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"My Credo" pages 1-233. undated.

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## CHAPTER 1, SEC. 1A

### MY CREDO

My ideological base, for as long as I can remember, has always been simple and fundamental: the sacredness of Jewish survival, both for its own people, and for the world at large; the value of every single Jewish life, especially now, in view of the genocidal attack earlier in the century; the inestimable value of Israel as a physical and spiritual center; the responsibility of every Jew for every other one, and for the homeland.

The inner core of a person, the true shape, the defining nature and the powering engine can all be found in whatever statement contains that person's credo. A person's own words offer the most reliable clue.

Further, what one believes, determines what one does. Acts and deeds derive from convictions and values. When these are known, conduct can be predicted.

These principles have regulated my life, now approaching its ninth decade, and have dictated my responses to many of the complex challenges which modern Jewish history has placed before me over this long period. My central message consumes one page.

#### I believe in the uniqueness of the Jewish people.

We share the quality of human-ness with all others on this planet, yet we are quite different in many ways. And if we were not different, we probably would have disappeared, as have all the others who started on the path of history when we did. There are two elements in our individuality. First, there is the covenantal nature of our birth as a nation at Mt. Sinai, in which we were linked to a God and a moral code. Second, there is our acceptance of an eternal mission, through the concept of redemption by a Messiah, in which a better world would be born for all humans to enjoy.

#### I believe in the centrality of a specific land - Israel.

The moral Covenant which marked our beginning and the Messianic redemption which will mark our ending are both connected with that small sliver of sacred space at the confluence of three continents. There we wrote



the most significant Book of the human race and spawned two globe-girdling daughter religions. That was Homeland - gained and lost, gained and lost again - but the very yearning for which provided the strength to endure the passage of the centuries. Now the land is gained again, in our own time, and, we hope, for all time. How miraculous!

I believe in Judaism's gift to humanity.

Alongside our separateness and particularity as a special people, we also possess a quality of universalism in its fullest measure. We stress and express, in word and hopefully in deed, the equality of all persons. Our sacred literature teaches that all human beings come from one God. The moral injunctions of our Prophets repeatedly stated that the stranger shall be treated as the home-born, and the messianic vision of peace, plenty, health embraced all humankind, not just the Hebrews.

I believe in the Diaspora.

The dispersal of the Jewish people across time and space is an integral part of its creative genius. The Diaspora has been a fruitful hinterland providing intellectual spark and charismatic personalities. The American Jewish future appears cloudy, at this moment. But if it finds its way and maintains its Jewish identity in the midst of unprecedented freedom and affluence, there is the possibility that it will outstrip all previous Diasporas in what it might achieve.

These are the four seminal beliefs which have ruled my life and directed my deeds: the Chosenness of the Jewish people; its linkage to a Land; its Universal message for all humankind; and the creative contribution of its ever-loyal Diaspora.

I try to recall myself as a youth. Was I then as I am now - strongly active, on the basis of a clear-cut set of beliefs and values, rather than a more contemplative type, weighing pros and cons in search of a balanced position, which often resulted in no action? Memory tells me that the boy was the harbinger of the grown man.

In one regard, my life has often taken me along the quiet sedentary intellectual path of much reading, writing and teaching. Yet there has also been a swiftly-running current of emotion which kicked me into conduct



sometimes dangerous, often illegal, for which I volunteered without reflection, but rather as a reflex, an automatic response whenever I was offered the opportunity to defend my cherished core of beliefs and values. Somehow I could never sit passively when I felt that history was knocking at the door, demanding action. I have always been stirred by the verse (22:3) in Deuteronomy, which commanded, after the code of morality had been laid out, "You must not remain indifferent" - "Lo tuchal l'hitalaim" - and I am thankful for the internal prod which has kept me young and vigorous all these decades.

I was arrested only once in my life, in Rumania, in 1957, by the secret police on the charge of being a spy for the Zionists and the CIA. They released me after four days and immediately expelled me from the country. But it could have happened more often. I have smuggled guns and other weapons to Palestine, before Israel was born; led convoys of refugees across European borders on their way to freedom; stolen property, to avoid its being scattered; broken U.S. Federal embargo laws; and many similar acts long forgotten. There was no penny of gain for myself in any of these activities. I look back on these manoeuvres, amazed at how calm I was, wonder from what hidden sources the courage was summoned. An inner strength, not adrenalin alone, seemed to embolden me to react. In later chapters I will tell all these stories, in their fascinating detail. But, for now, let it be understood that I am, by temperament, not fearful, not complex, very straightforward, self-confident, reach conclusions easily and quickly, then go to work executing them. I don't spend time and energy analyzing ambiguities, but seek to comprehend the essence of the problem at hand and fashion an effective response.

My underlying beliefs were laid in very early in life. I was born in 1918, one year after the Balfour Declaration was issued by the British Government as the creating document of the future Jewish State. Zionist theory was a natural element in the environment of our home, synagogue and circle of friends. At a very young age I was aware of the excitement and yearning implicit in this movement for Jewish independence. I was a seasoned 14 1/2 year old (sophomore in high school) when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and immediately introduced various anti-Jewish regulations. I understood what was happening. As Zionism was life-giving, Nazism was life-destroying. I felt uneasy and disturbed by the silence all



around me. No one was responding to the threat - no one in the general or Jewish community. Only one famous Jewish leader of the day, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, was calling for massive protest meetings, parades down Fifth Avenue, and a general economic boycott of Germany. The largest Jewish organizations, such as B'nai Brith, American Jewish Committee, Jewish labor unions and many others, were opposing him and urging that silence was the best policy. They asserted that Hitler would become his own worst enemy and would soon pass from power. They quoted Jewish leaders from Berlin who stated that Jewish attacks in America against Germany would only worsen their situation. Rationalizations in favor of non-action abounded. All this was confusing to a young man such as myself.

One day the air cleared for me. History knocked at the front door of our house, and I witnessed a beautiful, brilliant, moving example of what a fitting response to Hitler should look like, on a small personal level.

My mother was an active member of the synagogue Sisterhood, a natural leader, volunteering in every project designed to benefit the group. At one meeting there appeared a representative of the National Refugee Service (~~forerunner of the IJAS, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society~~) with an urgent plea for families who would be willing to accept into their homes German Jewish children whose parents were willing to let them go, not knowing if they would ever see <sup>those</sup> ~~their~~ children again. The NRS man explained over and over the dangers and evil of Hitlerism, the value placed by Judaism on the saving of a single life, and the time pressure for doing this immediately while the window of opportunity was <sup>open</sup> ~~permitted~~ for a short time. The congregation's Rabbi and his wife added their eloquent voices, urging, even demanding. Of the more than hundred women assembled, all mothers, no more than a dozen hands went up. My mother stood and announced that she would take three children, adding that God had been good to her and given her three healthy sons, therefore this was her opportunity to repay. She explained without embarrassment that her family was living in a small apartment, with only two bedrooms, since their home had been foreclosed by the bank during this painful Depression era. Hence, she could take only boys who would sleep mixed in with we three sons. To take girls would be difficult.



She came home with the affidavit forms, placed them under my father's nose at the kitchen table, and told him of her commitment. Signing the forms, as far as she was concerned, was only a formality. He saw it differently, because of the legal obligations under which his signature would place him. He tried to explain to her that an affidavit was a legal promise to the government of the U.S. that he would be responsible for the maintenance and welfare of the persons on whose behalf he was signing. He tried patiently to remind her of their precarious financial situation. The depression had reduced his earnings to some pitifully small amount. At least he was not selling apples on the street, or standing in a bread line, but he did not see for an instant how he could handle the additional expense for food, clothing, school, etc for three more persons. My father was a soft-spoken, quiet, gentle man. He was not being mean, nor was he insensitive to the Jewish imperative regarding rescue.. He was simply stating the facts which seemed to present insuperable obstacles to what she had committed to do. And he even went so far, for him, as to question whether she had given any deep thought to these practical problems before jumping to her feet and hastily volunteering. Perhaps, just perhaps, if she had given it some second thoughts, she might not have been so hasty.

That last sentence, apparently, was more than she could stand. She also spoke quietly, but with great passion. She understood we were poor, but how could we refuse to save lives if we were given the chance to do so. She was ashamed of her fellow-Sisterhood members. All of them should have jumped up. She would not hesitate to tell them at the next meeting just what she thought of their selfishness. But meanwhile, in our house, she had no patience for her dear husband's approach. If we have enough food for five of us, she said briefly, we will make it do for eight. She didn't intend to dwell on the financial consideration for another minute. She demanded that he sign. He hesitated. She insisted. He hesitated. She used her final weapon, which was to order him out of her kitchen, thus indicating that he was dismissed, as though he was a bad child being sent to stand in the corner.

The argument raged all night. I do not remember my parents ever raising their voices in anger or controversy. Neither one had a temper.. They were usually sweet and understanding with each other. But that night was different.



In the morning he signed, and she proudly took the affidavits back to the synagogue. Five weeks later we welcomed Walter Krone, Helmut Frank and Hans Goldschmidt. My parents gave them the same affection as if they had been born into the family, the same share, and an extra share of psychological attention to overcome the loneliness and the fear. In fact, the letters from their parents continued to come for a period, and then ceased. The boys understood, but the strong support they received in our house helped them to face their future. In later years, whenever my father told the story, he burst with pride at what our family had done, and gave full credit to my mother for her passionate defense of the helpless and her immediate response, without further thought, to what she considered her human and Jewish responsibility.

This episode had a determining influence on me. Looking around at the passivity of the American Jewish public at that time, and not knowing the reasons, as I do now in retrospect, I was terribly disturbed. How could good caring Jews show as little concern as they did? Or, if they were concerned, why didn't they do something about it, especially when a specific opportunity opened in front of their very eyes? As I mulled it over and over, I finally decided that my mother's fight with my father symbolized the whole problem, and therefore the only conclusion was to act according to moral Jewish values, without permitting vitiation, rationalization, delay or any other diluting factor. When history knocks, you answer. Otherwise, you fail. The lesson I drew from the episode of Walter, Helmut and Hans in 1936 put me on a course which was to last for my entire life. Thanks, mom.

*A Jewish Life*

CHAPTER ONE

Section 1

*And story of father's  
mother's refugees as  
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We lived in a small neat house on Fountain Street in Westville. The school was one block away, with the grocery store next door. That grocery was important because of something which happened when I was in third grade. Around the corner from our house, the street led to the woods, which contained the deer, a pond, an ice house, and many places where we hid while learning how to smoke.

*and  
conting  
her said*

There were four steps up to the front door finished off by a landing on which a traumatic episode was to take place some years in the future. The lawn contained a wonderful maple large and leafy enough to provide cover for my youngest brother, whose main preoccupations in life seemed to be swearing at the decent middle-class ladies walking along the sidewalk below, and making obscene remarks to the beautiful auburn-haired ten-year old neighbor Margaret who lived in the last house around the corner, just on the verge of the woods. We were three brothers, all of whom lusted after Margaret, but only the youngest had the nerve to express his deepest desires aloud. And even he did so only from the safety of his invisible perch on a high limb.

Around the back there was a separate one-car garage, just the size for my father's Model A Ford. The car was crucial to his livelihood, for he was a travelling salesman who carried his sample cases with him as he visited the small dry-goods shops in the towns of Connecticut. As the car was indispensable, so was

*separate one-car garage  
The car was crucial  
he carried with him  
dry-goods shops  
indispensable, so was*



the garage, and indeed its presence had been a factor in the purchase of that house rather than others in the neighborhood which were not possessed of the expensive addition. Most of the other men went to work on foot or by trolley, to the arms factories which characterized our town, or to the tiny retail establishments. My father was considered by the other men on the block to be white-collar rather than blue, although the perilous fact was that his earnings were much more uncertain than theirs, for he had no fixed salary and depended on commissions. He did wear a suit and tie to work every day, and presumably these externalities (plus the Model A) defined his status. What really defined him, in our eyes, was his gentility of manner, soft-spoken nature, innate kindness and sense of responsibility.

He was born in Lithuania in 1892, arrived in the United States sometime during the first few years of the new century, riding the crest of the huge surging waves of immigrants battering at the gates of Ellis Island in the harbor of New York. On New Year's Day of 1918, in his 26th year, he married, and within a decade bought a house for his family of wife and three sons. It was the first house he ever owned, and also the last. It was probably the first house in his entire lineage, for his father and grandfather undoubtedly lived in cramped rooms in a swarming apartment block in Vilna. How proud he must have been to purchase such a precious object for the unheard-of sum of \$12,000, and to feel sufficiently "capitalistic" to commit to the payments of \$100 per month. What a great country! What a

boundless and bountiful life lay before him!

There were three bedrooms, a complete bathroom with shower, a fireplace in the living room, a sunporch, a furnace in the basement - no prince could want more. His family would be clean, warm, comfortable, and his lovely wife would have a full kitchen with which to keep them all well-fed and healthy. It was the fulfillment of the most luxurious dream a man could have. And like many dreams it was to come crashing around his head.

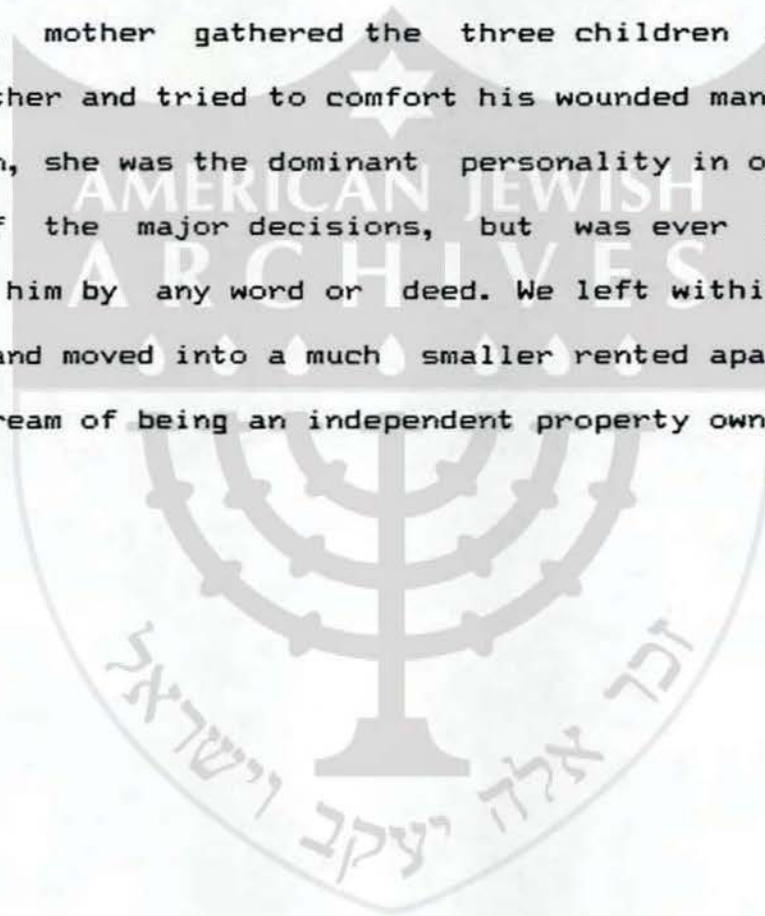
He bought it in 1926, when the economy was healthy and growing. He lost it in 1931, when the depression was in full flower following the crash of '29. Remember that little porch before the front door?

One day the bell rang, around supper time. He answered, in his shirtsleeves, to find a deputy sheriff with a paper in his outstretched hand. No word was said. He understood, and re-entered the house, to put on his jacket and to summon all of us to stand with him on the front porch. It barely contained the assemblage. Thus garbed and strengthened, he asked the formal question - what is this paper? The sheriff, who knew him as an honest citizen, was visibly embarrassed, yet exercised his duty by explaining this was a notice of foreclosure as a result of non-payment. My father had missed three monthly payments, for by this date many months had passed during which he had earned hardly anything and our very eating habits had long since deteriorated. We all had been living in fear of this moment.

My father asked how much longer we had. The deputy



almost begged us to understand there was nothing personal in what he was doing. He was receiving a \$5.00 fee for serving the paper, but had not the liberty to alter the terms very much. Foreclosure called for expulsion within one week - he would try to get us an additional week's grace. The transaction done, we went back into the house, mother gathered the three children into her arms, kissed father and tried to comfort his wounded manhood. From that moment on, she was the dominant personality in our family, took charge of the major decisions, but was ever careful not to denigrate him by any word or deed. We left within the allotted period, and moved into a much smaller rented apartment. So much for the dream of being an independent property owner.





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CHAPTER ONE  
Section 2

I had skipped many grades in grammar school. My mother, so pleased at the brightness and precocity of her eldest son, kept acquiescing each time she was asked for her approval of an advancement, without realizing that social and emotional development were as important in a child's growth as intellectual progress. In today's educational world, teachers warn mothers against indiscriminate skipping. I was three calendar years out of sync, younger than my classmates, when I was ready to enter high school. Mother had no idea that this was "wrong" and would later have a substantial effect on my college career.

At the beginning of 9th grade, in a beautiful junior high school, built in classical style of red brick, gracious rooms, full sport fields, and suffused with a calm and gentle atmosphere, I was stricken with a nasty case of hepatitis, called in those days yellow jaundice. I was just 12 years old and was ordered to bed for three months. In the medical knowledge of 1930 that was the correct cure, for the doctor feared that the strain on the kidneys of excreting coffee-colored urine would place an undue strain on the heart, and, indeed, during the course of the jaundice I was diagnosed as having developed a "heart murmur".

I spent three months in pajamas, wandering from one bedroom to another, in boredom, relieved only by the arrival of

new books and smuggled issues of Ballyhoo, the Penthouse of its time. My younger brothers were the smugglers whose price was to share the fruit of their ingenuity. During this period I read about 50 books, mostly American and English literature. I was released from confinement much better educated, two inches taller, and more deeply respectful of my mother's tender care than ever before.

The 9th grade sped by, good friends appeared, Margaret grew more luscious in sight and in imagination, the awesome day signifying a rite of passage to high school came and went. Summer in the peaceful, almost rural neighborhood brought the joys of easy days of discovery of life and richness of tasting. Then came the explosion of the foreclosure and our world blew up.

After we moved to a small two-bedroom apartment in a nice neighborhood where many of my parents' friends lived, and there was a cessation in the rush of packing and settling in, I announced to my father that I was postponing entry into high school, for the reason of seeking a job in order to contribute to the family budget. I was 13, and he looked at me, at first, as though I had suddenly become some weird unknown creature, then laughed uneasily, not knowing quite how to confront me and the situation.

