I am just as eager as you are to see justice done, but justice means you cannot lynch this man. If he is guilty, we will put him in front of a War Crimes Trial and turn him over to the German police." Well, the minute he would say that, the mob would quiet down. Because that far they didn't want to go.

HERBERT KATZKI:

I can just picture Henry Levy.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Right. Well, the Joint performed a great service in that regard. Episode after episode: fights between people, agony. Some man who thought his wife was dead would remarry in the camp, and then suddenly a year later out of nowhere his "dead" wife would show up. I can't even think of the multitude of human problems that were involved. Not just food and medicine.

The Berlin operation was where I worked the closest with the Joint, and the best. To this day, I have very affectionate memories of those four guys. I would say that was one of the most successful of all the operations the Joint had.

I had a problem - and I'll just save this story for last; but it's the most important, I think - with the cigarettes. Cigarettes were the price of getting people across that border. It was one carton of cigarettes per customer. We were running three hundred customers per night. So, every evening at six o'clock when the trucks left, I needed to send up three hundred cartons of cigarettes plus a couple of bottles of vodka for both sides of the border. A carton of cigarettes on the Black Market in the ~~Bunder~~BRANDC[illegible]berger Gate in those days

cost $150 in German Occupation Marks; and those Occupation Marks were legal tender at the Army Post Office. You could take Occupation Marks, go over and buy a money order in American dollars, and send it home to yourself. So when I say that an Occupation Mark was worth ten cents, a carton of cigarettes was 1,500 Marks or $150!! I used to schnorr from the GI's. There were 2,000 Jewish soldiers in Berlin at that time, between the French, the British, the Russians and the Americans. There were more Russian Jews than anybody else. (That's a whole other situation I never involved the Joint in: helping Jewish soldiers desert from the Russian Army. We'd bury them inside the camp population, where they were hidden.) But, with all the help I could get from the soldiers, I couldn't produce three hundred cartons of cigarettes every day. In terms of money, it was $45,000 a day! So, that's when I said to Eli, "We have to make a deal. You've got to get some cigarettes diverted into Bremerhaven and get them down here to Berlin, because I need three hundred cartons of cigarettes a day for this operation." He cooperated beautifully. It was really marvelous. Trainloads used to come in. Trainloads of cigarettes came into the freightyard in Berlin. The Army Post Office didn't know - they thought it was all going into the Black Market. I had a postal inspector come visit me to bring court martial charges against me for making myself a millionaire!

They didn't lose courage, and they never made any bureaucratic...I mean, they were really wonderful. All credit to them. And that was what was responsible. The bottom line of the whole thing was during that Berlin operation we schlepped out about 70,000 people. It was just that good. It clicked, and without them it would have been impossible.

HERBERT KATZKI:

How did you move them out from Berlin into the American Zone?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

The camp would begin to get filled up. We'd get close to that 5,000 mark - which was full to capacity - and we knew that tomorrow three hundred more would arrive, and the next day another three hundred, so we had to begin the evacuation out. That was down the autobahn through the Russian Zone to Helmstedt and cross over into the American Zone and then south down to Kassel, Frankfurt and Munich. That was not a matter of buying, because you couldn't ~~but it at that point~~, money couldn't help. That was a matter of an agreement between the American and Russian authorities at the Kommandatur level. They used to meet once a month. Periodically on that agenda was the question of exit permits to the American Zone, and the Americans simply persuaded the Russians. "What do you want these Jews clogging up Berlin for? We're willing to take them down into the American Zone." So, that was a pure Army operation - military man to military man - although after that, we provided trucks, gasoline, tarpaulins and food. But the answer to how did we get them out? It was by military agreement, in military vehicles.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Tell me - was Fishbein cooperative?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes, he was. *Fishbein was a funny fellow. How* can I put it? He had a sense of his sovereignity. He was the boss of that camp, and he didn't want anybody mixing in. He didn't want anybody telling him what to do. On the other hand, his Jewish intuitions were good. Not knowledgeable, but he understood intuitively that the Joint was there to help, and I was there to help, so long as we didn't crowd him. So long as we made sure everyone paid attention to his ego. You know the guy. So, whenever we would bring an American officer into the camp, we would