He decided to keep it light, shrugging off the



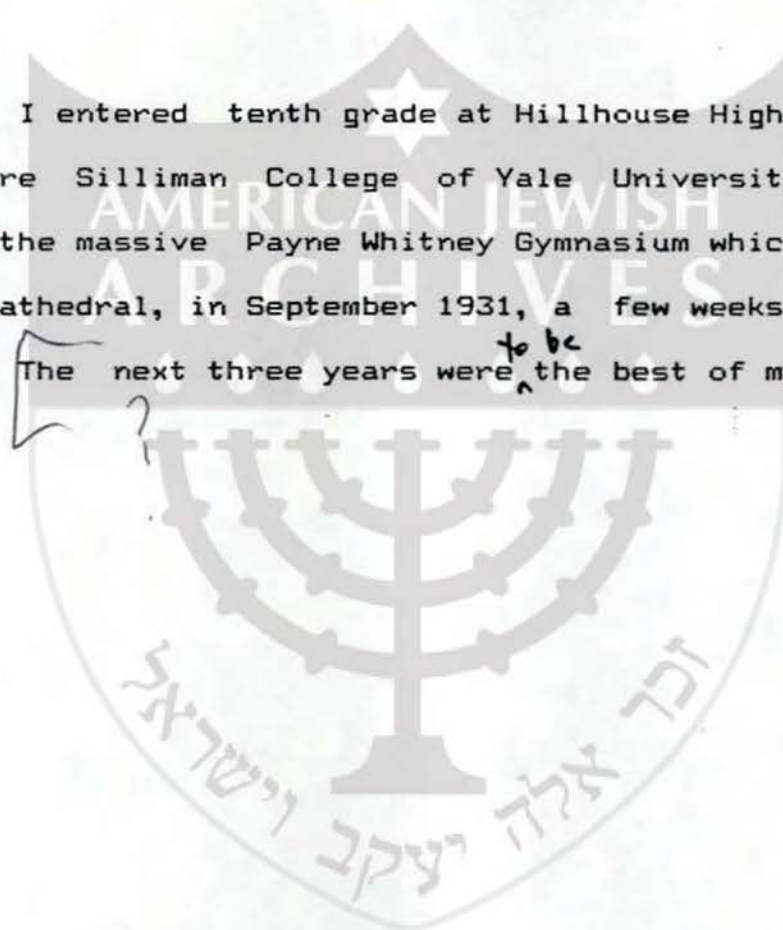
suggestion, not reacting, muttering some half-inaudible comments about not being silly. I took this badly, for in my earnestness I felt that anything less than a serious conversation was quite patronizing. Here we were in terrible financial difficulty, and I was making a logical offer to help, I wanted to do my share, I knew how badly he felt, in the midst of the depression, with a job but almost no income because all the small merchants he served were not placing orders with him, since almost no one was buying from them. The cycle of production, consumption and sales was almost completely flat.

In the face of his reaction, I escalated my tone, arguments and manner, demanding that I be taken seriously and be allowed to try. I then made the fatal mistake of stating that school was not important in view of an empty larder, and with that he slapped me hard, very hard across the cheek as though to shock me back to some reality. Explaining that there were 13 million men out of work, 5 million of whom were selling apples on the streets of the larger cities, he asked me to understand that if he was unable to earn enough how did I expect to find any sort of work which would justify dropping out of school. And then he patiently and lovingly talked about the importance of education as the key to civilization, and as the only route by which an individual could move upward on the economic scale. He didn't use big words nor expound elaborate economic theories. But in a simple straightforward way stated the truth which our people has



always known, that knowledge was the path which could lead to a better life and greater achievement. You go on with your education, he gently urged, and someday you will be able to help with the family budget. He never hit me again, for the rest of his life.

I entered tenth grade at Hillhouse High School, on the site where Silliman College of Yale University now stands, opposite the massive Payne Whitney Gymnasium which looks like a Gothic Cathedral, in September 1931, a few weeks before my 13th birthday. The next three years were <sup>to be</sup> the best of my short life, <sup>to date</sup>.



## CHAPTER ONE

## Section 3

*Delete entirely*

There were two high schools in town, one commercial, for those students intending to go to work after graduation, and one academic, for those intending to go to college. Hillhouse was academic, with a rich and variegated curriculum, excellent teachers, a splendid extra-curricular program, all the sports one could wish for, and a friendly imaginative administration. I remember the three years with great affection.

I studied Latin and German, literature and science, history and the social sciences, math and English. We were taught carefully to write and spell, reading was impressed upon us as the basis of all knowledge, correct grammar marked one as a literate and civilized person. Thus, encouraged to speak with fluency, to write accurately, to think logically, and above all to read with comprehension, the student could go forward to conquer a higher education with success, well-armed with these four crucial tools. It was a joy to study in that wonderful school, where respect for intellectual achievement was firmly grounded. I have been thankful all my life for the abilities developed in those years through that framework.

The extra-curricular opportunities attracted me in a major way, and without my even realizing it, helped me obtain a self-confidence in the face of audiences which became the basis of my public career for the balance of my life. Well-endowed



physically with height, stature, presence and a rich resonant voice, I assumed a leading role in the York Square Players, our school dramatic group, and achieved that degree of comfort on the stage which became a hall-mark of my personality. We did great classics and silly pleasantries, all of it fun and wonderful experience.

I became president of the German Club, without knowing that many years later fate would place me in Germany and knowledge of the language would be a substantial asset in the performance of dangerous and delicate tasks. Facility in German, started in high school, led to several additional years of study in college, and gave me real fluency.

The debating club became a second home, and I really loved the cut and thrust of argument and rebuttal. Here the powerful combination of intellect and oratory, brain and voice, provided thrill and pleasure, as well as an intuitive sense of what was necessary to convince others (the judges) of the merit of one's case. Naturally one was sometimes assigned to take the side of a resolution with which one was not personally in sympathy, and then it became simply an exercise in fulfillment of a skill to be learned. I found that I did much better when I was defending a position in which I believed heartily, for then I could introduce the factor which I discovered was the most persuasive of all - the factor of passion, which supported the sometimes cold intellect with the warmth of conviction, causing the voice to rise, the eyes to gleam, and the whole power of the

body to be felt. Passionate speaking became another trade-mark in the practice of later professions in my life.

On the social side, there were fraternities and sororities, including Jewish ones, and I was elected president of Upsilon Lamda Phi, ULP for short. Neither serious nor secretive, it was merely an ethnic vehicle for dances, parties and meeting girls.

During this same period I was very active in the youth group of our synagogue. B'nai Jacob was a conservative congregation, remarkably advanced for its day and constituency. There was an organ, mixed seating, decorum, English readings during the service, an organized administration, large membership, and a panoply of social welfare interests beyond the exclusively "religious". My father was a pillar, frequent attendee, board member, usher on the Holy Days and Sabbaths, reader of the Torah. My mother was one of the most loyal officers of the Sisterhood, busy throughout many decades with the multitude of fund-raising projects and do-good programs. It was natural for me to find my place in the organization.

The youth group had an active small cadre of boys and girls interested in and capable of travelling around the state of Connecticut, to meet with youth groups of other similar synagogues in joint programs. I remember many pleasant trips to neighboring towns, spending enjoyable Sundays in a panel discussion or debate or oratorical contest. I found myself concentrating on the subject of Zionism, which seemed to me to



be the right answer for those times. Hitler became chancellor in January 1933, and Roosevelt was inaugurated the same month. Thus in the middle of my junior year, at the age of fourteen, I recall being aware of some clouds casting shadows on Jewish and world destiny. The concept of Jewish sovereignty, national identity, independent power, together with all the ancillary benefits these characteristics bestowed, was the proper goal to be sought if the Jewish people sensed any threat to their existence. I tried to warn against Hitler, and at the same time give the positive solution of an independent Jewish State. The fact is that I found myself often speaking against unhearing ears. I was accused of exaggerating the danger of Hitler, and underestimating the fact that support of Zionism could be construed as dual loyalty. Such was the mood of the American Jewish public of those days.

What was the source of these ideas and conclusions which I held so strongly at that early age? Much is attributable to books, articles, journals, for I was an active reader. But more specifically there were four individuals, some etched in memory more sharply than others, who had direct influence. Two came from B'nai Jacob and the other two from Yale University.

Rabbi Louis Greenberg stands out very clearly. Tall, dignified, unhandsome but impressive, over-worked but always available, patient, learned, he was possessed of depths unimagined, which, when they were revealed, surprised and delighted the onlooker. The son of Eastern Europe, he adjusted to America in such full and vigorous measure that he preached his

only first  
subject

sermons in English, won a place of high repute in the general civic leadership, and ultimately was awarded an earned PhD from Yale for a three-volume set entitled "The Jews of Russia" which is useful still today. Can you conceive of the courage this took? Speaking with a slight accent, at middle age, undaunted by the elitism, he entered the Gothic portals, held his own with the WASPS, and produced a degree-winning thesis of such length. All this was done while tending to a large congregation, without an assistant, and being respected by the city at large. He loved Judaism, taught it with love and skill, portrayed it as the mirror image of the Jewish people, and connected all three - faith, people and land - into one organic whole. This was his Zionism, and this is what I drew from him, as did my parents and the hundreds of other members of his fortunate congregation, which exists to this day, a half-century later, in the northern suburb of Woodbridge. From this structure my father was buried in 1971.

The second person was Charles Sudock, the Cantor. Shorter, rotund, wearing built-up heels and a high octagonal-shaped clerical hat, he was still not up to Greenberg's height, but almost. So, when the two men stood side-by-side at the altar, Cantor Sudock unsheathed his most powerful weapon, a tremendous basso profundo, which shook the chandeliers, and thus levelled the playing field between them. Sudock was jolly, laughed, won the youngsters, told us stories about the concert stage and magical tours to far-away places. Sudock made no attempt to



compete with Greenberg's brain or knowledge, but agreed with his Zionist conclusions, and tried to teach us their importance by stories of the Polish and Russian shtetlach with which he was familiar. How wonderful it would be, for example, if Jews could be their own land-owners, instead of being tenant-farmers for the local baron. Or, how marvelous it would be if Jews could have their own weapons for defense whenever the peasants or Cossacks decided it was time for a little pogrom. Through these homespun homilies and dreams he turned the grand theories of nationalism and statehood into real-life reasons for espousing Zionism.

One of the men from academe was Moshe Bar-Am, a Palestinian in his mid-thirties who was translating a dictionary from Sumerian, Akkadian, and Babylonian cuneiforms on baked bricks dug in the Near East from various expeditions. In his day there were very few scholars anywhere on earth who could read the wedge-shaped marks which had been pressed into the wet clay more than 4000 years ago. To support himself during this non-lucrative exotic pursuit, Moshe gave Hebrew lessons at the rate of twenty-five cents per hour. This was real money, but my father felt it was worth it, and so did I. I learned some Hebrew, but mostly I learned about Palestine, how the Jews lived, how the British ruled, how the Arabs resisted, and how it all might turn out. Once again, I was the beneficiary of practical knowledge. After these years, I never saw Moshe again, and have no idea what happened to him.

I had the least contact with the fourth person, Isaac

Rabinowitz, but even that was formative. He was tall, blond, looked absolutely Germanic, and acted that way in the precision of his movements and exactness of his personality. Isaac held a position in the Yale Graduate School having something to do with the translation and publication by the Yale University Press of many volumes of the philosophy of Maimonides. I simply do not recall the <sup>NATURE</sup> exact details of his work, nor of how I came under his influence. The fact is that I received from him the perspective of a scholar whose expertise was the medieval period, and I heard of the poets of Spain and the cartographers of Italy and the Crusades and the Inquisition. This material makes a deep impression on a young boy, and especially on me, with my romantic nature.

These were the influences, these the people, these the times, and so was the boy shaped during his youth. High-school and synagogue, father and mother, Hitler and Roosevelt, all did their work. The period drew to a close. I was selected as salutatorian of the graduating class, and, most precious of all, I received one of the prestigious four-year scholarships to Yale which the university granted to the local high-school as a symbol of the gown-town relationship. Mirabile dictu! I would now be enabled to go further.



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## Chapter One

### Section 4

College was unbelievably different from high school, and I had no serious briefing to that effect, so that it took a mere few weeks before I found myself in deep trouble. High school had been such a success that I simply applied the same set of habits, time allotment for homework, earning-money time, pure recreation, and extra-curricular affairs to my college schedule. This turned out to be disastrous. And here is where the youth, lack of experience and naivete (in spite of the surface sophistication) took their toll.

Falling behind in my reading assignments, for the first time in my life; failing on some of the 10-minute blue book tests with which many of the instructors began the day's class; actually not understanding chunks of material in some lecture, and not having any friends with whom to consult, for I could not afford to live in one of the residential colleges; I began to panic. Neither parents nor brothers could help, for no one had trodden this path before me. I am not certain whether these loving and closest allies were even aware of my anguish, with the possible exception of mother, whose incredible antennae always seemed to sense trouble in the psyche of anyone in her brood. Yet her sensing a problem did not always mean she could solve it, especially one as esoteric as mine, which was so far beyond her own life's experience. At best she could feel for me and hug

tightly. This was most welcome but not very useful.

This rocky beginning disturbed the calm equilibrium which I had determined at the start would be the chief tool to assist me through crisis. Panic exploded the calm, self-assurance was replaced by fear, which, in its turn, led to further inadequate performance, and so the year stumbled along, each week bringing its new terror. The precious scholarship was at stake, for maintenance of a B average was mandatory for annual renewal. Even though it was called a four-year award, still a certain minimum performance was expected from year to year.

Trouble often has a way of calling forth its handmaiden — Accident, and the two add up to Tragedy. Sure enough, in June I received the formal notice of my grades for the year, with a note appended that the scholarship would not be renewed. A careful search of every mark, as for the odd piece of debris from the shipwreck which might save one from drowning, did indeed reveal a potential life-saver. In French, I had a string of A's and B's, with a final mark for the entire year of D. How was that possible? Could it be that I was the victim of a prosaic clerical error? Was salvation possible?

The frantic hunt began for the French professor. After a series of maneuvers which would do justice to any French policier, we discovered that the man was vacationing for the summer on Nantucket Island, without a telephone. A letter did reach him, we found out later, explaining the predicament. His response was most sympathetic, when it came. He recalled having



dictated the final grades to his teaching assistant; also recalled having given me a B; suggested that she may have misheard a B for a D; and promised to straighten it all out when he returned for the fall semester. Too late. The administrative office refused to accept his "recall". They wanted his written records, which were safely tucked away in his safe in Dwight Hall, and he was tucked away in Nantucket. And when the twain finally did meet in the administrative office <sup>it</sup> it was too late.

Full tuition for the year beginning September 1935 was \$450. Here I was in July facing that monstrous sum. I sold vegetables and fruits from the back of a rented truck, hawking my way through the summer colonies on Long Island Sound. My wares were fresh and appealing, for I had selected them at the bustling farmer's market at 3 a.m. Working hard for two months, trying to be charming in spite of the fatigue, I cleared \$100 after all expenses. It was then I realized that the road ahead would be very tough.

My mother was so wonderfully understanding through that episode that I came to love her even more. She was a remarkable woman in many ways, perhaps due to her own upbringing and the closely-knit fabric of her own parents and siblings. She was born in a manor house in a clearing in the forest outside of Riga, a city in Courland, which was in Esthonia, on the Dvina river, the youngest of 18 children born to the same father and mother within the span of 22 years.

Her father owned large tracts of timberland, which he traversed with his foresters marking those trees whose time had come for felling and being floated down the Dvina to the Baltic Sea. He was absent for months on end, often returning just before the accouchment, welcoming the new child, waiting for his wife to recover, then taking her to the nearest spa, which was at Konigsberg in East Prussia, there impregnating her for the next cycle. Counting in round figures, he was thus at home for six months and in the forest the other six.

The manor house sheltered perhaps four-score persons, including all the children, their nannies, various teachers for music and Hebrew and secular studies, the maids and craftsmen to repair everything, guards, farm people to produce food, and so on and so on. It was a bustling place, what with filling the huge cellar with great blocks of ice in late winter, cut from the river, and wrapped in straw, to last all through the summer for preservation of the perishables; and the making of cloth, both wool and linen, for the manufacture of clothing; and the constant coming and going of relatives and guests; and the resident rabbi supervising every aspect of the food, the prayers, the childrens' instruction; and so on and so on. From everything my mother told me, it was a cheerful, busy, interesting, even sometimes exciting life carried out in this total village, which was really only one household.

The father, mother and nine of these children succeeded in migrating to the United States during the great waves of the



1880's and 90's. The other nine and their descendants were swallowed up in the Holocaust a half-century later.

My mother was a small woman, just a mite over five feet and a mite under 100 pounds, packed with energy. She worked hard at running her household, for many years under fiscal restraints which forced her to do most of the work. My brothers and I each possessed one white shirt. She insisted we go to school every day in a clean white shirt. My memory of her washing and ironing those three shirts every single day (in addition to what she did for father) is still very sharp.

Her sense of duty was as strong as any I have ever encountered. With a keen conscience, she kept herself and everyone around her on the absolute straight and narrow. Those standards were transmitted to a wide circle who came within her orbit. She was willing to answer any call. The Sisterhood at B'nai Jacob had first call on her loyalty and attention. She held every office in that organization over the course of many decades. No task too unimportant, no person too insignificant, no demand too menial - her reputation was such that every cause came to her attention because every suppliant knew that her response would be affirmative. She was widely popular in the community as a result of this attribute.

35? see page 23  
An event which influenced me most decisively took place in 1936. Shortly after the Nurnberg racial laws were passed, which disenfranchised the Jews of Germany and presaged their ultimate destruction, an effort was made to save the children, at

least. Interestingly enough, the Nazi regime permitted the emigration of most who wanted to leave, obviously leaving their goods behind. Some German Jews lived under the illusion that the Nazis would not last in power, and such preferred to risk remaining. Others found it difficult to give up possessions accumulated over many generations. At a minimum, fully half the Jews of Germany did escape with their lives. And among the other half, there were some who were willing to send their children to safety, as a hedge against an uncertain future.

One day there came to a Sisterhood meeting the representative of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) with an urgent plea for volunteers willing to take into their homes German Jewish children whose parents were willing to let them go, not knowing if the separation would be temporary or permanent. The HIAS man explained over and over the dangers and evils of Hitlerism, the value placed by Judaism on the saving of a human life, the time pressure for doing this immediately, and all the other obvious reasons. Rabbi Greenberg and his wife Batya added their eloquent voices, urging and demanding. Perhaps a dozen women, of the hundred assembled, responded. My mother said very quietly that she would take three, because God had been good to her and had given her three healthy sons, therefore this was her opportunity to repay. She explained without embarrassment that she could take only boys, because her apartment had only two bedrooms, and she planned to mix the German boys in with her own boys. To take girls would be difficult.



She came home with the affidavit forms, placed them under my father's nose when he came in from work, and told him of her commitment. Signing the forms, as far as she was concerned, was only a formality. He saw it differently, because of the legal obligations under which his signature would place him. He tried to explain to her that an affidavit was a legal promise to the government of the United States that he would be responsible for the maintenance and welfare of the persons on whose behalf he was signing. He tried patiently to remind her of their precarious financial condition. The Depression was still on - true he was slowly doing slightly better, but their income was still very minimal, hardly enough to feed and clothe the five in the nuclear family. How could we possibly feed three more mouths? And where would they sleep? And how could we handle their school expenses?

My father was a soft, quiet, gentle man. He was not being mean, nor was he insensitive to the Jewish plight. He was simply stating some facts which seemed to present insuperable obstacles to what she had undertaken to do. She had no patience for this approach - none whatsoever. If we have enough for five, she said briefly, we will make it do for eight. She demanded that he sign. He hesitated. She insisted. He hesitated. She ordered him out of her kitchen, which was an indication that he was dismissed, a bad child being sent to the corner. The argument raged all night. I do not remember my parents ever raising their voices in anger or controversy. Neither one had a temper. They were usually sweet and undemanding with each other. But that

night was different.

In the morning he signed, and she proudly took the affidavits back to the synagogue. Five weeks later we welcomed Helmut and Walter and a third young man, whose name I have regretfully forgotten. My father never defaulted on his obligation. Those three were the same in the household as we three. In later years, whenever he told the story, he burst with pride at what our family had done, and gave full credit to my mother for her passionate defense of the weak and helpless.

I said earlier that this episode had a determinative influence on me. Looking around at the passivity of the American Jewish public at that time, and not knowing the reasons as well as I do now in retrospect, I was nevertheless disturbed. How could good caring Jews show as little concern as they did? Or, if they were concerned, why didn't they do something about it, especially when a specific opportunity existed? I pondered these questions over and over, could find no satisfactory explanation, decided that my mother's fight with my father symbolized the whole problem, and that the only solution was to act according to moral Jewish values, without permitting vitiation, rationalization, delay or any other dilution. The fact of the matter is that the episode of the affidavits in 1935 put me on a course which was to last for my entire life.

36? see p. 20



## Chapter One

## Section 5

The next three years at Yale were very hard. I needed to earn money, and drifted into afternoon and evening jobs, when the day's classes were completed. These were to be found in the coffee shops, sandwich places, the old Taft Hotel, and during summers in the newly emerging Howard Johnson chain. I often worked eight-hour shifts as short-order cook, on my feet, in a hot greasy kitchen; sometimes less, but always finishing late in the evening, exhausted. Best were the assignments as waiter, for there were always free moments, when the dinner rush died down, to sit, smoke a quick cigarette, catch breath, and start again.

Obviously, my studies suffered. Classes ended at 1.00 p.m. Work started around 4 p.m. That three-hour period was the only truly useful homework time. Otherwise it meant trying to read and write after midnight, dead-tired, not very productive. Most mornings I arrived at class in a state of nervous fright, for I don't think I was ever fully prepared, and feared being called upon. In spite of these undesirable conditions, I did acquire much knowledge, good reading habits, and a love for learning which has endured for a lifetime. The conditions under which I lived and worked simply doomed me to a mediocre transcript, and I graduated in 1938, at the age of 19, disturbed

at the state of the general and the Jewish world, uncertain as to the next move.

Along the way, through a coincidence of our birthdays, I had met a Mr. Samuel Leidesdorf, who had a major accounting firm in New York, and was one of the top leaders in the philanthropic community. He liked me personally, as well as the basic ideology which I had developed by then. He suggested that I become an accountant, and promised me a job at \$25.00 per week when I was qualified.

I registered at the Columbia Graduate School of Business, took a room in the dormitory, found a counterman's job at a drugstore on Amsterdam Avenue, and started to learn double-entry bookkeeping, profit and loss statements, balance sheets and all the other technicalities of the trade. I understood it all, but could not get enthusiastic at the prospect of spending my life at it. The purpose for which this mass of detail had to be assembled and kept in order was perfectly clear. Every economic function of human endeavor had to be systematically organized and recorded, otherwise there would be chaos, especially as society grew more complex. I had respect for the profession, but during the course of studying <sup>it</sup> it came to the definite conclusion that I did not want to practice it. So much for the promise of a job. I left Columbia at the end of the year, without taking the master's degree.



I was by now hundreds of dollars in debt, both to Yale and Columbia, and it was apparent that the liquidation of these obligations had to take first priority. They bothered me, they were my albatross, no cosmic urgings toward the improvement of the world would ever yield true satisfaction so long as the worry hung over me. I simply had to stop thinking about career and destiny, had to perform a basic housekeeping. My balance sheet was out of balance. So, it was back to New Haven, to look for a job.

Two friends of my father, Dave and Eddie Levine, had a factory in which they made mattresses, blankets, pads for wrapping furniture, and similar items. The Levine Bedding Co. was itself just emerging from the Depression, yet these good men did not hesitate to offer employment. Their only fear was that I was overqualified, in view of my education, to work on a sewing machine. I assured them that my desperate need would enable me to put my brain on hold and make my fingers nimble instead. The pay was 50 cents per hour, \$4.00 per shift; I begged for two shifts per day, 16 hours for \$8.00. Working 6 days per week would give me \$48 for 96 hours. It was a princely sum, and I had nothing else to do with my time. I went back to live in an attic room in the house where my parents now had a comfortable apartment; forgot about books; spent almost no money, literally; and saved enough by the end of the year to pay off all debts. Thank God!

Another wonderful thing happened that year, in addition

to the money. I came into contact with real people in the real world, and learned what they thought, how they talked, what they wanted, how they felt about what was happening in the world. Most of the workers were women, because the sewing machine, even the large industrial version, was considered a feminine instrument. Yet there were many men, handling the riveting, stapling, packing and other heavy work. During the food breaks, workers threw themselves down on the big bales and piles of blankets, opened their lunch pails and talked about everything under the sun. Most talk started out on personal issues such as children, marital discord, in-laws, money, housing. Gradually, it shifted to world affairs.

This was September 1939. Hitler had invaded Poland. England and France had declared war. America was neutral, but should she be? Many of our workers were Polish, some even recent immigrants, and their sense of outrage was high, their anguish real. They were careful not to criticize America, but they wondered why America was not more outspoken against Hitler. They sensed the industrial power of this country. Here, in our little factory, orders were beginning to come in from the U.S. Army for blankets, sleeping bags and other articles, which, while not weapons, nevertheless enabled an army to function. And our workers executed these army requirements with zeal and enthusiasm. They interpreted their labor as fighting against Hitler, and they knew workers in other factories who felt the same way. In addition to the Poles, we had many others who joined in these sentiments -



Russians, Slovaks, Hungarians, Jews.

On the other hand, there were <sup>also</sup> many Italians who had deep respect for Mussolini as a leader who was taking his nation into the modern world (they didn't know or care about Ethiopia), and if Il Duce was making an alliance with Hitler, that was alright with them. They did not want America to interfere with that. Our handful of fifty employees, groping toward crystallization of their political opinions, arguing, shouting, reading letters aloud to each other from folks back in the old countries, seeking to convince each other, represented in microcosm what was happening all over the nation. America was not destined to enter the war until 27 months later, and then only because of the Japanese, not Hitler, but the great majority of Americans was slowly and surely growing aware of the evil of Nazism.

For me, it was one of the most important educational experiences I could possibly have undergone. What it did was to clear my thinking as to what I should be doing with my life. The generally passive attitude of the American Jewish population toward Hitler and his persecution of European Jews had shocked and revolted me for several years. I had heard and read all the rationalizations, but they did not satisfy my visceral feeling that action was demanded by the ferocity of the Nazi attack. Watching the way in which my fellow-workers were seeking, and sometimes succeeding, in convincing each other, it became

apparent that conviction, more than any other attribute, was the most powerful instrument. <sup>and</sup> further, that verbal conviction, powerfully expressed, was the most effective.

It dawned on me that what I really wanted to do was to work toward two objectives which in some far-reaching sense were really one: to arouse the Jews of America toward massive efforts of rescue <sup>on behalf</sup> of Hitler's victims; and to <sup>infuse</sup> ~~forge~~ much greater strength into the Zionist movement whose ultimate purpose was to create an independent state for Jews, hopefully including the present and/or future victims. To work effectively at these twin objectives, one must be possessed of a platform from which to shout, demand, exhort, inspire, educate. What better platform existed than the pulpit?

In the Levine Bedding Company, working at machines whose flying needles occasionally stitched the finger of a hapless worker, working merciless hours, spending time with people, some of whom were illiterate, others whose culture was as distant from mine as Pluto, I learned to listen, and from listening I learned. At that place, and during that time I decided to become a rabbi in Israel, and this decision came not from any epiphany or conversion or revelation of God. It was not a theological decision, but suddenly I realized that what I really wanted was to become a civil servant of the <sup>Jewish</sup> people ~~of Israel~~, leading them toward what I had concluded were the paths of survival. My heart soared, spirits lifted, a vision emerged

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and I knew that this was the culmination of a process which had begun with <sup>my mother's</sup> ~~the~~ struggle over the affidavits years earlier.

And so it was back to school, this time with no debts, but with a feeling of haste and a sense that I must prepare myself well, as quickly as possible. It was the summer of 1940 and Dachau <sup>(unbeknownst to me?)</sup> was already two years old. Where to enroll? Of all the denominational movements, the one most natural and congenial for me was the Jewish Theological Seminary, the home of the Conservative movement with which my home synagogue of Bnai Jacob was affiliated. There I turned, with all the horror of the Holocaust burning in my soul, and the pounding desire to save the Jewish people beating in my head. This does sound romantic and heroic, absurdly presumptuous, most unrealistic. Yet, think back to the times and the age of the person speaking.

I arranged an appointment with the Chancellor, Dr. Louis Finkelstein, and had hardly entered his room before starting to pour out these hugely emotional words and thoughts. He interrupted, saying that all this could come later, but first he had three questions he wished to pose which were more significant. He asked if I observed the Sabbath halachically. I answered in the negative. Rabbi Greenberg had never asked me that question. He asked, secondly, if I observed the laws of kashrut. I explained that our home had been kosher for about the first ten years of my life, but my mother had abandoned the strictness of the law, for some reason. He asked, lastly, whether I observed

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the regulations <sup>regarding</sup> ~~of~~ family purity. I told him I was not married, but whenever I would enter that state, the decision about going to mikveh each month would be my wife's, not mine.

He then announced that my replies had obviously not satisfied his opinion that a rabbinical student should be a strict observor of the mitzvot, and he therefore felt that I was not a proper candidate for admission. I thanked him for his time, then expressed my own feeling that this was not the proper seminary for me. I was upset that he was not the least bit interested in my thoughts or emotions, *concerning Hitler or Palestine.*

As I walked down Broadway, my mind racing, weighing alternatives, I worked at calming myself. I knew perfectly well that Orthodoxy was not for me, and anyhow there was no possible way to overcome my inadequate background in Talmud or Hebrew. I was clearly inadmissible from a purely academic point of view, if not from many others. The thought of applying to the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati was simply not an option. That Reform seminary was so far to the left as to be almost non-Jewish, in my judgment. The administration and faculty were, in the main, anti-Zionist, anti-ritual, anti-Hebrew, and while there were some individuals who were exceptions to these generalizations, still I knew that the atmosphere of the school would run counter to most of my cherished ideals. There was only one other possibility in the United States, and that was the Jewish Institute of Religion, a new school established about twenty years earlier by Rabbi



Stephen S. Wise on the premise of Klal Yisrael, or, in today's jargon, pluralism. The faculty was composed of persons from all branches of Judaism, as was the student body. Some wore kippot in class, some did not. Every opinion was legitimate. Chapel services were warm and traditional. Wise himself was one of the earliest American Zionist leaders, active since the end of the 19th century. From Broadway I cut over to Central Park West, and sought an appointment at the JIR.



Chapter One  
Section 6

There I was welcomed with open arms, the second Yale man in as many years who was opting for the rabbinate. It almost seemed as though a new trend was developing, in which the American Jewish community would be graced with rabbinical leaders who came from the finest universities, combining thorough secular education with a high level of Jewish pride and consciousness. The previous year's entrant, Horace Manacher, and I became fast friends, inseparable for the next three years. His family was rich, lived in a penthouse on Riverside Drive, and lavished hospitality on me to the extent that I sometimes felt like the 18th century student eating "kest" at the table of the local rich man in the shtetl. Eventually, time and space separated us, but when the friendship was flourishing, it was precious.

The two leading personalities of the JIR were mighty in every regard. These were Rabbi Stephen Wise, the founder and president, and Dr. Henry Slonimsky, the dean. Each was powerful, both mentally and physically; magnetic; charismatic; charming; incandescent; fascinating; stimulating - no words suffice. Wise was the worldly Jewish politician, founder of many organizations, chairman of committees, president of fund-raising campaigns and intimate with mayors, governors, senators, even Presidents. He was a key player in the international scene as well, testifying



at the Versailles Conference of 1919 and at numerous World Zionist Congresses throughout Europe. He brought to us the wealth of his wisdom, judgment and experience. We became the richer for it.

Every Thursday morning at 11, the entire student body, never more than 20 men, convened around the oval conference table for a class entitled "Problems of the Ministry". When we saw that listing in the catalog, we assumed it would be our entry into the arcane mysteries of our trade - i.e. how to confront the dying, conduct the funeral, comfort the family; or the reverse, how to counsel the young bride and groom, conduct the wedding, offer advice on bringing up children, etc., etc. It turned out to be none of the above, nor how to deal with the Board of Trustees, nor how to stick to a budget, nor any of the practical matters of which we were deathly afraid, for we had no idea how to act in any of these situations, and we also knew these were the very matters which often determined the rabbi's reputation and often his very job. We were desperately eager to be informed by the master.

Instead the class began with Dr. Wise imperiously ordering the youngest man in the room (it was always I) to run to the corner for a box of 5 cent cigars, and when 20 clouds of smoke were fouling the room, he would again shout that the windows were to be thrown widely open. Now he was apparently

comfortable, for much of his life was spent in smoke-filled rooms. Out of his inner pocket would be drawn the latest telegram he had sent to Roosevelt, or received from Geneva, and with this he was off and running on the latest intrigue or road-block or double-cross in the intricate game of the State Department Arabists who were refusing visas to frantic Jewish refugees, or the British who were appeasing the Mufti in Jerusalem, or some American Jewish organizations which were blocking him because they felt he was too direct and undiplomatic in his approaches.

He was filled with passion, fought for his causes with enthusiasm, worked on the telephone long into the night summoning allies to his side, hated to compromise, demanded loyalty from followers, pounded tables, shouted in the most famous stentorian voice of the century, aroused great support, and made great enemies.

The causes and the means by which to win on behalf of those causes were the true "Problems of the Ministry", as far as he was concerned, for these were the issues which would make a ministry meaningful. If these matters were not in the forefront of the rabbi's mind, then he was merely a sacerdotal clerk. And even if he learned how to do all those other priestly functions very well, so long as he neglected his prophetic functions, he was a failure. Wise wanted his men to learn all the skills of leadership, the abilities of command, the methods of inspiration, the nuances of negotiation. He wanted his pupils to advance the



Jewish people through history, not merely serve them through the rites of life. He was a leonine figure - the best-known and most-respected Jewish public person in the first half of the 20th century.

Dr. Henry Slonimsky, the beloved dean, was the soul and brain of the school. Tall, white-haired, declaiming, as he strode back and forth across the front of the classroom, he was as close to the image of a Greek philosopher as one could be. Actually that is what he had studied at Marburg University in Germany, as well as having also studied Jewish philosophy with Hermann Cohen. Slonimsky was in love with Midrash, but was also in love with life. Judaism is not an ascetic religion, he would thunder. Taste all of life - art, nature, women, wine, tragedy, comedy - taste it, and then you will know what it is all about, and then perhaps you will be able to explain it to your congregants, he would shout.

Whatever I think about God, I drew from Slonimsky. He was most troubled by the problem of theodicy. The fires of Auschwitz were not yet burning and the crystals of Zyklon B were still in their canisters in the Rhineland factories, but the shadow of destruction hovered over the Jews of Europe. And hovering over the head of Slonimsky was the question gnawing away at his faith in God. It was not yet fashionable to speak of God as being dead. That phrase lay in the future. Rather the

questions were - does God know? does He care? does He even exist? is He powerless? why doesn't He intervene? And as Slonimsky pondered these questions for us, and explained, and interpreted, and read us answers from traditional sources, gradually he developed his own theory, to satisfy his own doubts, and as he explicated it for us, he gave us a hypothesis which worked for some, while it was unnecessary for others. The Orthodox among us were secure in their faith. God was not a mystery for them. But for the others among us, Slonimsky's efforts rescued the faltering and the doubt-ridden. Speaking for myself, he gave me a God-concept which has served me all my life and enabled me to work with enthusiasm and optimism, in spite of all the horrors of our era.

His theory was simple. He invented the phrase "limited or finite" to describe God in the time of Hiroshima and Auschwitz. It is not that God is absent or uncaring or occupied with bigger problems or powerless. To remove God completely from the universe would leave man hopelessly and helplessly alone. This is unthinkable. So God must remain as a factor. But man must be realistic and not expect too much. God is not infinite, omnipotent, omniscient. God is limited, limited by the fact that He gave man free will, and man does the evil. God does not do the evil - God's creature does, and God, having destroyed man once, promised not to do it again. Hence, God is limited by his own creation, and cannot prevent or undo or mitigate the evil



performed by this creature. God's power is finite, not infinite. The promise that this condition will change is implicit in the word of the prophet Zechariah who said that in some future day (the time of the Messiah?) God will be One and His name will be One. God is not One, in spite of the Shema, is not whole, is not united, is not in full control, is broken or fractured or divided. Thus his power is not complete, but will be, says the prophet.