take him first into Fishbein's office and then put him up on a platform. I'll never forget one Pesach. General Clay once said to me: "I don't understand the Jewish mourning customs. I see people crying every morning at morning prayers. I get these reports. Explain to me what Kaddish is." I explained it to him. And then I said, "Would you like to see five thousand people saying Kaddish? The last day of Pesach, you say Kaddish. Come to the camp with me." OK. So he came. He had a political officer with him, an advisor by the name of Robert Murphy. I'll never forget that. A famous old guy - he was Assistant Secretary of State later on. Murphy and Clay came into the camp in a big American staff car with the flag waving on the fender. The people were over there in a great big barracks and the driver started to go over there. I say, "No, no, no! First - we must go to Mr. FIshbein's office." And General Clay steps out of the car to greet Mr. Fishbein! But that's the way to work! So, yes, Fishbein had his weaknesses, but Fishbein had his strengths. He cooperated. Didn't make trouble. He's still alive, Fishbein is, you know.

HERBERT KATZKI:

He is, really?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

He lives in California - in La Jolla, outside of San Diego. He still has all his marbles, and if you wanted to spend an hour and have him on tape sometime, I'm sure he'd do it for you gladly. I have his address if you want it.

HERBERT KATZKI:

And from Berlin you went where?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

After Berlin, Phil Bernstein came into Germany as the Advisor on Jewish

Affairs to the Commanding General. By that time General Clay had moved down from headquarters in Berlin down to headquarters in Frankfurt. He became the head man of the whole European theatre. The predecessor Advisor was there for a short time - I forget who it was, there were so many of them - the Jewish Advisor.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Was it Rifkin? Rifkin was first.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

He was the first?

MARC TABATCHNIK:

You had a pro tem that was Judge Leventhal....

HERBERT KATZKI:

No, no, Leventhal was later.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

The chaplain...yes. ~~Yehuda Neiditch~~ Judah Nadich. Yes. He was with Eisenhower. When Eisenhower left, he left.

HERBERT KATZKI:

And then came Rifkin.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Well, anyhow, Bernstein came. He was obviously going to stay for a good long time, not for just a couple of months; so we set up a relationship in the Frankfurt headquarters with Clay, Bernstein and myself. Later on I recruited Abe Hyman to our office. That was the Office of the Jewish Advisor to the Commanding General. We saw Clay almost every day. That was the beauty of that

relationship.

HERBERT KATZKI:

He was a good guy.

correct date June 46

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh, he was marvelous. I moved down to Frankfurt then - it must have been sometime ~~near~~ toward the end of '46, ~~the middle of November~~ perhaps Sept. or October. Bernstein's frame of reference was very clear: he was to give the Commanding General advice on how to handle problems coming up ~~under~~ as the result of an increasing camp population. Haganah was working in Eastern Europe, sending into Germany, Austria and even Italy. General Mark Clark was in Austria, General Lee was in Italy and Bernstein was to advise the Commanding General - ~~which was~~ Lucius Clay - of the whole theatre, about problems that would occur anywhere with this increasing population whose future was totally in doubt. Nobody knew who was going to handle this or what was going to happen to them.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

There were a lot of rumours about anti-Semitism in the headquarters... you told me that they were not true, but....

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

The Third Army commander during the war was General Patton, and he stayed for a while afterwards. I never had any connection with anybody at Third Army Headquarters level. It was not necessary, for this reason: General Clay's headquarters, of course, superseded Third Army. General Clay had two generals - a two-star and a three-star. One was named General Bull and one was named General White. Bernstein invited Bull and White evening after evening to his house in a suburb of Frankfurt called Bad Homburg. He and I lived in that house together - it was a house taken away from a Wehrmacht general who was in jail.

It was a big, beautiful German villa in a big beautiful suburb which had not been destroyed at all. The Army left it because they knew they were going to need it later for themselves, they way they didn't touch the I.G. Farben building, which was where our headquarters were!