Manacher and I lived as close to Slonimsky as we could. Lunching on the deserted balcony of the 72nd Street Automat, stretching the cottage cheese and prunes to last a whole hour, so we could drink in every word; then walking him home to his childless apartment, we were his sons, and he stimulated us. We touched everything under the intellectual sun: literature (Greek, English and American); politics; socialism (FDR); communism (the new hope); Zionism (S. loved the dream but never in his life visited the reality); Ahad Ha-am (whom I admired but S. wasn't sure); and lots of frivolous things such as girls, Mayor LaGuardia, and Yale football games. Richard Aldington, the English literary critic, once wrote a paragraph about Slonimsky, describing him as a person who spoke books better than most people wrote them. And that was the magic of the man. Words and ideas flowed from him in a rushing tumbling stream, carrying the

listener along as though on a raft racing through a canyon, adrenalin pounding, just missing the rocks, and finally slowing down and drifting into the placid level pool where one could catch a breath and savor the experience.

We had many other fine teachers, but Wise and Slonimsky left us the richest heritage. When the school disappeared in a merger with the Hebrew Union College after Wise's death, those two men never faded from memory and their photographs have remained on my wall forever. Incidentally, even though the school merged, it lasted long enough to do its essential job of permanently influencing the direction of the reform movement in America, which became more Zionist and more traditional in its mood and practices. To its credit, may it be recorded that the HUC-JIR was the first rabbinical seminary in the U.S. to require of its students that they spend one full year in Jerusalem, to learn the land and the language. The conservative movement followed suit some years later. The 200-and-something graduates of the JIR were a leaven in the dough. They influenced their colleagues and congregants, the national rabbinical association and union of congregations. They also brought into the reform ranks a healthy respect for Jewish tradition and those who practiced it.

In June 1941 I was married to the former Elaine Schwartz of Meriden, Connecticut, whom I had met back in high school days, when I visited the synagogue youth group in her



community. During the years I was at Yale, she attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts; and when I went on to New York for Columbia and the JIR, she came to the Yale School of Drama. Thus, in the course of these several years of crossing paths, we did not see each other with a very great degree of continuous companionship, yet the relationship maintained itself and gradually flourished into a romance. In the summer of 1939 her mother attempted to interrupt the flourishing with a trip to Europe, which had an exciting conclusion, though failing in its original purpose.

A World Zionist Congress was scheduled to be held in Switzerland the first week in September, and mother planned that they should finish off the summer with this exciting event. Hitler planned otherwise and started the war that week. I think the ladies were present at the congress one or two days, during which they frantically attempted to book space on any liner leaving for New York from anywhere. The trip home was spiced with submarine alerts, blackouts, and enough excitement to last a long time.

We married when she finished Drama School, rented a one-bedroom apartment on W. 74th St, and set up housekeeping. Mother-in-law had capitulated and now helped us with the rent. I had acquired several jobs. One afternoon per week I worked down at the Henry Street Settlement House as a youth group leader. The essence of the job was keeping a bunch of tough kids off the

street by thinking of projects which could be done inside the house. We spent a happy year designing and fabricating a gang jacket. I was paid \$5.00 per week. Another job was teaching Saturday morning and Sunday morning at the White Plains religious school - \$5.00 each session. The third was Saturday afternoon at the Pleasantville School for Boys, a Federation Agency caring for delinquent or abandoned children, waiting for adoption or foster parents. Again, it was a matter of catching their interest with something outside of their immediate personal problems. We read and told stories. Again, it was \$5.00. Total earnings for the week - \$20.00.

Our existence was friendly and loving. We invited fellow students, happy that we could offer hospitality to some who had long subway rides home, and needed a place for a few hours of quiet study in the afternoons. We went to theatre and concerts, walks in the parks (quite feasible then), and I took in an occasional baseball game at Yankee Stadium. We had no children, thus lived for each other. Family members drifted in, from time to time. Parents came to New York. Brother Stanley showed up in Navy ensign's uniform, the first of the three of us to do service. And then he was off to sea duty, and several years were to pass before I saw him again. Two years passed in this personally pleasant fashion, while the world plunged deeper and deeper into turmoil, the war grew bloodier, and the condition of the Jews grew more hopeless.



Dr. Wise was his own placement bureau, seeking opportunities for his "boys" to obtain pulpits. By the summer of 1943 my class had been at studies three full years, no vacations, and was ready to be placed. Several of us were eager to volunteer for military chaplaincies, but even this required one year of practical experience in a congregation, before a commission would be granted by the War Department. So even we had to be placed, at least for a year. In July, Wise told me I was going to Denver. He told me nothing of the circumstances, only that this was the most choice congregation he had unearthed, and since I was one of his most favorite students, he wanted me to have it. He hinted, very mysteriously, that there might be most favorable future developments. Plane travel was out of the question since we had no military priority, and anyhow a DC-3, the largest transport in use took four stops to arrive in Denver. Instead we spent three days on the transcontinental train, arriving elated and expectant. One year from now I would be in uniform, and meanwhile I could start awakening my congregants to the twin causes for which I had been preparing so long. Here was the beginning.

## CHAPTER ONE

## SECTION 7

This congregation was one of the oldest and largest reform Temples in the country. It had been established by Simon Guggenheim and other German Jews in 1874, two years before Colorado became a state. In 1889 Rabbi William S. Friedman became the spiritual leader, served for a full 50 years, when a stroke incapacitated him on the golf course one day. During that half-century he became one of the most important men in Colorado, in the general community, not only the Jewish. He cut an imposing figure as he walked down 17th Street in Denver, garbed in top hat, Prince Albert coat, white piping on the vest, silver-headed cane in his firm grasp. People tipped their hats in respect and whispered his name as he passed. Such a personality would obviously be adored by his members, who knew that the status of each individual member was maintained at a high level, simply through association with him. Thus, his word was law, his opinion was sacrosanct, his decisions were immutable, his pronouncements were divine. His aura encompassed two complete generations.

The shock of his illness reverberated as though it was a Richter 7. What would they do? How could they get along without him? No one knew how to replace him. Having had no need to go



rabbi-hunting in anyone's living memory, they did not know where to turn. This situation resulted in their acceptance of a recommendation concerning one Rabbi Abraham Feinberg, who had been out of the pulpit for several years, singing on the radio under the name of Anthony Frome. Apparently the committee was so unnerved and felt under such compulsion to fill the pulpit quickly, that it neglected to make a thorough search of background, personality, and references. The net result was a period of approximately three years in which arguments between the rabbi and the congregation escalated, over a large number of subjects, to a condition wherein the fundamental question was reached as to whether he should remain.

In his defense it should probably be noted that any successor to the revered Dr. Friedman would have had a hard time, because of the constant and unflattering comparisons between the fallen hero and the incumbent. Nevertheless, Feinberg made his own bed untenable, and the final struggle took place over the question of his patriotism and veracity. Realizing that the Board was about to recommend his severance, he suddenly revealed his burning desire to volunteer for the military chaplaincy. This would probably have saved his neck, but then he stalled and a new irritation developed as to whether he had processed an application or not, and he said that he wanted only a navy commission, and they said, and he said, and so on.

This situation had been festering for months. Dr. Wise had not told me about it. Either he didn't know himself, or preferred not to tell me, lest it repel me. Who in his right mind would voluntarily walk into the middle of a major congregational fight? I became aware of something, not the whole story, when Rabbi Feinberg, whom I had never met, appeared among the cartons and boxes as we were packing to leave for Denver, and urged me not to accept the invitation to become the assistant rabbi. He was bland, innocuous, zealous for my welfare by reminding me that I could have a great career as my own master, and that I should not waste time being someone's assistant, even his. I was perplexed, knew I was in the dark, felt that something heavy was going on here, but my instinct told me not to back off. A quick consultation with Dr. Wise reinforced me, and I told Feinberg I would be happy to serve under him, that it would only be for a year because I was already slated for the chaplaincy, and that I would see him in Denver.

The fact is that I never saw him again. When we arrived, I called him asking if there was anything he wanted me to do at next Friday evening's service. His curt reply was that he had no intention of appearing and I could do whatever I wanted. The only man to whom I could turn for help and advice was the executive secretary, Mr. Samuel Rose, who quickly became my confidant and mentor. He was one of the sweetest, caring people I have ever known, and reassured me there was nothing to worry



about. I should simply do the service, make no reference to Feinberg, no explanations, no apologies - just be myself.

It took some courage, but I did it, and the next Friday and the next as we went through July, and came into August, and I was still doing it, and we were only a few weeks away from the great Holy Days of September, and what was supposed to happen now? Once again Sam Rose to the rescue. By now, we had become fast friends. He was convinced of my sincerity and discretion, in that I had not gotten involved in the Feinberg matter to seek any advantage for myself. He was further convinced that I was making a powerful impact, for attendance at those summer services was achieving unprecedented heights, and this was restoring morale in the congregation. And lastly he was convinced that, even though I was incredibly young, just short of 25, I could handle the job. Therefore he went to work.

In short order, I was approached by the president, who invited me to be the senior and only rabbi, since Rabbi Feinberg was going to another pulpit, and I was to take charge of the High Holy Days. Would I be willing?

Well, here I was, with the shortest tenure of assistant in all history, a mere six weeks, being offered a post involving more than one thousand families, a couple of weeks before the holidays, when every seat would be taken at the double services

which were already necessary. What about sermons? music? readers? Torah portions? I had nothing prepared. I never dreamed that the denouement would come with such abruptness. Still, there were other considerations which had to come before the above practicalities - and these were honesty, good judgment, straightforward appraisal of what was best for the membership.

I told him how flattered I was, but my mind was made up regarding the army, so they could only have me for one year. Further, that I was not going to spend the year passively, but would be arguing vigorously for my ideologies, beginning right now over the holidays, when my audiences would be the largest. I might be upsetting many people, for this Friedman was an exact opposite to the previous Friedman, and I would surely be guilty of lese majesty. Further, they should not make the same mistake with me as they had made with Feinberg, namely not to investigate his background thoroughly enough. I urged him to contact Wise and Slonimsky. In sum, I told him that I really had nothing to lose by accepting his offer, for I would be history in a year anyhow. But the congregation had a lot to lose if, once again, it was subject to the turmoil which accompanies rabbinical fighting.

Having made my demurrers as honestly as I knew how, I waited for their final decision, which came quickly and affirmatively. After that I had no scruples about preaching a series of sermons over the Holy Day period which outlined my



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credo. The core was Jewish nationalism. Of course we were a religion, but not only that. We were a culture, a civilization, a tribe of people, with a history, language and land. The total of all these characteristics is summed up in the one word - nation. We were loyal Americans, as individuals and families, and our nationality was American, for that was our citizenship. But in addition there was another aspect of our identity, and that was our Jewish nationhood. Every Jew in the world has a two-faceted identity: he or she is a citizen of the country of residence, which might even be the country of birth for one or several generations; and at the same time he or she is a member of the Jewish nation, practicing its unique religion, learning its unique language, tied by memory to its most ancient heritage, and bound by love and reverence to its ancestral land. Every Jew in the world is different, concerning the first aspect of his identity. One is a Frenchman, another a Turk, a third an Australian, and the fourth a Dane. But every Jew in the world is the same, as far as the second aspect is concerned. So, the French Jew is the same as other Frenchmen in some aspects, and quite different from other Frenchmen in some aspects.

This analysis poses a dilemma for those American Jews who do not want to be different from other Americans in any degree. If they were to agree that they possess a double identity, they fear that this may lead to their being accused of double loyalty - i.e. they are not truly loyal Americans if this

loyalty is diluted by being turned toward another source. Can one have two mothers and be loyal to both? In the 1930's and 40's this question of possible dual loyalty was the main argument used by those who opposed the Zionist goal. In the main, American Jews in those years, not far removed from the time of their migration, and seeking desperately to become absorbed in the new world, wanted nothing more than to be considered like all others, like the Germans and Slavs and Italians and Scandinavians who were struggling to strike roots and become just plain Americans. The early sociological theories spoke of a "melting pot" in which everyone homogenized into one type. Jews did not want to be told they had an additional facet to their personae - they wanted to be like everyone else, nothing more.

And here I was telling them something they really did not want to hear, something which William Friedman had preached against for a half-century. He told them they were not a nation, but Americans whose religion was slightly different from other religions. Aside from that, they were not different in any detail. He was against Jewish nationhood, the Hebrew language, outmoded Oriental customs such as Bar Mitzvah and wearing a hat indoors. He believed in eliminating any practice or any train of thought which was not common to mainstream Americanism.

I was an enigma to them, and I could honestly understand their dilemma, but I gave no quarter. They must be



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taught the new reality which the Holocaust and the Jewish-State-to-come would impose upon them when the war was over. They must be intellectually and emotionally equipped to meet the future, not fight against it. While continuing to preach and teach my fundamental principles, I built bridges and created a network of friends and contacts all over town. I was seen more and more publicly with Manuel Laderman, the orthodox rabbi, and invited him to share the platform when I was installed by Dr. Wise in a magnificent ceremony attended by thousands. I think this was the first time the Temple had ever had an orthodox person, wearing a yarmulke, on its altar. I became friendly, even close, with two of the most prominent Protestant ministers in town, Paul Roberts, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral, and Jacob Trapp of the Unitarian Church. Quigg Newton, the mayor, and Lee Knous, the governor, and Palmer Hoyt, editor and publisher of the Denver Post, were among the key public figures who welcomed me to their circle, asked me to serve on committees, and gradually became sources of strength in their support of Jewish causes. My congregants liked this, for it was in the old Friedman mold, with one difference. I was winning these men over to the new ideas, and this helped me win over my own reluctant members. A friendship developed with a remarkable man, which has lasted to this very day. I speak of Dr. Carl Hermann Voss, then of Omaha, and the first executive director of the newly formed American Christian Palestine Committee, a learned minister, a Christian who took Judaism seriously as the source of his own religion, a lover of the

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Jewish heritage and a passionate supporter of the Zionist idea. We have remained friends for almost 50 years, seeing eye to eye on almost every issue.

The year went well. Attendance at Friday night services was remarkably heavy, probably because of the controversial nature of the sermon subjects. Our Sunday soldiers' program grew to several hundred Jewish men in uniform from nearby air fields coming every Sunday, for a morning religious service, followed by a big lunch, followed by a dance all afternoon in the social hall. Hundreds of young ladies answered the call for volunteers. It was warm hospitality, sincerely given and gratefully received. The religious school flourished, expanded, included Hebrew lessons, and as I taught the confirmation class myself, I had the opportunity to work with fresh young minds, unencumbered by any prejudices. It was a joy, and while I counted the days until enlistment, still I was happy every day I remained on the job.

As the year progressed, it was obvious to me that one severe act would be necessary, and that I had better preside over it, in an effort to keep it under control. It was to be an act of surgery, or a bill of divorcement, depending on whether one preferred legal or medical vocabulary. There was an irreconcilable split between a small group, perhaps one hundred or so, of the oldest, most socially prominent, original founding families and the large majority of the congregation which had



been won over to my point of view. Some described it as a split between the old aristocratic German families and the nouveaux Polish and Russian Jews who had swarmed into the membership during the past five or ten years. This phenomenon was occurring in reform congregations all over the country, and Denver was no exception. Whether the split was sociological or ideological, it made no sense to try any form of gluing, for it would inevitably come apart again. Therefore, I encouraged the secession, offered to help establish a new congregation as the best solution, gave them a Sefer Torah, and kept praising the homogeneity which would result. They could be as anti-Zionist as they wished, without feeling stifled, and they could find a rabbi with congenial ideas who would not irritate them. I, as well, would have a more peaceful environment within which to make my propaganda. So it was, and by the time I left, Denver had two reform temples.

One last episode is worthy of mention. A strongly anti-Zionist organization had been established two years earlier by a group of reform rabbis, who were vigorously opposed to the Zionist trend becoming increasingly apparent in reform ranks. When the Central Conference of American Rabbis (reform) had voted 3 to 1 in favor of a resolution stating that reform Judaism and Zionism were compatible, those rabbis in the minority withdrew from the convention and organized the American Council for Judaism. Its purpose was to fight against Zionism, and to stress the ideology which defined Judaism as a religion only (shades of the Napoleonic Sanhedrin of 1806). Chapters were created in many

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cities and their missionary work was well-funded by sympathetic lay leaders. One of the greatest ironies of the whole bizarre story was the election of Mr. Lessing Rosenwald of Philadelphia as national chairman, while his brother, Mr. William Rosenwald of New York became the national chairman of the United Jewish Appeal, which championed the creation of the State of Israel.

There was a very strong chapter of the American Council in my congregation, and after the secession described above, most of them moved over to the new congregation, but their influence in the "old" Temple Emanuel was still enormous. The old families retained dual memberships. One week after I left, by now a commissioned officer in the uniform of the United States Army, the executive director of the American Council, the notorious Rabbi Elmer Berger, came to my Temple, at the prior invitation of the leaders of the Council, to utter a tirade against me, from my pulpit, for the treasonable doctrines I was expounding. He, who resisted every effort to persuade him to enlist in the chaplaincy, had the effrontery to call me a "bad American" because I was preaching dual loyalty. He, the good American, refused to assist his country; he, the good Jew, refused to join the battle against Hitler; but he found it perfectly ethical to attack me while I was enroute to Army Chaplains' School at Ft. Devens, Mass.

The inner falsehood of his personal position, and that



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of the organization as a whole, was evidenced by their failure to persuade the great mass of reform Jews across America of the validity of their argument. A year or so after his appearance, I received a letter in Germany, where I was stationed, which contained some interesting sentences. It was signed by the local Denver chairman of the Council, a member well-known to me. He wrote in part:

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"Just thought I would drop you a line and tell you we are all looking forward to your return. I writing you this letter on the stationery of the American Council for Judaism, Inc., so as to squelch all rumors which I am sure there are plenty that this organization had plans for doing away with your services on your return. As President I can assure you that this is furthest from our thoughts, and I want you to get the information first-hand.

Kindest regards from everyone in Denver,

Sincerely, "

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## CHAPTER TWO

### Section 1

Few experiences are as weird as getting into a costume which alters your exterior appearance but has no effect whatsoever on the essential you. Every child knows this from the time Halloween begins. The costume evokes a certain response from the onlooker - horror, laughter, respect - which amazes the wearer who doesn't understand these reactions. The day a civilian takes the oath and dons the uniform, he/she undergoes this inner confusion, loss of self, and transformation into someone new. For an officer with no previous military exposure, such as ROTC in college, it is compounded by the badges of rank, and the feeling of being Alice going into the hole is even more intense.

After you are sworn in, and have the requisite papers in hand, you are entitled to put on the uniform you have ordered from your tailor or bought off the peg some weeks earlier. Walking out of your house, newly garbed, you must keep telling yourself that you look perfectly normal. Many other people on the street are similarly dressed. The nation is at war. You are not in the least outstanding or different, as you would be, for instance, if you, young and healthy, were to be in civvies. Then passersby would look at you inquiringly. And so our young warrior, entering a store, or a trolley car, or a bar is faced only with questions pertaining to his adventures, travels, dangers faced in foreign places. No one knows that the uniform is



one hour old and the warrior has been nowhere yet. Thus the costume suggests a thousand things as yet unborn, while underneath it, the neophyte knows he is still his virginal self. If this situation is awkward in a civilian setting of town and street, just imagine what it must be in a military setting of camp or fort.

I entered the gate at Ft. Devens, to register at the Chaplains School, and was immediately, at the gate, faced with the excruciating experience of receiving a salute from the guard sergeant, who expected to receive one in return. I felt so silly, never having done this before, not knowing whether the angle of my fingers was correct, nor whether I had waited too long, or whether my cap was on straight. In the next hundred yards, this torture was repeated a dozen times, and instead of feeling more acclimatized, I grew more disoriented. My first lieutenant's bars established my status in everyone's eyes except mine. I felt so uncertain, I who could keep a thousand people spellbound with a good stream of oratory, that I could only look around in desperation for the nearest barracks, in order to get indoors where saluting was not required.

As mystifying as were the rules of behaviour, stance and bearing, so were the courses which composed the curriculum. During the next six weeks we were expected to master, or at least become reasonably familiar with, among others, the following

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basics:

~~Practical Duties~~

~~Courtesies and Customs~~

~~Graves Registration and Military Funerals~~

~~Map Reading and Aerial Photography~~

~~Chemical Warfare~~

~~Army Organization~~

~~Military Law~~

~~First Aid for Wounded~~

~~Army Postal Service (and Censorship)~~

~~Special Lectures (includes Red Cross, GI Bill,  
Tolerance, Command of Negro  
Troops, V.D. Prevention, etc.)~~

It was obviously impossible to master even the above, let alone the multitude of other topics listed in the Chaplain's Manual. Most of the men had been through college, knew how to study, and tried their best. Only when we were posted to our assignments did we find out how small a fraction of the surface we had scratched. None of the above had anything to do with the real things for which we would be needed: easing pain, comforting young men who were frightened or homesick or debauched, explaining what the war was all about and why it had to be fought, figuring out how to answer questions about God in the face of all the mud and murder, listening, just listening, which was probably the most important contribution we could make.



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In addition to all the classroom work, there was a subject entitled Military Training, which took place outdoors, and was intended to give us a glimpse of typical conditions of warfare. There were long marches, with heavy field packs; exercises in the woods, involving pitching tents, cooking rations; daily calisthenics; and a procedure more fearsome than anyone of us ever anticipated. It was called Obstacle Infiltration Course, or, in simpler language, moving forward under live fire.

A large section of field was covered with barbed wire at a height of 15 inches above the ground. Machine guns were placed at one end of the field. Trainees stretched out flat on the ground in front of the guns, and were instructed to crawl forward, propelling themselves by digging in elbows and boot-tips, keeping head down, staying as close to the earth as possible, but certainly below the 15 inch level, else they would get caught by the wire. Getting caught on the wire in a real combat situation, and losing time trying to tear oneself loose, meant certain death. The machine guns were set to fire at a level of 30 inches above the ground. So, if you kept yourself hugging the ground and keeping yourself well below the wire, you were an additional 15 inches, at least, below the line of fire.

The length of the field was 100 yards. Spaced at random throughout the field were pits containing explosive charges, which were set off periodically. Their purpose was to simulate enemy artillery fire. So, off you went, like a turtle, nose

carving a furrow in the soil, machine guns firing live ammunition over your head, you telling yourself all the time to keep your head down, and because you couldn't see, suddenly finding yourself on the edge of a pit, which the man in the control tower who could see the entire field thought would be the perfect moment to blow the explosive whose concussive effect would flip you over. Now you were on your back, sweating madly, frightened to death, trying to figure out how to get on your stomach without lifting torso, head or any limbs for that matter. Your heavy steel helmet had slipped down on your nose, knocking off your glasses, your entire body was wringing wet, and you were certain that you couldn't reach the end of the field alive. But you did, and when the gunners saw that everyone was at the finish line, they stopped firing and you could stand tall and stretch to the skies. There were accidents. Sometimes men lost control, through fear and tried to stand up and run. The wire held them down, but an arm or a leg broke through and reached that fatal 30 inch height. Sometimes the gun barrels got overheated and sagged slightly, without the gunners being aware, so that the bullets were flying below the requisite height, just a few inches above the wire. This caused panic, which, in turn, caused accidents. It was not an easy exercise, even though one became more familiar with the sense of danger, and for some men it became quite commonplace after a dozen times. And that was exactly the motive behind the exercise - to accustom men to the sound of fire, and to develop reflex moves for protection. I'm certain this obstacle



course, which all infantrymen had to experience, saved many lives in combat.

Chaplain School ended, our uniforms were no longer costumes cloaking neophytes. We felt like real soldiers. Crowding around the bulletin board on the last day, I found myself assigned to the 69th ITR (Infantry Training Regiment) at Camp Blanding, Florida, which merited the presence of a Jewish chaplain because of a large contingent of men from Brooklyn and the Bronx who were in that regiment. I looked forward to joining and serving them.

The Camp was situated near the small town of Gainesville, about 60 miles east of Jacksonville, out in the pine trees, in the middle of nowhere. The commanding general greeted me warmly and escorted me to my new home, a white clapboard chapel, with a tall steeple, a lovely plot of grass planted around, a bit of Vermont here in the deep south. A standard army chapel has a small foyer, and a main sanctuary, behind which are three offices and a storage room. There is an army concept reflecting the absolute equality of Catholic, Protestant and Jew. Never mind that there is no numerical equality - there is religious equality. This is one of those miraculous American concepts which are taken for granted, yet even a moment's reflection gives pause that this condition is almost unique in the entire world. When an American President is inaugurated, prayers are offered by a minister, a priest, and a rabbi. It is as though the Jews are 1/3 of the American population, when in

reality they are less than 2%.

In our snug little chapel, the three of us quickly developed a working relationship, helping each other in all manner of chores. Another wonderful aspect of the army was the notion that a chaplain's basic responsibility was to all the men in his command, and while it was understood, of course, that he had a particular responsibility to the men of his own religious faith, nevertheless he had to be physically and psychologically capable of transcending religious differences. Visiting men in the hospital or the stockade was a universal duty, having nothing to do with the man's personal religion, so every chaplain could do that. Giving a lecture on V.D. to a platoon was non-denominational. Conducting a bull-session on some aspect of how the war was going in Europe or the Pacific depended on the chaplain's knowledge of geopolitics, not whether he had a cross or a star of David on his lapel.

So it went. The Protestant chaplain helped me on Friday afternoon to take down the Christian insignia with which the chapel was decorated, put everything away neatly in the storage room, and take out the Ark, candles and kiddush tray for the Sabbath Eve service. I helped the Catholic chaplain put up his crucifix, set out his chalice, patten and missal. Day after day, week after week we lived in a style of mutual respect and cooperation which was itself a lesson to the men and officers who saw us in the mess or out on the field.

There were many training regiments at this camp.



room, and take out the Ark, candles and kiddush tray for the Sabbath Eve service. I helped the Catholic chaplain put up his crucifix, set out his chalice, patten and missal. Day after day, week after week we lived in a style of mutual respect and cooperation which was itself a lesson to the men and officers who saw us in the mess or out on the field.

There were many training regiments at this camp, consisting of tens of thousands of men, and they were all scheduled for the obstacle courses which were scattered over the extensive grounds and woods. I made it a special point to watch where my 69th was scheduled to be, and anytime any unit of the 69th, no matter how small, was set up for this exercise, I was there. At first the men were polite, but the unspoken question was obvious. They were asking themselves - what is he doing here? Is he trying to boost our morale? But when they saw that I was helmeted as they were, and intended to go the course with them, the looks changed and the shouts of welcome took over, and they joked and relaxed, and I was pleased to feel like a veteran whose conduct would put them at ease. Thank goodness for Chaplain School!

After an enriching tour at Blanding, including a Rosh Hashanah service for more than 1000 Jewish personnel which was held in a hangar at St. Augustine because there was no hall on our own base large enough, I was transferred to Camp Miles Standish, back in Massachusetts, to prepare for overseas shipment.

There had been several anxious days at Blanding waiting for that assignment. Rumor had it that most of our troops would be sent to the Pacific for the final push against Japan. I wanted to be sent to Germany, for the two burning themes which had guided my life during the past decade would unfold in Europe and the Near East, not the Far East.

I telephoned the Chaplaincy Commission of the Jewish Welfare Board, soliciting their intervention with the War Department. The executive director, Rabbi Philip Bernstein of Rochester, N.Y., was known to me, and I begged him to use his influence. I'm certain he did whatever he could, to which I added my own earnest prayers. When my assignment named Standish as destination, I rejoiced, for that camp was near Boston, which logically indicated Europe. Of course, logic does not always determine army decisions. There were two Japanese-speaking officers on board our troopship bound for France. We sailed from Boston on a Liberty ship, and for eight days and nights I was seasick, losing the opportunity to join one of the non-stop poker games and becoming a rich man. I ate only saltines and oranges, vomited frequently, and tried to concentrate on the other kinds of opportunities which lay ahead.



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CHAPTER TWO

Section Two

Landing at LeHavre, trucking over to one of the many cigarette camps ringing the badly bombed port, settling into an eight-man tent in Philip Morris, drawing equipment from the quartermaster hut, signing all the papers, I learned great respect for the orderliness which existed in the midst of great confusion. I have no idea what comparison to make with civilian life. What corporation or institution is required to handle a constantly moving group of hundreds of thousands of people, keep track of their movements, feed them, deliver their mail, and keep them supplied with all the tools of their trade - all of the above requiring a supply line thousands of miles long? While there were constant foul-ups, shortages, and mistakes, on the large scale of the millions of soldiers, sailors and airmen involved in World War II, let it be recorded to the credit of the Army that most of the time the toilet paper and Coca-Cola reached their destinations correctly.

We entered the camp as bewildered individuals, went through the rapid processing, and were expelled on the other end like sausages from the grinding machine, carrying a mountain of stuff, like Boy Scouts off to an outing. There was helmet and gas mask, canteen and flashlight, .45 Colt automatic and M-1 carbine, bedroll and field pack, K-rations and C-rations, raincoat and boots, etc., etc., - all of it either draped on your body or

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shoved into a duffel bag which you carried everywhere. Loaded into a GMC 1 and 1/2 ton truck, affectionately known as a 6-by because of its six wheels, we were driven in this work-horse of basic transportation from France up into Belgium, and dumped into an officers' replacement depot near the small town of Namur, there to wait until it was sorted out whom we were replacing where.

It was in this little town that I had my first contact with the Nazi persecution, and the episode was on a small human scale, easy to comprehend and feel, for which I was ever grateful. Later there would be macro-events, but here it was perfect in its impact, because I was able to absorb all the nuances and possibilities, all the danger and all the glory. Also, this story revolved around one good man, so the ending left you with a feeling of hope and optimism, even though the cruelty of the Nazis was enormous.

Walking down the narrow main street, I saw a Star of David hand-drawn on the dusty window of an abandoned store. The door yielded, beyond the empty front room was another room in the back, which contained some chairs, a small cabinet, a framed picture of a priest, and M. Burauck, sitting behind a small table. The room was dim and dingy, but the smile spreading across his pinched face as he recognised the Tablets of the Law on my uniform was enough to give a glow to this tiny synagogue. He was the caretaker, one of the very few Jewish survivors of the town.



He showed me the Torah scroll in the cabinet, and told me how they had hidden it from the Nazis during the long years of occupation. He took me to the picture, where I noticed the faded flowers pinned to the wall beneath and the inscription "This man is one of the saints of the world". It was written in Flemish, an exact translation of the Hebrew "Chasidei oomot ha-olam" which is applied to those non-Jews who, at mortal danger to themselves, perform life-saving deeds for Jews under persecution. In Israel today, such persons are greatly honored by the government and presented with a medal and asked to plant a tree at Yad V'shem, on a long Allee des Justes. At the base of the tree is the name and nationality of the person so honored. Such Righteous Gentiles are nominated by Jews who have actually been saved by them. Each case is investigated as carefully as possible. In the entire world, remembering the number of the slain, there are only 900 such persons who have been identified and honored. Now that Eastern Europe is open to the west, there may be many more who will come forward. At least we hope so.

When I remarked that it was most unusual to find the picture of a Catholic priest on a synagogue wall, M. Burauck offered tea and told the fabulous story. Father Andre was the local parish priest of Namur. His parish house was located in the center of town, right next door to the Hotel Horscamp. When the German armies overran Belgium in 1940, the Hotel was requisitioned by the Gestapo and used by them as headquarters. Approximately 40 officers of the Gestapo lived and worked in that

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hotel, and many of them, professing Catholics, became friendly with the local priest in the parish house next door. In an effort to win his confidence and friendship they exchanged visits with him, inviting him to their quarters and in turn forcing their presence upon him in his refectory. Father Andre permitted these intrusions and accepted their invitations for he had a very well-hidden motive of his own. He was one of the leaders of the underground in that part of Belgium and so his apparent friendship with the Gestapo was a marvelous cover for his real activities.

One of the most important aspects of the work of the underground was to help refugees to escape from the Nazi murderers. Father Andre's parish house became a way station on the underground railroad for Jews seeking escape. Under the very noses of his Gestapo neighbors Father Andre gave refuge and food to the terrified victims who had been directed to the haven of his four walls.

It became his custom to shelter these persons in flight in his own bedroom, often in his own bed. Once he had 22 refugees in his house waiting for nightfall so they could move on to the next underground station. Suddenly, in the middle of the afternoon, three of the Gestapo officers entered his house without warning, seeking a bottle of cool wine. With calm courage he stalled them at the entrance hall for those precious few minutes which would enable the refugees to hustle into his bedroom. For an hour the three Nazis sat in his courtyard



drinking the wine and he stayed with them so they would not go wandering through the house, for if they had found the luckless Jews, it would not only have meant their and Father Andre's death, but the destruction of a link in the chain of underground stations and workers who were fighting for the freedom of mankind.

On another occasion, some months later, there were some 15 officers sitting around his refectory table, carousing and drinking, when a servant slipped up to him and whispered that there were five Jewish children waiting at the back door who would have to be smuggled into the house and kept overnight. Father Andre excused himself from the table, brought those children through a corridor in the cellar, took them into his own bedroom where they found a few hours of rest and managed to fall asleep in spite of the drunken shouts of the Gestapo officers in the very next room.

When Belgium was at last liberated and the accursed Nazis were driven out, Father Andre could finally admit the work which he had been doing. After a tabulation, it was found that he was personally responsible for having harbored in his own home over two hundred Jewish refugees, most of them children under the age of fifteen. Shortly after the end of the war, Father Andre's birthday came around. The tiny remnant of Namur survivors now composing the Jewish community who knew of his work gathered to think of the most suitable birthday present for this beloved man. They finally made a joyous decision and one beautiful sunny

morning they carried their present to his house in a large cart. It was a new bed! They explained this was a symbol of their appreciation for the fact that for several years he had almost never slept in his own bed, giving it to others at great risk. Now they felt he should have a new bed with which to start a new era of freedom and peace.

As a final gesture they asked for his photograph which they wanted to enshrine in their holiest place - on the wall of the synagogue, right next to the Ark. He came to the synagogue the day they hung the picture and as they thanked him, with tears in their eyes, for what he had done, he replied that he had simply been doing the will of the Lord in helping his neighbors. When M. Burauck finished his story, I had tears in my own eyes - for the terrorized children, for the noble priest, and for the hope of a future in which the ideal of a genuine brotherhood of man would become universal. If only we would carry over into peacetime the kind of conduct which some people had learned to do under the pressure of wartime - man helping fellow man.

*date*

From the replacement depot at Namur, I was sent on permanent assignment to the 9th Infantry Division, part of the Third Army, under the command of General George Patton. Ninth Division headquarters was located in Bavaria, Germany, in a small town called Wasserburg-am-Inn. This was not far from Hitler's redoubt at Berchtesgaden, the famed Eagle's Nest on top of the mountain, from which he could look out for miles over Austria, his birthplace, and the Italian Alps. It was a view which



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nourished his megalomania, and the first time I stood in the frame of his glass-less picture window, 25 feet long and 15 feet high, in this bomb-blasted house, I could understand why it was his favorite place.

As soon as I was settled in and became familiar with my basic divisional duties, I turned immediately to the motor pool, to make the acquaintance of those whose help I would need to carry out a plan I had made. Sure enough, I found the one man who could provide me with everything - trucks, drivers, gasoline, and paperwork to legitimize all the above. He was a master sergeant from Pennsylvania, a caring Jew, who listened to my story and immediately, unequivocally promised me the world. He hated Nazis, knew enough about the torture of the Jews, and wanted to do anything he could to help the survivors.

My plan was fairly simple: I wanted a small fleet of 6-bys to patrol the back roads of Bavaria, especially the long deserted roads through the heavy forests, around the many lakes from Munich south to Garmisch-Partenkirchen. The purpose of the patrols was to pick up any Jewish refugees wandering these roads in order to bring them to safety and care. This section of southern Bavaria was a hiding place for two kinds of people - one, our refugees, who had made their way to this area after escaping from Nazi convoys or forced marches, or after being liberated from camps by Allied soldiers and had no other place to go except the forests; and two, Nazi fanatics seeking to escape capture by the Allies. They called themselves Edelweiss, after a

local flower, and roamed the woods, coming out to perform acts of sabotage against Ninth Division troops and vehicles. Our jeeps were usually driven with the windshield folded down onto the hood, so that the machine gun mounted between the two front seats could have a free field of fire. Thus the driver and gunner both were out in the open, so to speak. A favorite Edelweiss trick was to string piano wire very tautly across the road at exactly the height of a seated man's neck. At 50 miles per hour, that wire hitting the right spot could decapitate, and sometimes did. The order was given, after several such episodes, forbidding the folding down of windshields. These Edelweiss Nazis were dangerous, not only to American soldiers, but even more so to unarmed refugees.