HERBERT KATZKI:

Fantastic.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yeah, well, it was....General Bull and General White became totally indoctrinated about the needs of this DP population. We taught them the vocabulary of who was there to help: what the Joint was; the Jewish Agency, because already by '46 they were beginning to send people in; and UNRRA; and who was who and what HIAS was; Vaad Hatzalah; they all began to appear on the scene. So, we were instructing these two wonderful Army generals - non-Jews who had never heard about any of this before - what it was all about. We gave them the basic framework. Whoever was left alive after Hitler in the East - Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, even Russia - whoever we could get out, we were going to bring West to the American Zone. Then we would try to get them out of the American Zone and south to the Mediterranean, to go to Palestine. So we had to explain the whole Palestine thing, plus the whole British attitude against it. We really indoctrinated those guys night after night after night.

HERBERT KATZKI:

You should have indoctrinated General Morgan at that time.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh, my. We didn't have anything to do with the English, thank goodness. Clay said to those two guys, "I want you to understand, and I want you to

cooperate." So, you see, we had no Third Army problem. From the top - from his office - the instructions went down to every constabulary unit on the border.

I'll never forget one episode at a little Czechoslovakian town on the border called Hof. We began to bring trains across Hof. OK. That train used to arrive at midnight. So, I said to him one day - and this story is typical of fifty stories - "General Clay, could you please give an instruction?" "No, no," he interrupts me, "I don't give any instructions. Talk to General White about this. General White, would you please give an instruction to the constabulary unit number so-and-so at the border of Hof that on the nights of Tuesday and Friday every week they should show a film inside the barracks from midnight until two o'clock in the morning." So - the border was clean. One guy at the bridge. The rest of the guys are all inside looking at the movie, and we take the trains and the trucks across...nice, clean, beautiful!

HERBERT KATZKI:

No fuss, no bother.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Right. That relationship emanated from the top down. And, to his everlasting credit, General Clay. Now, the second thing that happened. Previous to Clay, General Joseph McNarny, who was there, had signed a charter of recognition with the Central Committee of Liberated Jews. The Foreign Minister of the Central Committee - the Government, they used to consider it their own internal government - was a man by the name of Leon Retter. His name today is Ariyeh Nesher.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Yes, we've taped him.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

So, McNarney appointed a liaison officer to work with the Central Committee. The liaison officer's name was Colonel Sithers. He was a southerner from Knoxville, Tennessee, I think. He had never seen a Jew in his life. And Colonel Sithers, with his southern accent, was dealing with Leon Retter about: "Why do you need extra supplies for sixty-four camps to be delivered? Now, what is this you want to give these people?" I'll never forget it. But again. This is the answer to your Third Army question. There was no relationship at Army level. Top headquarters down to a colonel who was the liaison officer, and he ~~is~~ was authorized....

HERBERT KATZKI:

Well, but by that time Patton was no longer Third Army....

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, he was gone. So, the operation in Frankfurt was smooth running, with good freedom at the top, and problems down below all the time. The DP's in ~~the~~ a camp outside of Munich revolted against the American Army and nineteen DP's were arrested. There was a trial, a court martial held by the American Army, and we needed to get a defense lawyer for those DP's. That's where I got Hyman. I went up to the Judge Advocate's headquarters in Frankfurt and said, "General Clay says these men should have a fair trial. Give me the best lawyer you've got." He said, "Well, we've got a captain by the name of Hyman, but we're not going to let him go." Twenty-four hours later they let him go and ~~he~~ Hyman said to me, prophetically, "If I take this job and go down to defend those DP's, I'm going to be stuck here for five more years." He never got out of Germany until 1950. That's right. He was the last advisor.

HERBERT KATZKI:

About that time we got Charlie Passman's brother, who was a lawyer who

defended these individual cases. He was stationed down in Munich.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Munich or Passing? I thought he was in Passing - well, outside of Munich were the UNRRA headquarters in Passing. Yes. Now, so let's stop talking about that. That operation was fine.

You mentioned Babenhausen. Let me use that as an example. I forget who the JDC director was - was it Leo Schwartz?

HERBERT KATZKI:

At that time, Leo.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I think it was Leo. A train load came in from the East - the usual route, whether Czechoslovakia, or Salzburg, Munich; it doesn't matter. The trains were coming every day - about a thousand people. You referred to a visit to Poland - I'll tell you about that in a moment. We used to try to give advance notice to the G-5 section of the Army. ~~General White~~....

HERBERT KATZKI:

That was Jack Frost, wasn't it?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes, Frost. They were scrambling around looking for places, and the Joint scrambled around. I don't know who came up with this place, but there was an empty camp that had been used for prisoners of war in a village called Babenhausen. Somebody figured it had room for about three or four thousand people, so we could send two, three or four trainloads up there. But somebody made a terrible error: forgot to take away the barbed wire that surrounded the camp, forgot to take away

the watchtowers with the machine guns, forgot to take away from this place the look of a concentration camp. That's what the revolt was all about. I'll never forget when the train - a long freight train - came around the curve. The first look you had of this place made you think you were going back into Auschwitz. ~~They~~ Die refugees wouldn't get off the train. They didn't believe what anybody told them. I'll never forget what we went through down there.

Leo came. We set up a microphone on the track opposite, and opened the doors of the freight cars. The loudspeaker was booming so everybody could hear in ten cars. Leo talked to them and said, "I am here, I am the Joint. We have supplies for you, we have food, we have blankets. It looks lousy today, I can't help it. In two weeks time it will be as comfortable as we can make it." The Third Army had a Catholic chaplain, a Colonel somebody, a big Irishman, and he stood up there in the most friendly way - I can't think of his name - and said, "Trust your brethren! I'm here to tell you that the Army wants to help you. I'm a goy, but I'm telling you that the Army is not going to do anything bad to you."

I'll never forget ~~what's his name~~ coming...Max, Max ~~Broude~~ BRAUDE came. Max stood on the other side of the track. I stood at the side of the track, Hyman stood there, talking and talking, but these people would not get off the train, no way, for three solid days.

The Army came and brought field kitchens, the Joint brought food, and it was all cooked and prepared. We distributed the food on the train. The Joint came with big trucks. On the side it said, "The American Joint Distribution Committee," and in Yiddish, "Dey Joint." Dey Joint is da. This was the slogan: dey Joint is da. So, they could see. It took us three days to get them off, finally. The Army sent soldiers in with wire-cutters to begin to take away the

barbed wire, and they began to demolish the big watchtowers. The people began to see this. Furthermore, you know, you had to go to the toilet, you had to cook, and you had to get off the cramped boxcars, so slowly but surely....

HERBERT KATZKI:

My recollection is that the train actually did start back to Austria...

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I don't remember.

HERBERT KATZKI:

...and it was brought back again. They were going back to Poland at one point.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

They didn't believe. They had no faith in anybody, and it took a long time to convince them you were there to help them.

HERBERT KATZKI:

To get back a moment to this business with General Morgan. You weren't in Frankfurt at the time there was a flareup with Morgan, and the observation ~~you~~ HG ~~were~~ was supposed to have made at a news conference about the appearance of these people coming out from Poland?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No.

HERBERT KATZKI:

That was in December of 1945.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

It did not affect your work in Berlin?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, General Clay - the reason I thought about the dates is that you are talking about Truman's letter asking that 100,000 people should be moved from the camps to Palestine for humanitarian reasons.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

No, to the United States.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, I'm sorry. We're thinking of two different things.

HERBERT KATZKI:

I think, Marc, you're a little bit early in December '45 for the Truman directive.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Well, my recollection of the sequence is this: there was a pogrom in Kielce, Poland, on July 4, 1946. As a result of that pogrom, the next day Bernstein and I left to go to Poland at the request of General Clay, and we flew in his airplane. He sent us over in his DC-3. We had appointments made for us by the American Ambassador in Poland, whose name was Arthur Bliss Lane. He was a nasty, mean, anti-Semitic man. I'll never forget: we saw him in the only working hotel in Warsaw - the Polonia - everything else in the city was flat. He had gout. He had his leg up on an ottoman, and he was in pain. The essence of what he said was: don't get the American Government involved in this illegal business of immigrants crossing borders. "I don't want to know anything about it, I'm not going to do anything about it, I'm not going to report anything to the State Department about

it except my recommendation to send these people back where they came from. And if you tell me there's no place for them to go back to, well that's just too bad. There are millions of refugees in Europe and there's no reason why they should be any different than anybody else." Boom. Finished. American Ambassador.