What I wanted to do was to organize a deliberate search for Jewish survivors, and not wait until they would find their way to some town or village, or probably perish in the woods. It was not a military mission, so there was no way in which I could simply ask the divisional transport officer to provide vehicles and personnel. Therefore it was an underground operation of sorts, depending on that crucial sergeant, who dug around among his friends looking for volunteer drivers, who manipulated his records so that a certain number of trucks were always off the duty roster, "in repair" as he so conveniently arranged, and who always had some drums of fuel available by some sleight-of-hand.

One by one I took the drivers out on trial runs, teaching them how to ask the ragged people they saw wandering on



the roads if they were Jewish, what concentration camps they had been in, what countries they came from originally, in what towns they were born, and to speak some Hebrew words, especially from familiar prayers like the Shema or the Kaddish. It was all rather delicate, but had to be done, because the favorite disguise for an SS man trying to evade arrest was to assume the identity of a Jewish refugee. Another type of problem arose from the vast number of slave laborers milling around in Germany. When the war ended there were approximately ten million slaves on German soil, who had been working in factories, on farms, on railroads, thus freeing German men for military service. These people were now free and wanted to go home. The organization of their repatriation was undertaken by the army, which, in addition to all its other duties, assumed this burden of civilian relief and rehabilitation. Nine and one-half million French and Danes and Belgians and Poles and Russians and dozens of assorted other nationals were sorted out, restored to better health, given some money, and trucked or trained home within months. It was an incredible job, another feather in the army's cap, another typically American act of goodwill and human kindness. Some of these people did not want to go home, fearing reprisals from their fellow citizens on the charge of cooperating with the Germans. And the best way to avoid being sent home to the Ukraine or Lithuania or even France was to hide among the Jewish refugees who had no home to which to be repatriated, and instead were being gathered in camps in Germany, under Allied supervision,

awaiting a final disposition of their fate. These were called Displaced Persons camps, and the inhabitants were called DPs. So, when it came to searching the roads and forests of southern Bavaria, to pick up Jews and bring them to safety, one had to be careful of Nazis and collaborators who were trying to slip into the Jewish net. How ironic.

In the ensuing weeks we picked up hundreds and hundreds. Some were adults, gaunt, sick, weak, in rags, listless, the fire of life all burned out, not caring what was happening to them. We were merely men in uniforms who were putting them in trucks, and for them that was all too familiar. For all they knew, we might be Nazis who had learned a few words of Hebrew with which to trick them. They knew they could not resist uniforms and trucks, so they climbed in to another unknown fate. These were the most tragic, for they were so traumatized as to be unaware that they were now in caring, even loving hands.

Some were children, ten or twelve years old. I once saw two such, a boy and girl, walking slowly along a farm road, filthy, clothes in tatters, holding hands, not talking. As our truck approached, and they saw we were slowing down, they started to run, jumping off the road into a ditch, he pulling her with all his strength, which wasn't much, across a plowed field, zigging and zagging as though searching for a place to hide. I walked, rather than ran, trying to indicate by stance and gesture that I did not intend to capture them, but was a friend. Gradually the distance between us narrowed, they tired and slowed



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down, finally we met. They held hands again, as though to go together to whatever lay in store. I told them my name, and asked theirs. They did not know. Nor did they know where they were born, how old they were, what camp they had been in, or how long they had been on the road. They were completely amnesiac. Eating the bread I gave them, they followed me back to the truck, to be hugged and kissed by the burly soldier-driver who was crying because these kids reminded him of his own who were home safe and sound.

Whether adults or children, the main problem to be solved was where to put them after we found them. There were many DP camps in the neighborhood - Foeurenwald, Feldafing, St.Ottilien, and other smaller ones - and we put as many as possible in the already established camps. But they were all filling up very rapidly, for Munich, the capital of Bavaria, was the destination of choice for refugees from all over Germany and Austria. So the real trick was to find new places. Mind you, we were not looking for mansions, but simply any place with four walls and a roof. Three walls would do, also. The smaller towns and villages were not so badly bombed. A large barn would do for 100 people. A small hospital building would be fine for 200. I remember once coming upon a Rathaus, a city hall, not grand nor large, but intact, and possessing a heating system that worked. I estimated that we could fit 300 people if we threw out all the German clerks and all the filing cabinets, and turned the entire structure into a dormitory. There were two lavatories in working

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order, and that would do.

I strode into the mayor's room, in an aggressive attitude, drew my Colt, slammed the butt hard on his desk, and informed him in my best Yale College German that this place was now requisitioned by authority of the American Army, and I wanted it empty and perfectly clean by 8 o'clock the following morning. The speech ended with another bang of the Colt. Period. It was exactly the right posture. He started to protest, thought the better of it, merely asked meekly what he was supposed to do with his personnel and records, and I answered over my shoulder on my way out that this was his problem, not mine. At 8 the next morning, his staff of about 20 was lined up in front of the building which was totally empty inside and immaculately clean. My crowd of about 100 ragged unruly refugees jumped off the trucks and surged into the Rathaus which was thoroughly dirty before the next 8 a.m. arrived. Never mind - this was to be home, and they would soon overcome the recent bad years and begin to live a civilized life once again.



## CHAPTER TWO

### Section 3

*entire nation would*

The process of sorting out the mass of civilian refugees and ex-slave laborers was accepted by the army as its responsibility, but in order to carry it out effectively a new G-branch had to be created and added to the traditional four. The army, in general, was organized as follows:

G-1 in charge of PLANS

G-2 " INTELLIGENCE

G-3 " TRAINING

G-4 " SUPPLIES

And now a new G-5 " CIVILIAN ADMINISTRATION.

Most people do not think of an army as a flexible instrument. Conventional notions think of it as rigid, bureaucratic, impersonal, heartless, a large behemoth necessary to protect a nation, but otherwise useless. The United States Army in Germany right after WW II showed a different face altogether - actually a humanitarian face, in which it tried its best to relieve the misery of these ten million whose care it had suddenly assumed.

G-5 sorted people by nationality, organized transport to take them home, provided food and shelter while complicated logistical operations were planned, used the time to provide medical repair where feasible, and generally acted like a huge Red Cross instead of an armored fortress. G-5 also cared for the

Jews who were not being repatriated anywhere, but slowly began to accumulate in a holding pattern, and were placed wherever room could be found. The most immediately available locations were former prisoner-of-war lagers, where the Germans had kept vast numbers of Russians whom they had captured in battle. The condition of these camps was horrible, for the Nazis were particularly brutal in their handling of Russians. Geneva Convention regulations concerning prisoners certainly did not apply. The Russians slept on straw strewn on concrete floors, latrines were almost non-existent so that human waste collected in the same place where human beings ate and slept. As DPs were put into such quarter, an effort was made to clean them up, but at the beginning it was still very bad, and took months before the DPs themselves improved their own conditions.

When the war ended, there were about 35,000 Jews alive on German soil, according to an exhaustive survey made by the indefatigable Chaplain Abraham Klausner, who started his count at Dachau and continued throughout the American Zone. By a year and one-half later there were a quarter-million Jews in 64 camps in Germany and Austria. The administration and management of this population grew as the numbers increased, until there were five different elements working together in a remarkable harmony.

The over-all picture began with G-5, which was the general supervisory body. The Army provided food - 2000 calories per day per registered person. People died, people ran away - the registered list in every camp never went down, always up, as new



transports arrived and were somehow squeezed in. The dead and departed fed the living a tiny bit better.

The second layer was UNRRA, United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration. They provided a civilian to be camp director, and he or she often had several staff members. The UNRRA officials lived outside, but had their offices in the camp and worked there every day. They handled the daily administration, and in a large camp of 5000 or more persons, there was always a long line outside the director's office with problems to be solved. The top director of UNRRA was first Governor Herbert Lehman and later Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, who once made a survey tour of the camps in Germany, and whom I heard addressing a mass meeting in one camp in fluent Yiddish. I came to know well the director of Camp Schlachtensee in Berlin, Mr. Harold Fishbein, a brother of Dr. Morris Fishbein, the well-known former head of the American Medical Association. He was an exemplar of the best that could be hoped for in a United Nations bureaucrat. He really cared for the people in his charge, walked among them throughout the large encampment, joked with them, knew many by name, broke rules for their sakes, presided at circumcisions, performed marriages in a civil capacity. He told me once that he actually had a peculiar feeling working inside of himself all the time that he was the father of all the inmates.

The third layer consisted of professionals and social workers supplied by the AJDC - American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee- popularly known as the "Joint". These personnel were

attached to local offices of the Joint which were opened in various German cities, and assigned to nearby camps for specific purposes. They also opened warehouses of food and clothing, supplying a supplementary ration of 1200 calories per day per registered person. Thus the DPs each received 3200 calories which brought them back to health rather quickly. The social workers were valuable in helping to restore psychological balance, and the medical workers healed the physical wounds and ailments.

The fourth cadre came from Palestine, under the banner of the JAFP, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, which was, in effect, the underground government of the Jewish population living under the rule of the British. They brought no food or medicine, but came with school books, and song books, and maps, and a richness of stories about the Land of Israel which was deeply embedded in the souls of these homeless victims as the end goal of all their suffering. The men and women of the JAFP brought that spiritual presence, that flesh and blood reminder of a homeland which would come into existence and would welcome them into safety and happiness. The Palestinians organized a school system, became the teachers inside the camps, and because the matters of security were uppermost in their minds even then, they also organized an internal police force in each camp, with bicycles, arm bands and billy clubs. Morale rose, Hebrew began to be heard in the central square, old memories of pre-war Zionist speeches flooded back, the future began to assume a focus.

The last layer of governance came from the DPs



themselves, who elected a council with a chairman. This was the grass-roots local government, which considered itself authorized to speak on behalf of the people, and it did. If a holiday was approaching, the cultural officer of the council would call in the JAFP person to make certain that songs were being prepared, and the Joint person, to ask for some special holiday food, and the Unrra director to ask for help in building a platform for the camp orchestra. The local council felt no hesitation in asking for anything from anybody. After all, had these DPs not suffered enough? Nothing was too good for them.

Outside the camps, a national council was formed, tying together all the local governmental bodies, and serving as their Cabinet, so to speak. I first met these individuals in a large house at 3 Siebertstrasse in Munich, which someone had requisitioned from the German owners. It was an impressive, spacious, relatively intact building. Many of the wooden floors had been torn up and burned in the fireplaces in order to survive during the fiercely cold last winter of the war, but gradually it was repaired. All sorts of people were living in that house, which was, in actuality, the Jewish HQ of this heavily destroyed chief Nazi city. The first official of the Joint arrived with an empty knapsack, and bedded down near one fireplace; some DRT people drifted in; I occupied a corner when I needed to sleep for a few hours; and, of course, miscellaneous local camp council officials who had come to Munich to consult with the national council.

That was not its name, and herein lies a tale. The first time I met with those dozen gentlemen, sitting around a big table in the sun-parlor of our mansion, they were debating the name. The discussion was Talmudic, because the entire dilemma revolved around the nuances of two words - "in" and "of" - and the thrust of the discussion was political-ideological. Two suggestions were on the table regarding the name. Should we call ourselves, said they, CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF LIBERATED JEWS OF BAVARIA; or CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF LIBERATED JEWS IN BAVARIA. And one could sense immediately what the crucial difference was. If they were of, that signified they were planting roots, establishing an origin, becoming part of; whereas if they were merely in Bavaria, that indicated a temporary status, en route to somewhere else, and clearly denied any geographic loyalty. Obviously the in won the day, and the official name was born.

The Central Committee, or Cabinet as it thought of itself, then proceeded to assign portfolios, and Dr. Zalman Grynberg, or was it, Dr. Samuel Gringaus (memory fails) was elected the first chairman, or Prime Minister. Mr. Leon Retter became Foreign Minister, because that 24-year old spoke the best English, and therefore he could handle all the relations with the G-5 branch of the army. Retter and I became friends that day, and many years later I invited him to the U.S. to join me on the staff of the UJA. By then his name had become Aryeh Nesher.



## CHAPTER TWO

## Section 4

After a long day of cruising the roads and picking up several loads of weary and frightened wanderers, I found myself in a small village named Bad Tolz, in southern Bavaria, in the foothills of the Alps, with a storm brewing. There was an inn at which I had stayed once before, and even though I was alone, still I felt secure enough staying there again, for I was terribly tired and did not feel like driving 100 kilometers through a snowstorm. I recite these particulars as background to the mystery of how she found me, the answer to which I never did discover. All I know is that early next morning I was summoned from my warm fluffy comforter to the telephone at the desk downstairs.

A woman's voice, low and inviting, asked if she had the right person. Was I the 9th Division chaplain who had been picking up the DPs and bringing them to shelter? At whose orders had I been doing this? Who was paying the inevitable expenses? Was my commanding officer aware of what I was doing? The flood of questions threatened to continue indefinitely, so I interrupted to ask in a formal tone who she was, how she had found me, and what did she want? She answered nothing, as I had, thus we were at a standoff. It was hers to break, if she wanted, and she did. She asked if I would come to meet her in Room 203 of the Royal-Monceau Hotel in Paris, near the Etoile, at my earliest

convenience. An invitation as specific as that did not require extensive deliberation, particularly since I loved Paris with all its delights, and could use a couple of days of leave. I told her I would come, but it would take a day to return to my HQ, get permission and the necessary written orders, and I would have to let her know the exact day of my arrival. She said she would be there, waiting for me, and the way she said it left me in no doubt that some adventure was in the offing.

Three days later I knocked on her door, and when she opened it, one type of adventure left my mind immediately. She was middle-aged, plain yet serious, with the bearing of someone who has been through many experiences in life, somewhat tough, and all business. She did not invite me in, but rather brusquely asked to see some identification, and when she was satisfied, beckoned me across the threshold, at which she held me with a gesture. She took a deep breath and asked whether I would agree to work with "them". When I asked who "they" were, she answered in just one word "Haganah".

Perhaps once in a lifetime, or certainly very rarely, one is confronted with a question containing enormous consequences, opening a path whose course is absolutely unknown, for a duration unmeasured, with rewards or penalties undescribed, dangers and glories obviously inherent but undefined. How to answer the question? No data is offered with which to assess the consequences, yet one must give a reply. Here was revealed the adventure I had sensed lay in the invitation. Thus, the reply



would have to come from the deepest depths of my heart and mind. All the ideals on which I had based my life and career and deeds up to now had to guide me, and immediately. This species of question did not permit equivocation. Delay or hesitation were tantamount to refusal. Acceptance had to be instantaneous, if it was to be taken as sincere and self-confident. Not knowing what in the world I was getting into, my gut told me to say yes, and so I said.

Still holding me at the threshold with a gesture, she crossed the salon, knocked on a door at the far end, and escorted back toward me a short man, wearing a massive shock of white hair, sprouting from his large balding head in all directions. He was wearing an old sweater, khaki trousers and house slippers. She told him that I would work with them, he offered me one vigorous handshake with a verbal thank-you, turned and retired through that door at the far end. The next time I saw him was more than a year later. Now the mood changed. She invited me to take off my heavy greatcoat, to sit down, relax, have a coffee and she would explain everything to me, including the specific details of the assignment to which I had just committed myself.

Her name was Ruth Kluger, which she later changed, when the Palestinian Jews started taking Hebrew names in place of their Central or Eastern European Jewish ones, to Ruth Aliav. Aliav was an abbreviation of the phrase Aliyah Bet (b and v are interchangeable in Hebrew) meaning Immigration #2. This was the so-called illegal immigration of Jews who were smuggled into

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Palestine against British regulations, which granted only a very limited legal immigration, to appease the Arabs. What the British allowed legally would take a hundred years to empty the DP camps, so the Haganah, which was the military arm of the Jewish Agency, had established a department to evade the British and bring Jews in illegally. Legal was Aliyah Aleph (#1) and illegal was Aliyah Bet (#2). Since Ruth had spent many years of her life working on Aliyah Bet, she decided to take that phrase as her very name.

Who was the little man with the white hair? His name was David Ben Gurion, and he was the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, no less. The commander of the Haganah, Mr. Moshe Sneh, was in the next room with him and they were working on operational plans. The two of them were here in Paris to avoid arrest by the British who had been transporting large numbers of high Agency and Haganah officials to prison camps in Rhodesia and elsewhere. The Royal-Monceau Hotel was British headquarters in Paris, and a full-sized British flag hung over the entrance. These two were pulling off a "Purloined Letter" stunt, hiding themselves, in disguise when they ventured out, right under the British nose.

The basic plan for Aliyah Bet was in two parts - first, to gather as many Jews as possible from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, including those places far beyond the Ural Mountains in Asia, where Russia had provided refuge for many Polish Jews, and to bring them all to the West, which meant the Allied Zones of Germany and Austria. Here the DP camps would be



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established and here the people would wait until some major political decision would give Palestine its independence as a Jewish State. Then they would be taken home immediately - no Aleph or Bet - just an open door.

The second part of the plan was to take some number out of the camps, and move them southward to Mediterranean ports in France and Italy, from which Haganah ships would take them to the coast of Palestine. Not everyone could do this route, filled as it was with hardship, and requiring physical strength to cross borders illegally. This second part was more complex, difficult and fraught with danger than the first part. But there was no sense in moving masses of people westward to Germany, unless one also tried to move some southward and make a break for home across the Med.

For the first part, two routes were being set up - a northern and a southern. The northern terminus was the Polish border town of Stettin, about 150 miles northeast of Berlin. On trucks, wagons, trains, and on foot the Jews would stream toward Stettin, shepherded, nourished, maintained by a small band of incredibly dedicated Haganah men and women. In Stettin, there were holding facilities for several thousand at a time, but if there were not a steady stream out, i.e. across the border into Germany, Stettin would soon become a mess, and the blockage would work itself backward all the way to Uzbekistan. The whole key to the success of the northern route, keeping it open, was the steady movement of thousands going across into Germany. But there

was one hitch. Germany had been divided by the Four Powers into Four Zones, and the Russians had been given the northeastern Zone, next to Poland, so that Stettin was on the border between Poland and the Russian Zone of Germany. The Russians were notoriously difficult about anyone crossing their borders illegally, and this was one of the main problems bothering Ben Gurion and the Haganah.