We went to see the Archbishop. His name was Augustus Hlond. I'll never forget him. He had a thick German face, short hair. His answer was very simple. We spoke standing up, we never even sat down. He said very simply that "These Jews killed in Kielce the other day had it coming to them. The Jews have brought Communism to our country. They were trained in Russia all during the years of the war. The chief Communist in Poland today is a man by the name of Yacob Berman, and he's a Jew; the Jews have destroyed this country and they will burrow from within. If the townspeople rise up against them, then they deserve it." Unquote. Finished. So - you've got the American Ambassador who's not going to do anything, and you've got the Catholic Archbishop who's not going to do anything.

Then we went to see Mr. Yacob Berman. We had a long talk. We sat and drank tea and sucked on the sugar the way they drink it. The conversation was in Yiddish, and it was very simple: "These Jews here had a pogrom. It's too bad, but it's not crucial. This is their homeland, their fatherland; they should stay here to help rebuild it. There's no reason for them to go anywhere else, and I'm not going to let them go anywhere else. If the Haganah or the American Army, however, tries to take them out of Poland, they will go out naked and barefoot. I will try my best to stop them, and if they can struggle their way out, they will go out naked."

So you've got this Jew, who's the head Communist, lining up with the Catholic and lining up with the Ambassador. When we finished all these meetings - and ~~Bevine~~ Bill Bein, JDC director for Poland was with us - we sat down to see if we could make some kind of

a plan. The only plan we could think of was: if he can hold the fort, get whatever supplies he could get inside Poland - which wasn't much, he couldn't get much from any source because there was a question of either by ship in Gdansk or by train, the only way to get into Poland - then we would have to try to figure out how to get money in to him. The idea was that the refugees would give him their money - you remember that whole concept where the refugees would take a receipt ~~stating that~~ showing that they had given the Joint and whenever they got out to freedom they would be paid back. This gave him some currency to work with, and then he would have to buy supplies inside on the Polish black market.

The bottom line was that there would be no help from any of the authorities from inside Poland. Two, that there would be no way of stopping this anti-Semitic fire burning in Poland a year after the war was over; three, ~~Levine~~ Bein would do the best he could and we would try to get enough money to him through the Joint, any other sources and through the Palestinian guys of the Haganah, and he should do his best with the holding program inside the country; four, that Bernstein would write a report to Clay warning him there was going to be a flood coming out of Poland as a result of the pogrom, and that because of the attitude inside, nobody was going to help. Not the American Ambassador, the Catholic Church or even the Jewish Communist authorities. The people were going to come out and flee, and there was only one way they were going to come and that was west to Germany. So, Bernstein would make that report to Clay and warn him that the American Army in Germany had better be prepared. ~~He~~ We actually put a number in that report. We said 165,000, and when it was all over we were very close to being accurate. 155,000 came out of Poland into the camps in Germany. Added to that were 70,000 we brought down from Berlin in the first gush. That was what brought the camp population up to roughly a quarter of a million people. That's what the DP camp population was by ~~fall~~ end of 1946.

So, this report would be written to Clay telling him to get the American authorities in Germnay to develop facilities to handle this many people. It meant more money in his budget, more supplies in his warehouse and more personnel he would have to put into the G-5 section to help handle it. And the last thing we were going to do, Bernstein said, "I will try to get to the Pope. I will try to get to the Pope to help put out this fire in Poland."

We did. We came back ~~to~~ from Poland and filed that report. Clay accepted it immediately, but said one thing. Clay told Bernstein that he wanted Truman - because this was now of such a magnitude the Army would have to handle 150,000 people - the President of the United States, to agree. Clay wanted Bernstein to go to Washington and get Truman to agree. And Bernstein did. You know what airplane flying was like in those days - it was dreadful. Nonpressurized DC-4's with five or six stops, and it was a twenty-four to thirty-six hour flight. But he did it. He went, and came back inside of five days.

HERBERT KATKZI:

I didn't know about that, that he went.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh, yes, and he brought a letter back from Truman to Clay.

The essence of the matter was Clay's willingness, but wanting Truman's approval; sending Bernstein over in an Army plane to get it; Bernstein coming back five days later with a letter from Truman to Clay - "Go. 'Green Border.'" That was the word. Green border - let 'em in.

And so, that began the whole process, but I don't want to go into it now. That's when the JDC - by the fall of '46 - was working at full speed. That's when Sadie Sender had a staff of twenty people in her Frankfurt office. That

is when the warehouses were full, when Schwartz was in Paris.

You see, the UJA campaign was in December 1945, when Montor called for that $100 million campaign in '46. And it was happening, so there was a flow of money. Already in the middle of '46 before I left Berlin, I had a delegation. Montor came, Sammie Daroff, Joe Holzman, and Lockman from Cincinnati. Five or six guys came. Rothberg was in that group, the first time I saw him. They opened their eyes for the first time, this top American leadership. It must have been June or July.

So, by that time, the fall of '46, JDC was running a huge operation. Well funded, well fueled, the ports were open, the supplies were coming in steadily. It was really good - the height of glory of the organization. It really was.

HERBERT KAZTKI:

You remember what the problem was about getting supplies? They couldn't get a ship, and there wasn't any place for them to go. Finally when Bremen opened we sent Jack deGorter up there.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I'm telling you, if there's one man who was an absolutely unrecognized hero of that whole story, it was Philip Bernstein. And I'm telling you something: if you guys ever plan any event or anniversary or celebration, take this guy - who's got to be around eighty years old - and honor him publically. Because if there's one human being who deserves it, it's he.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Yes, I would think so. I don't know that there was anything ever done to recognize him.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, never. Never by anyone. Now, let's go off on the thing ~~you~~ Mark mentioned about Truman. Following that episode in which Truman ordered a 'green border' and people started coming from Poland and the Joint came from America; at that time you must have had at least one hundred people on your staff.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

275 in the summer of 1946.

HERBERT KATZKI:

All in Germany?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I seem to sense that in Germany alone there were over 100 people. I wasn't counting the locals.

Now. Along about September or October of 1946 - this is my recollection - Truman issued a statement to General Clay, or wrote him a letter, in which he said he wanted the Army to prepare logistical support to relieve pressure in the camps, because he had given permission for the population to grow. The Army began to build a logistical infrastructure: trucks, trains and boats to move 100,000 of those people over to Palestine out of basic humanitarianism, even though it went against Britain's political line. The British were our American allies, but we had to try to persuade them on the spot in Germany to cooperate with this process. The American Army would bear the entire burden of the movement.

I saw that letter. Clay said to Bernstein, "Listen. I'll try with my British counterpart, the British commanding general of the English Zone, because he's got the camp at Bergen Belsen up there, and other camps. He wants to get relieved of that also." To cut a long story short, Clay failed on that score.

Even though he said, "I'm willing to do it, will you do it?" The Englishman was afraid. He said, "That's not for me, that's on a political level."

Clay asked Bernstein - and I went with him - to go to England to Whitehall and see Ernest Bevin, who was Foreign Secretary. We went in January of 1947. Here is a letter from President Truman to General Clay. How about it, Mr. Foreign Secretary? You're taping this, so I cannot use the language that he used. Every second word that he used started with f and ended with k, as an adjective against the Jews, as a noun for the Jews. It was a virulent, violent, profane anti-Semitic explosion. "I don't give a goddamn what President Truman wants. F--- him. I don't give a goddamn what General Clay wants. F---him! These f-----g Jews, blank blank blank, are the cause of all the trouble in the world."

Listen to this. I'll never forget it. Burned into my soul. ~~It's~~ It was the winter of 1947. ~~I'm~~ He was sitting there in an overcoat. ~~There's~~ There was no heat in ~~this~~ the building. He had a small electric heater by his feet. This ~~is~~ was the Foreign Secretary of His Majesty's Government! You would think ~~we~~ England had lost the war, not won the war. Bevin said, "I can't keep 100,000 troops in India. I can't keep 100,000 troops in Palestine. I don't want it. Settle the goddamn f-----g Jewish question, don't bring the Jewish question to me, I'm going to dump it on the United Nations, the hell with it. And I'm going to pull England out." A tirade, wild.

We walked out. We went back to Frankfurt and reported this thing to Clay. He was a very smart man. He said, "Well, it's obvious to me then that you fellows are going to do whatever you have to do. If the British don't agree to Truman's proposal that we should move 100,000 people nicely, humanely and legally, I guess you guys are going to do it some other way."