Here is where Ruth Kluger came to the point with me. The Haganah wanted me to take over the route from Stettin into Berlin and get it moving in a steady flow up to 10,000 persons per month. If they could count on that, they would be better able to organize the long chain backward as far east as Central Asia. It was an awesome request. But I had committed myself, so now it was only a question of a plan and some details. She had already given some thought to both these items.

I would have to get myself transferred from the Ninth Division to Headquarters, Berlin Command. Luckily the chaplain currently in Berlin, Joseph Shubow of Boston, was going home. This gave me the opportunity to base my request for a transfer on the fact that Berlin could not be left without a Jewish chaplain. The city was divided into four zones, each administered by one of the Allies. But aside from the Americans, no one of the other three had such an officer. The Russians, as a matter of ideology, had political commissars, not clergymen; the British had only one rabbi for their entire zone of Germany, and did not post him to Berlin, but rather to their own Hq in Hanover; and the French had



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so very few Jewish chaplains in their entire army that I don't think they had even one in their entire zone. There were about 2000 Jewish personnel in Berlin, in all four commands, and it was up to the abundantly-supplied Americans, as usual, to provide this particular service to all four armies. One Jewish chaplain, an American, for the entire Allied Kommandatura. On that basis, it would not be difficult to arrange my transfer.

Chaplain Shubow, earlier on, had managed a small miracle, namely, to find in 90% totally destroyed Berlin a house with an intact roof, and all walls standing. It was in Dahlem, in a fine residential district, in the American sector. He requisitioned it as the official Jewish Chaplain Center, and it continued to serve as the heart and soul of the Jewish military and tiny civilian community for many years. Kluger's plan was that I should take that house over, and the Haganah would send to me 12 Palestinian soldiers from the Jewish Brigade, which had fought valiantly in Italy beside the British and was now bivouacked in Belgium because the British did not wish to have 30,000 well-armed, experienced Jewish fighting men return to Palestine at that very moment when the British were clearly leaning toward the Arab side and doing everything possible to appease them. The Brigade men were twiddling their thumbs in Belgium, so any dirty dozen of them would be delighted to get into this underground Haganah operation.

I was to arrange my house so these men could eat and sleep there; provide false DP papers for them, which we could do

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nicely, for we had an excellent forging operation in the second basement; hide their British uniforms and pay-books in exchange for ragged DP clothing; and see to it that they worked at night and slept during the day, so they were not on the streets, vulnerable to chance inspection. All this was possible because of a wonderful DP husband and wife team, Mr. and Mrs. Leo Bierstein, a former furrier from Lodz, who became my housekeepers and were marvelously efficient and calm under the terrific pressure.

I was to arrange for a half-dozen GMC 6-bys to be in the back yard of the house, with enough gas tickets for unlimited mileage, and a couple of good mechanics always to be at our disposal. All of this I had learned well to do back in Bavaria. No problem - it simply meant stealing. The plan was to leave Berlin around dusk with two Brigade men in each truck, taking turns driving and riding shotgun. There were several Bren and Thompson sub-machine guns in each truck, as well as carbines and Colts. This sounded a bit melodramatic, but the fact is that we were driving about 200 kilometers from Berlin to Stettin, through Russian territory, and 200 kilometers back, all in darkness, and we were a vulnerable target, carrying a fortune of money every night. Anyone watching us knew that our route never varied, so it would be simple to set up ambushes.

Leaving Berlin at dusk, snaking through back streets of the city until we got on the open road, we usually arrived at the Stettin border-crossing point around midnight. The delicate negotiations at that bridge, the pay-offs, the obligatory vodka



or two as a toast to seeing each other tomorrow night, and the loading of 50 people in each truck, together with the haggling about the baggage, because we preferred people to those bags and bundles, yet we understood how each bundle represented a person's entire worldly goods - all this took an hour. And then back on the road with our precious cargo of 300 persons, wrapped in blankets, tarpaulins tightly tied, heading toward the French sector of Wedding in Berlin, where we would arrive just before dawn, at an apartment block we owned. Food, shower, DDT powder, cot and sleep the day away was the regimen for the weary, who would take yet many more days to unwind and begin to taste the real freedom which was now theirs. Back to the Chaplain Center and the same regime (minus the DDT) for drivers and gunners. In the course of less than a year we pulled 90,000 people through the Stettin-Berlin route.

Two important aspects require explanation - the reference above to "a fortune of money"; and the question of what we did with the accumulation of people once they were safely in Berlin. The currency of choice all over Europe at that time was a package of cigarettes. Under the arches of the Brandenburg Gate, in the heart of Berlin, the black market flourished and established trading values. The pack of cigarettes was stable at \$15, or \$150 per carton. At the army Post Exchange (PX), a carton cost 70 cents and GIs were allowed one carton per week. A soldier who did not smoke, could buy his carton, sell it, take the \$149.30 profit to the Army Post Office, buy a money order and

mail it home to his wife or mother. After doing this for a year a private would have \$7500, about 30 times as much as his base pay for the same year. The price for one Jew at the Stettin border was one carton of cigarettes. At the rate of 300 per night, we were talking about \$45,000 per night. The task of gathering that many cigarettes strained every brain and nerve. There were some dedicated soldiers who helped, circulating among their comrades and bringing in hundreds of packs every day. The soldiers who contributed out of their weekly ration were among the most generous donors our people has ever had. My father was collecting among his friends back home, and I was receiving many mail sacks full every week. I was also receiving visits from army postal inspectors asking about these hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of "gifts from home". They were perplexed because I was not selling on the black market, nor buying money orders. My father, bless him, was reading all the stories about the black market, and only once did he write, saying that he was not going to ask me what I was doing with the cigarettes, because he was certain I was not violating any laws, civil or religious. But in spite of all the efforts, including collections within the DP population itself, there was no way we could keep abreast of the daily need. The Haganah gave me huge amounts of cash, and I would sometimes go into the black market to buy. The situation eased only when the port of Antwerp opened, the first in Europe after the war, and shiploads of supplies began coming in. The JDC sent all the cigarettes we needed, and I began to receive freight-car



loads. Then we breathed easier, knowing that there might be all kinds of obstacles yet to overcome, but lack of the bribe payments would no longer be one.

As for the second matter I raised earlier, we were under constant pressure to arrange egress, at least in a quantity sufficient to match ingress. There were two camps in Berlin, one in the southwestern part of the city, in a large former prisoner-of-war camp called Schlachtensee, housing about 7000, and a second on the edge of Tempelhof Airfield, in city center, housing about 3000. Thus we could hold 10,000 DPs in the city at any one time, and that was maximum. Oh, yes, under duress we could squeeze in another 1000. Once that maximum was reached, every load of 300 we brought in at dawn had to be matched by 300 who were sent out by nightfall. We were not faced with the necessity of organizing a shipment out every day, but at least twice a week we had to send a convoy of 1000 people, by truck or train, southwest to the American Zone. Berlin, after all, was an island in the middle of the Russian Zone. To leave Berlin, in any direction, one had to pass a Russian control point. We passed one across from Stettin, coming in, and we had to pass one at Helmstedt, going out. Here, bribes did not do the trick. Paperwork was needed, showing a destination, and equivalent papers from the American side, allowing them in. Most of the papers were forged in the Chaplain Center in Dahlem. Many times convoys were turned back, but by the middle of 1946, following a decision by President Truman, the dramatic circumstances

surrounding which I shall describe later, there were no problems in entering the American Zone. Once in, the people were brought by Haganah and Jewish Agency personnel to one camp or another where they could be squeezed in, or more likely to some new camp being opened to accomodate them or compatriots arriving in Munich through the southern route via Czechoslovakia and Austria. Thus the number of camps increased to a total of 64, containing 250,000 Jews. That was the height.

Additional room in the American Zone was available as groups were organized and moved down to the small ports on the French and Italian coasts where the Haganah ships came in to pick them up for the heart-breaking run to Palestine. Of the 60-something Haganah vessels, 57 were captured by the British and the refugees taken to a British prisoner camp set up on the island of Cyprus, which held, at its height, more than 60,000 men, women and children. Their suffering and despair, both mental and physical, was compensated for in a manner which only the tide of history could provide. When the State of Israel was declared on Friday afternoon, May 14, 1948, the first ship to arrive on Saturday evening, May 15, came from Cyprus, only 8 hours away.



## CHAPTER TWO

## Section 5

Aside from the overwhelming sense of changing history by participating in this tremendous migration of a whole people across continents, I shared many other episodes and events which were the realizations of earlier dreams. When I looked back at those earlier years in which I yearned somehow to have a hand in the destiny of my people, and then came forward to my activities in the present, I felt blessed and fulfilled. I knew other chaplains who complained of boredom in the performance of routine duties, yet when offered the challenge of joining in the adventures of shaping a nation, for I felt that was exactly what we were doing, demurred out of fear or lack of imagination. The inability to think in grand sweeps is one of the marks of mediocrity and ordinariness. Some are perfectly satisfied with being ordinary, but when one is dissatisfied and bored, no one can rescue him but himself. So many things were happening to me almost every day that the pace left me breathless, yet even more energized and motivated.

I remember preparing for the Passover Seder - the first Seder after liberation - what greater joy could there be than celebrating freedom from the Hitlerian madness. His thousand-year Reich had lasted exactly twelve, and the human race was free again. My mind swirled with the magic of the Jewish tradition, which was so tribal and particularistic on the one hand, and so

universal in its message, on the other. I thought that every person in every nation who had felt the lash of his tyranny must now feel like a Jew escaping from Egypt, and I thought that this first Seder in Berlin should be a tremendous affair, open to the whole human race. Since that might not be practical, at least let's take the biggest hall we can find and see how many that would hold. The Schoneberg Rathaus was the one. It was the city hall of the largest borough of Berlin. Almost two decades later President Kennedy was to speak to the vast crowd in the square below from the balcony of this same building. Its ~~main dining~~ hall would hold well over 2000 people. Since there were that many uniformed Jewish personnel alone, we hoped that some number would not attend, leaving room to invite some DPs, some German Jewish survivors who had returned to their home city, some non-Jewish military, and the very few German Christians who were clearly known to have been anti-Nazi and had helped Jews by hiding them.

It was a great gala affair, the vast hall decorated with the four Allied flags, the Jewish flag of the unborn State, flowers, banners, and filled with enthusiastic singing, even before the Seder began. We were overflowing with supplies, for I had received permission to take several trucks and men down to the main warehouse in Mannheim and load up with everything they had available. And the Army quartermaster-general had everything. We brought home kosher wine from Algeria, matzot from Palestine, gefilte fish in tins from the U.S., salami from Hebrew National, kosher chicken from the Jewish Welfare Board. And our mess



sergeant produced the most wonderful meal anyone had eaten in a long time. We had enough haggadahs to go around, everyone took part loudly and Hebrew was heard in many accents. The Russian Jewish fellows were the most boisterous, actually shouting and pounding the tables. Later I learned that for many this was the first Seder in their entire lives, a perfectly understandable fact when one thinks of the suppression by their government then. The uninhibited joy of the Russians was perhaps due to another fact altogether. I had invited all four commanding generals, by letter, followed by personal visit. And had invited each one to read a section of the Haggadah, and to make a short speech on any subject of his choice. All four had accepted. The head table was arranged with four special arm-chairs and the correct national flag, large-size. Three were occupied, and the three men made wonderful presentations. Major-General Kotikov was absent and his chair was empty, but his men were singing loudly. Freedom reigned.

An unusual, but not entirely unexpected event occurred in May in the camp at Landsberg, near the city of Augsburg. This camp was located in some buildings which were once a prison, where Hitler himself was incarcerated in 1924-25, during which he wrote "Main Kampf", and which were later a German Army barracks. The Jews living in that place had a well-organized existence, for the UNRRA director was sympathetic, the JDC and JAFP teams were cooperating well, the schools and camp police occupied the

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energies of a large number of people. Yet there was something in the air of that place, with its memories of Hitler's presence, which kept the peoples' nerves on edge.

One day a rumor swept through the camp, like a prairie fire out of control, to the effect that a 12-year old boy had somehow been spirited out of the camp into the nearby woods and killed by some Germans. The fires of rage and pent-up hatred exploded into a furious attack by hundreds of people who burst through the gates, poured into the small town, broke windows, overturned busses, started fires, beat up Germans on the street. The burgomeister called on the American Army for help, since it was the army's responsibility to maintain law and order, and the army did indeed exercise its crowd control tactics, albeit not with excessive force, and slowly forced the DPs back inside the camp fence.

Back and forth went the pushing and shoving - the Jews trying to break out and attack Germans; the army trying to keep them penned in; the Jews by now in the thousands; the army calling up some tanks and setting up some machine guns on tripods. The DPs started shouting such slogans as "American SS", "Nazis", "Gestapo", chanting in increasing volume and rhythm. The soldiers were fingering their rifles - the scene was filled with danger - a murderous riot could have caused dozens on deaths on both sides. The Jews made one more surge to break out; the army surged in and scooped up 30-40 people in the front ranks, cut them off from the mob, hustled them into trucks, slammed the



gates shut, locking them securely, and announced over the bull-horns that a thorough investigation would be made immediately to determine if, indeed, any child had been abducted or murdered.

As the crowd quieted down, still milling around the central camp square, and the army removed its weapons, the camp police began its own quiet search to determine what really had started the rumor. It soon located a family whose young son had slipped out of school, which caused the teacher to send a pupil to the family's room to inquire. The mother got hysterical and started to scream that her boy was missing. In fact, he had left the camp through a tear in the fence and gone into the woods "to be alone for a little while", as he later explained. As a matter of fact, while the rioting was going on at the front gate of the camp, a small search party looking through the woods at the back of the camp, found him and brought him back in. This fact became known only an hour or two later, when the situation had quieted down somewhat. By the end of the day, the camp population, nervous and exhausted, bedded down early, except for the families of those arrested and taken away by the army.

The army now had a two-fold problem on its hands: a nasty PR problem vis-a-vis the Jews; and a real maintenance-of-order problem vis-a-vis the German townspeople who had suffered loss of property and limb. The latter situation was turned over to the G-5 section, and was quietly settled through compensation. The former matter was much more sticky. The facts were that the Jewish DPs had rioted; they had made defamatory remarks against

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American troops; they had damaged civilian property; and among those arrested, there were several carrying knives, pipes and sharp sticks, all defined as weapons. There was no way to dismiss this without subjecting the army to criticism, both internal and external. Thus, it was decided to indict the 19 young men who were considered the most inflammatory and dangerous, and to release the others. So the famous Landsberg Trial began.

A media storm broke in the Jewish community papers in the U.S. Headlines blared: **NAZIS KILL JEWISH CHILD**

**JEWISH DPs RIOT AGAINST U.S. TROOPS**

**AMERICANS ARREST 19 JEWS**

#### **MILITARY COURT-MARTIAL BEGINS IN LANDSBERG**

A Congressman from Illinois, important on the Armed Services Committee, wrote to the War Department demanding that a fair trial be arranged, or he personally would fly to Germany and oversee the trial. Other politicians took up the cry. The Army knew it had a hot potato on its plate, and the pressure from Washington descended on USFET HQ (United States Forces in the European Theatre) in Frankfurt. The Commanding General of the Theatre was Joseph T. McNarney, a four-star air force general. He was intelligent, perceptive, fair, direct, straight. He had at his disposal a civilian Advisor on Jewish Affairs, with the simulated rank of major-general, which gave him the status necessary to deal with equally high-rank army officers. This Advisor was nominated by the five leading American Jewish national organizations, so he had the confidence of the Jewish



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establishment behind him, and appointed by the Secretary of War, so he also had the confidence of the military establishment. It was a carefully thought-out and successful mechanism for handling the delicate issues which arose constantly as between the Army and the DPs.

The newly appointed Advisor was the same Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein of Rochester who had previously served as director of the Chaplaincy Commission. He was a warm, outgoing person, astute in defusing crises, longtime Zionist, fellow graduate of the Stephen Wise Institute, one of the best civil servants the Jewish people could have put forward at that historic period. The top brass of the army loved him, as did the Central Committee, and everyone else with whom he dealt. He was a superb diplomat, and will figure prominently in the events of the next couple of years. General McNarney turned to him for advice on the Landsberg Trial, even though Bernstein had just arrived. Bernstein suggested two things: the Army should send a chaplain down to oversee the proceedings, with authority to implement any procedure which, in his judgment, would underline the army's fairness; and the Army should provide its very best lawyer to serve as defense attorney for the 19 at the court martial. As for candidates for these positions, Bernstein suggested I be sent down from Berlin to Landsberg, and also be given the assignment to search the Adjutant-General's office for the best lawyer. McNarney agreed to everything, and these arrangements were released to the press in Washington, which resulted in a much

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quieter mood. Sabbath said he would wait-and-see.

The president of the court of seven officers was a full colonel, the prosecuting officer was a nice Jewish fellow from Denver, Capt. Herman Gulkin, a baker by profession; the defense attorney was Capt. Abraham Hyman, the best the army had, the lawyer whose task was to review every death sentence passed by any court in the entire Theatre to make certain that it was proper and legal, a careful, meticulous and impressive man. The defendants were found guilty of carrying concealed weapons. The additional charges involving intent to harm were dismissed. They were sentenced to three months in prison, and Hyman pleaded cogently (as we had decided earlier, should they be sentenced) that they should not be placed in a military stockade with soldiers who might have a tendency to be unfriendly because of the epithets which had been shouted during the fracas, nor should they be placed in a civilian prison among Germans, but that they must be incarcerated separately in any building which the army controlled and could keep under guard.

The court agreed to this, and a run-down large manor-house was found not far distant, so their relatives could come from the camp to visit them. Long before the three months passed, the Haganah liberated them and spirited them away to Genoa, from which an illegal ship was shortly sailing for Palestine. Happy ending.



## CHAPTER TWO

## Section Six

Daily life in Berlin was crowded with innumerable demands, constant interruptions, unexpected crises, and everything was delicate, urgent, intricate. The atmosphere was supersaturated with the incredible events through which every person alive had just passed, and which made every person more than normally tense and fearful. Every problem would have fatal consequences if not solved immediately, so said every petitioner. One who had not suffered and endured the horrid Hitlerian dozen years could only appreciate from a distance what was fermenting in the memory and nervous system of those who had lived through it. We outsiders tried to empathize, but our efforts were really feeble, and we were shocked every time we heard the wish expressed, by someone who had made it alive through Aushwitz, that he or she couldn't handle life and would really rather have perished with all the others. All of our work to help re-establish strength, health and the physical aspects was, in the long run, less important than the recovery of spirit, hope and the will to start life again.