HERBERT KATZKI:

He knew what was going on.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh, did he ever. We used to brief him. All conversations in his office were very discreet because he didn't know if it was bugged or not. But the conversations over at Bernstein's house at night over the schnapps were wide open. "So, I guess you gentlemen will do whatever you have to do. Sorry." And he writes a letter back to Truman, saying the British rejected his request.

OK. So then for the rest of '47 all the way down to whatever month it was when the Exodus went - I helped load the people on that ship whenever it was: July, August. By November '47 the United Nations voted on the partition plan, of giving the Jews part of Palestine, and part to the Arabs. There would be a Jewish State, and that would be the solution to the whole business.

So, the Joint's heaviest load of work was in the year 1947. Because by that time, you had a full complement of close to 300,000, people.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

How about Cyprus?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

By '47 Cyrus was getting filled up.

1947 was the height of the whole JDC operation. That's when the maximum number of people were in the camps and had to be taken care of. That's when the JDC gave the maximum it could give. There was a small diminution of the population by the Aliyah Bet ships going out, but the ships that went - and I worked with so many of them, all the guys of Aliyah Bet - took a total of about 60,000 people. It was a big number, but still didn't make much of a dent. It was like twenty per cent of the camp population. You still had eighty per cent there. In that year - '47 - the campaign in America provided even more money than the

'46 campaign. The interesting thing is - and this is a tribute to the Joint - in the campaign of '47 JDC took a larger share of the campaign proceeds than the Palestine portion, because there was more to do.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

$76 million.

HERBERT KATZKI:

What actually happened was that up until 1950 JDC paid for the movement of people from Europe to Palestine and Israel - paid the transportation - and therefore we got the larger share. But in the 1951 campaign it was reversed. The Jewish Agency started paying and relieved our budget, so we got less money.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Not only did it relieve you. 1950 was the finish year. That's the year I think Foehrenwald was the last camp, outside of Munich. It closed in 1950. That's when Hyman finally left Frankfurt, and the office of the Jewish Advisor was closed. In 1951 the exodus from Iraq took place, and so things shifted the balance.

HERBERT KATZKI:

You said something, Herb, about your having been recruited to work with the Haganah. What was that about, if you can talk about it?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes, sure. It's ancient history now. When the war ended I was running around in Bavaria. My division finished at a place called Wasserburg-am-Inn on the Inn River between Munich and Salzburg. South of that were all the lakes south of Munich where the first camps began to be set up, Feldafing, Foehrenwald, etc. I used to run around with my trucks along the country roads and forests picking up refugees. When you got fifty people together, already you had a camp. You had to find a place to put them.

I'll never forget that we found a German hospital in a place called Saint Autilian, a beautiful place. The Joint later ran the thing. Oh, it was gorgeous. The first time I met Haber, I think....

HERBERT KAZTKI:

Haber came in during April '47.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh, no. Then it wasn't Haber. I was still there in April '47.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

When did you leave?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I was still there. I left after the Exodus, which was the late summer of '47. August or September. That's when I got sent back home. That's when I got caught on the question of the books you're talking about - Offenbach. That story.

I was running around in southern Bavaria picking up refugees, and somehow or another these Haganah guys heard about it. I got a telephone call unexpectedly, no warning. I was in a little town - Bad Tolz - and a woman said on the phone, "Are you Friedman so-and-so?" I said, "Yes." So she said, "Will you come and meet me" - a beautiful, seductive voice - "in the Royal Moncole Hotel in Paris, room 203, the day after tomorrow at 2:00?" Yeah, you bet! Such an invitation! Wouldn't you go? I didn't ask her any questions on the telephone. I'd go. I got a pass and went to Paris. I came to the hotel and saw the British flag flying outside. It was their headquarters in Paris. The Americans were over in the old Gestapo place, the Maurice. So, what the hell is the British headquarters got to do with anything? I went up to room 203, knocked on door, the door opened: "You speak Yiddish?" asked a nice, middle aged, not very good looking lady. I said to myself, for this I made

the whole schlepp? And so right away, I saw there was nothing there. She doesn't invite me into the room. On the threshold she says, "Will you work for us?" I said, "Who's us?" She said, "The Haganah."

You know, there are some times in life when you don't have any facts and you don't have time to do any research. You have to decide yes or no, on just intuition. Exactly. So I said yes. That was a turning point in my life.

Then she invites me in to the room and goes across the living room to the bedroom door. She knocks on the bedroom door and out comes this little man. Short, white hair. I'd never seen him before in my life, I didn't know his name. She didn't introduce me. He comes out and she says to him, "Friedman says he'll work for us." He shakes hands with me, says thank you very much. He turns around, walks out, and I never saw him again, until I took him to Babenhausen, more than a year later. So then she says to me, "Sit down. Here's a cup of coffee, take off your coat." And I said, "What the hell is this mystery all about, and who is he?" She said, "This is Mr. Ben-Gurion." I said, "Oh. What's he doing here in a British hotel?" She said, "Well, this is where he's hiding."

HERBERT KATZKI:

Hiding??

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes. They were burrowed in, they were in disguise. He had a moustache and was wearing glasses, which he never wore in his life. When he was in his room he let his hair fly around. Outside he would wear a French beret, dark glasses and a moustache.

She explained to me about the Haganah. She told me to get myself positioned in Berlin and so on. That part I already told you. She gave me the coffee and said,

"You're in." Finished. That's how I got recruited. As simple as that. Many years later they gave me this thing here, which is the decoration provided by the Government of Israel to all of what they called "fighters in the underground," prior to the establishment of the State. After the establishment of the State it was different. They couldn't give out any honors because every Jew in America would expect to get one for his ten thousand bucks.

So, that was the whole job. And I must say that I had an enormous amount of respect for everybody I ever ran into in that operation.

HERBERT KATZKI:

What did that involve? When you were working for the Haganah?

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, I'm talking about the Joint. I'm finishing up. When Haber came and I began to work with him there was a team in Kassel right after the Helmstedt border crossing. I don't remember the names of those people.

HERBERT KATZKI:

There were a couple of French girls.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Yes. There was a short American girl, a fat one who died later on - Lucy something, she was over on the Frankfurt border.

HERBERT KATZKI:

We had one who passed away up in Belsen, and another one who passed away around Stuttgart.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

What was her name?

HERBERT KATZKI:

Can't think of it.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Oh. OK. About the directors of the Munich office: after a while the Joint was fighting with the Central Committee, but it was all fighting over nonsense. It was fighting over ego, not anything real.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Yeah, the big dispute at the time was who was to control the supplies, who was to control the warehouse.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Right. Well, that was the whole issue in which Klausner (Chaplain Abe) took the side of the DP's against the Joint. But that was a tempest in a teapot also. If you look at the thing historically I think you can say that the record the Joint had between 1946 when they really got cracking and 1950, those four years, were probably the four best years of the organization. How old is the JDC? 75?

HERBERT KATZKI:

70 this year.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

Of the whole 70 years, I think probably that four year period was the best.

HERBERT KATZKI:

Well, we don't know that. You may be right, but we don't know what happened after the First World War either, when the first unit went to Poland.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

I don't know, but I know that on a scale of the size of the need and the

response to the need - if you put those two things on the scale in terms of a definitive period of time....I can put it in the negative: had you failed, you would have been - I'm making the judgement very harsh and very black and white - you would have been continuing Hitler's work. Because you would have allowed another quarter million of the Jewish people to slip away to death and oblivion; you would have done nothing to help bring the State of Israel to birth; and you would have had no effect on history.

HERBERT KATZKI:

I would be inclined to think, looking at it very broadly, that the JDC was really responsible for the State of Israel in a way, because, had we not gone back to 1914 and done something to help the Jewish community at that time, they would have disappeared. There wouldn't have been any call for it.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

No, I wouldn't agree with that. Too far removed.

MARC TABATCHNIK:

I think he's right, ~~Herbert~~ Katzki. The State of Israel was a combination of forces that JDC in its wildest dreams could not influence.

HERBERT FRIEDMAN:

The Army said, we have a partner in this thing. The Army said our responsibility is basic: 2,000 calories a day, don't bother us. But they knew they couldn't get out of the problem simply by saying that. They had to have somebody do the supplementary part, and the Army's appreciation of the fact that it had a big solid American organization made the Army more committed, of course.

Well, listen. I think you've got enough ~~on there~~ now. I don't know whether you think it's useful or not.

HERBERT KATZKI:

It certainly is. This is a great record. And on behalf of the JDC, I want to thank you for it.