In line with this mood of capricious conduct, excitable excesses, melodramatic solutions, and a general sense of nervousness pervading the atmosphere, there are dozens of

episodes which could be cited, but three will illustrate sufficiently. Suddenly, of a morning, while I was still asleep from the night ride back from Stettin, some DPs burst into my room with the news that a lynching was about to occur in the camp at Schlachtensee. Someone had recognized a person as having been a Kapo in a Nazi labor camp. There is no term of greater opprobrium among Jews. Kapo is an abbreviation of "Konzentrationslager Polizei" - concentration camp police - and refers to those Jews who were assigned to duties inside the camp which served the purposes of the Nazis and therefore were often detrimental to the Jewish prisoners. A Kapo was often required to beat other Jews. A kitchen Kapo, who ladled out the daily soup ration to the line of prisoners, could ladle from the top of the pot, where the gruel was thin, or from the bottom, where he might draw a piece of vegetable or meat. He could thus show favoritism to one person or another, for which he could later be rewarded in some way or another. Some Kapos were actually sadists, who were selected for their work by the Nazis because of this very characteristic. All Kapos lived longer than any other prisoners, and some made it to the very end. Camp inmates hated the Kapos even more than they hated the Nazi guards, if that were possible. And so, it would happen occasionally that in the midst of the thousands in a DP camp, someone would recognize a former Kapo and in a matter of seconds a lynch mob would form to obtain blood revenge. Neither Unrra nor military officials viewed this mob rule with favor, for there was so much hatred just below the



surface of each and every victim, that it could easily get out of control and seek other targets once the Kapo's blood had whetted its appetite. I understood this, for I had once witnessed an event in a movie house, where the shout "Kapo, Kapo" arose in the middle of a screening, followed by "Here is the bastard, here..", and without further ado hundreds charged toward that spot, climbing over the seats, and pounded to death the alleged criminal. Within a few minutes it was revealed they had killed the wrong man.

In this present case, even with the blood lust unleashed, some saner head must have prevailed, for the Kapo had been taken to the director's office and I had been sent for. The scene shifted to my house, for I wanted to set up some semblance of a trial, away from the over-heated atmosphere of the camp. The trial did not take long. Many witnesses appeared, there was no question of mistaken identity; many others recited deeds and conduct over a long period of months which were sufficient to condemn; and the only matter remaining open was whether to turn him over to the U.S. Army for punishment, as I had suggested, or whether a committee of his peers would execute judgment. In almost all matters, the DPs would listen to me, for they counted me as friend and benefactor. In this case they listened politely to my suggestion, and unanimously shook their heads in the negative. Silently they took him away, and within the hour one of them returned to me to report his death by hanging. That night at supper in the mess hall, the announcement was made, and the crowd

started to sing "Hallelujah" - the traitor is dead.

Another episode, of another genre, yet typical in its own way, involved a soldier in the Red Army, name of Mark Shapiro, born in Kiev. Since I was the only Jewish Chaplain in Berlin, and all the Jewish servicemen in all four Allied armies were welcome at my Chaplain's Center, it was a well-known fact that soldiers in Russian, British and French uniforms, as well as American were to be seen coming and going from my house at all hours, especially on weekends. We held Friday night services in the house, whose central reception rooms could accomodate about 150 seats. We also held a Friday night buffet supper after services, and beginning early Friday afternoon lots of soldiers began to stream in, to help with the setting up. There were always many vehicles parked around the house in the vacant lots which had once contained houses that were bombed away. There were, of course, MPs, Military Police, of all armies, for with this much traffic, there might be problems which only the MPs could settle. But, after a while, the MP surveillance became so routine, that these good fellows joined everyone inside, for they suddenly became curious to see what a Jewish Sabbath service was like, and what kind of good food these Jews ate. I stress the naturalness of the mood, for we used the crowds, the jolly singing, the milling around the tables, as a wonderful cover for other clandestine operations taking place in the two basements which never ceased - forging of papers, making up travel manifests for those DPs being shipped out, sorting DP mail,



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providing food and lodging for Haganah agents on the move. One of the more clandestine activities was the assistance rendered to Soviet soldiers who wanted to desert.

According to the Yalta agreement, the Russian Army was given the honor of entering Berlin first, and after some suitable time (I think it was six weeks) the other allied forces were allowed in. Berlin was an island inside the Russian Zone. The huge Reichschancellory Building was Hitler's headquarters in the center of the city, not far from the Potsdamer Platz on one side and the Brandenburger Gate on the other. The building was one of Albert Speer's masterpieces, symbolizing in its massivity and luxurious fittings the thousand-year-Reich which Hitler had created in his own and the Nazi imagination. Hitler's office was located here, arrived at after a hundred-meter walk along a corridor faced with marble, and niches every five meters in which a black-garbed SS man stood at rigid attention. Broad steps left the building toward the rear garden, which was very large and must have been beautiful. In one corner of this garden was the entrance to the 30-meter deep air raid shelter which was Hitler's final office and the scene of his suicide.

Inside the Chancellory, very deep down, was another air raid shelter, containing offices and living quarters, belonging to Hitler's Chief of the General Staff, whoever he was at the moment. When I arrived in Berlin this building was the very first place I visited. Fascinated and repelled by the evil, I wanted to see where Hitler lived and worked. I walked down that long hall

to his office, entered the huge room, and saw first an enormous chandelier which had apparently crashed down during a heavy bombardment, lying astride a 10-meter long marble table, which was itself smashed into fragments. Later I learned that Mussolini had given him this gift to serve as a map table, knowing that one of Hitler's favorite methods of terrorizing and ridiculing the aristocratic generals was to summon them to his map table, ask their advice as to the next strategic moves to be made in the war, and then scornfully telling them what he had decided, ordering them to carry out his commands. Many of them hated him, some plotted his assassination, but almost every one knuckled under and did his bidding, often knowing that it made no military sense whatsoever.

After sitting among the rubble for a long time, thinking of what he had done to the world and the Jews and his own Germany, I started to wander through other parts of the ruined building, and came to a broad circular staircase leading downward, with no end in sight. As I walked ever deeper, it grew darker and finally pitch black, and I began to have an eerie feeling that I was alone in a silent Nazi hell, from which retreat began to seem like a good idea. Suddenly a deep voice shouted "Stoi" and a bright light flicked on, right in my face, pinning me to the spot. The language and the flashlight equalled a human being, and I felt a certain relaxation. He turned out to be Sergeant Mark Shapiro, as nervous as I, for he had heard me walking around in the deserted building above, and taken me for



one of the multitude of lost and hungry men who wandered through the broken city looking for food or someone who could be murdered and robbed.

He was the Russian non-commissioned officer in charge of this building, had been here since the Russians first entered the city, and had made himself a comfortable billet way down in the shelter of General Wilhelm Keitel. To this remarkable place he now invited me, and it was a fairyland of luxury, tiled floors and carpeted walls, with water and electricity, real beds and a stocked refrigerator. We had vodka and tea and vodka and tea, sufficient to encourage an exchange of confidences and presents. He gave me a piece of Hitler's marble map table, which I have to this day, and I gave him my American Colt .45, which he did not retain very long, as you shall soon learn.

He started to come to the Chaplain Center more and more frequently. First it was Fridays, then he added Saturday morning and as he sat through the service memory began to feed his mood. In our many subsequent conversations, he would talk about his grandparents who told him what Jewish life was like before the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 outlawed religious education and practice. Being surrounded by so many Jewish soldiers of all nationalities, he developed a sense of Jewish identity which he admitted never having felt before. And then, one fine day, he said he wanted to come to America, but knew that would be impossible to achieve through any legal means, therefore had decided to desert, and asked if there was any way I could help.

His was neither the first such case, nor the last. We had worked out a system whereby we hid many people, not only soldiers, who needed a new identity. The best way was to bury them in the mass of DPs in either of our two camps, by giving them some old refugee clothing and a set of DP papers which would pass any scrutiny. I explained this to Mark, of whom I had become quite fond, and told him exactly what he should do. He was to come to the Chaplain Center, in uniform, anytime over a weekend, preferably when the crowd was at its height, and he would disappear into our cellar, emerging some days later as a DP, whenever we had a crowd of DPs in the house for some occasion or other, and he would leave with them, on their truck, and nobody would ever be able to find him among the thousands in the camp.

He agreed, but disobeyed, for which he paid with his life. He left his barracks one Friday night, but did not come to the Center. Instead, he went to a girl friend's house for what he knew would be a final evening, and he was unable to leave without seeing her. He was followed by GRU, without his knowing it. After several hours, he realized it was almost dawn, there would be no crowds at my house at that hour, he panicked, asked her if she had any old civilian clothes, and told her that he was going to my house. He walked out, was seized on the street by the Russian secret police, which she saw through the window. They took him away in a car, she got to my place several hours later, and told me the whole story through her tears. I found out two days later that he had been taken to a military prison, charged with being a

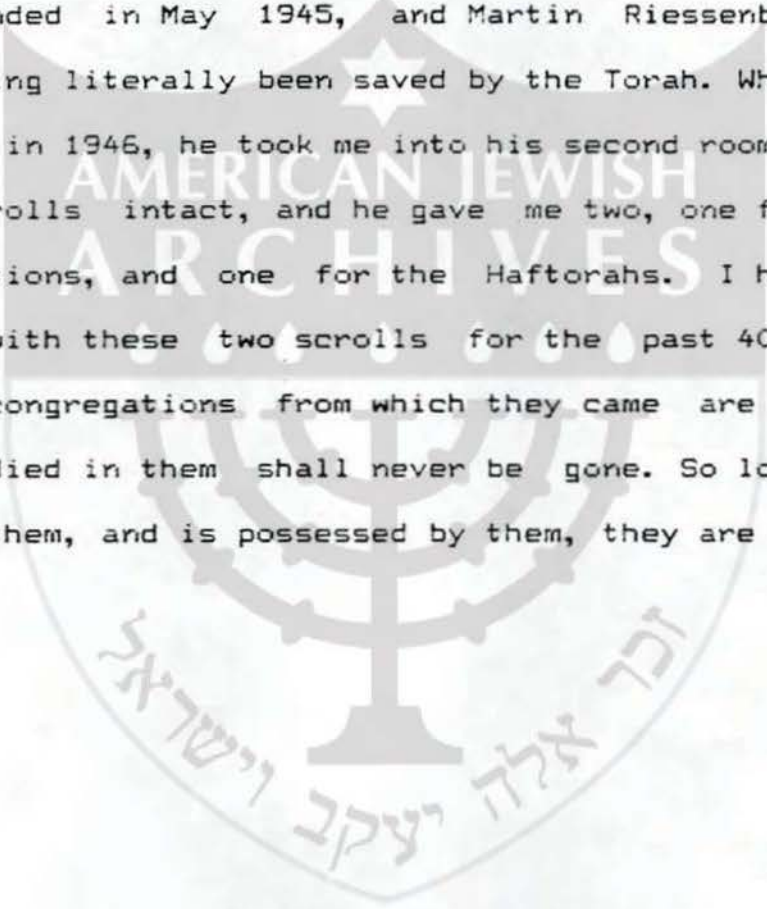


spy, because he was out of uniform, and being a potential deserter. He was shot.

A third strange and wonderful episode had a happier ending. A man named Martin Riessenburger had been the cantor at the Pestalozzi Street synagogue and had managed to elude the Nazis, through various means and helpers. By 1943, he was hiding underground in a mausoleum in the Jewish cemetery of Weissensee in East Berlin. He kept alive by coming out in the pre-dawn hour and scavenging for garbage, but the cold down in the tomb would kill him soon, as he related the story to me subsequently. One night, just before he thought he would perish, a miracle happened. As he was about to go forth on his foraging, he heard a truck approach the cemetery gate, raise its body and dump a load of something, run back and forth over the something several times. His first thought imagined it was a load of bodies. When he felt it was safe to come above ground and investigate, he saw it was a load of Torah Scrolls, some still clothed in their velvet covers, some naked. This was such a surrealistic sight that he thought he was hallucinating. Then he realized this was simply another Nazi insult and deligitimization of the Jewish people and their religion.

In a flash, he saw his salvation. Torah scrolls are written on animal skins. These skins could fend off the cold. They could keep him alive. Feverishly he began to pull the Torahs down into his hiding place. He managed to get scores of them before dawn broke. He knew that during the next day the remainder

up on the street would disappear. What he had would have to last until the war was over. And so they did. Wrapped in these skins, tearing them and shaping them into pieces to cover his arms and feet and tearing strips to tie the pieces around his trunk and limbs, he lived through two frightful winters of 1943 and 1944. The war ended in May 1945, and Martin Riessenburger emerged alive, having literally been saved by the Torah. When he told me this story in 1946, he took me into his second room, where I saw several scrolls intact, and he gave me two, one for the weekly Torah portions, and one for the Haftorahs. I have conducted services with these two scrolls for the past 40 years. He is gone, the congregations from which they came are gone, but the story embodied in them shall never be gone. So long as someone possesses them, and is possessed by them, they are eternal.





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## CHAPTER TWO

### Section 7

In the course of life, trends sometimes develop, which culminate in a climactic event, so shattering as to change the course of history. The sweep of movement shifts dramatically, and the observer need not wait for time and hindsight to provide the meaning of trend and event. At the very moment of happening, the observer understands that a sea-change is occurring. Such was the situation in Poland in mid-1946. The trend was a murderous anti-semitism which began immediately after the defeat of Hitler and claimed over 1000 lives in fifteen months; the climactic event was a pogrom in the town of Kielce on the Fourth of July 1946, which left 42 Jewish bodies neatly stacked like fire-wood around the fountain in the central square. It was a shock of such magnitude, as word spread throughout Poland, that a wave of flight to the safety of the West commenced within days, and we knew the course of history was changing before our eyes.

In order to see this phenomenon at closer focus, and to understand its implications for the U.S. Army in Germany, which was the destination of first choice, and would therefore receive the full brunt of a mass flight, Rabbi Philip Bernstein, the Army's Advisor on Jewish Affairs, and I, as his Aide, flew to Warsaw in the American Ambassador's plane one week after the Kielce pogrom. General Joseph T. McNarney, commander of the European Theatre, wanted a detailed report, with a prognosis of

what the Army must be prepared to handle. To anticipate our conclusions: 1. We found the small Jewish communities in a state of near-hysteria. People were leaving their flats and rooms without even attempting to take belongings; leaving their little shops or stores without locking the doors - just running.

2. Our estimate was that approximately 60,000 Jews might be expected to be in flight within the next 90 days, and the U.S. Zone of Germany should expect to receive that number.

3. A longer forecast should increase the total to 100,000, even to 150,000 within twelve months.

The chronology of our investigation brought us first to the American Ambassador, Arthur Bliss Lane, with whom we had two conversations, this one at the beginning, and another at the end of our trip. Warsaw was pitiful and pathetic in the nakedness of its destruction. Even Berlin was not as totally flattened. There was only one usable hotel in the city, the Polonia, and it was overflowing. Bernstein's rank had gotten us two beds; the Ambassador's rank plus the muscle of the U.S. Government had gotten him two whole rooms. Mr. Lane had a painful gout, and received us with his foot propped up on a hassock, his face in a grimace. He was helpful in briefing us on the background of events, and utterly unhelpful in terms of what the United States could and would do to press the Polish Government to control the murders of Jews sweeping the country.

He explained that the Polish government, leftist in character, was doing its best to stop the terror of almost daily



killings, but could not control its people who were blaming the Jews for having brought communism to Poland and many another Eastern European country, such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Rumania. The very manner in which he developed this thesis, his choice of words, tone of voice, nuances, all gave us the distinct impression that he understood and was sympathetic with what he called "the sense of outrage" of the Polish population. Yet he followed that up at once with a shrug and reference to "historic anti-semitism of Poland", so as to remove the implication that he was siding with the current murderers and their political motivation, by reminding us of ancient murderers, thus wrapping up the package neatly by summarizing Poland's eternal problem with her Jews. He did not say one single word which could lay him open to criticism. It was a polished diplomatic presentation which left us terribly uneasy, for it was clear that he did not intend to make any official protest or demarche.

When we stopped by at the end of our trip, to summarize the conclusions and recommendations we would make to Gen. McNarney, we tried once more to enlist his support in putting out the fire. Our argument this time was based on the difficulties to be faced by the Army, and we suggested, not so subtly, that the diplomatic branch should try to help the military branch. His rather abrupt reply was that he would not like to be in the General's shoes right now. It was very clear that he was washing his hands, saying that an internal problem in a foreign country was not the concern of the Department of State.

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Our next appointment was with the Prime Minister, Mr. Edward Osobka-Morawska, and several of his officials. He was very polite, urbane, impressed with the fact that an American General in Germany was concerned with the situation of the Jews in Poland and had dispatched us to investigate, but regretted that he could not add much to what we had already learned from Mr. Lane. He explained that there was a large underground movement seeking the overthrow of his government, and this movement was using Jew-baiting in the same manner that Hitler did when he sought to take control of Germany. This underground coalition consisted of Fascists, Russia-haters and similar groups. Their propaganda stated that the Jews were running the present communist government; that the great majority of the people hate this government; therefore, murdering the Jews would help overthrow the government. He was saying essentially the same thing as Mr. Lane, with the added twist that the fascists who were killing Jews were also his enemies, for they wanted his head also. And yet he could not stamp them out because, he admitted, they had lots of popular support. Of course, their propaganda was all lies, he said, because how could the Jews be said to be running the government when there were only three Jewish ministers out of a total of seventy. And so it was clear that no assistance could be counted on from the Polish government side. They were unhappy, but essentially paralyzed.

In a Catholic country the reigning Cardinal is not the least important public official, and may even be the most



influential man in the nation. With the thought in mind that Augustus Cardinal Hlond might be able to defuse the situation, we asked for and received an audience. It was not necessary to brief him in any detail, for he was quite familiar with facts and mood. After learning of the concern felt by the U.S. Army, he replied to our request in the negative. Our entire interview, held in his chancery, was conducted standing up. It was short, decisive, and entirely unresponsive to our needs. This tall heavy-set bull-necked man showed no sympathy, nor did he attempt to mitigate the harshness of his refusals by word or facial expression. No - he would not call in the leaders of the right-wing groups and ask them to instruct their followers to desist from their murderous path; no - he would not issue a pastoral letter to the clergy instructing them to condemn the murdering; no - he would not invoke the Papal Bull issued by Pius XII condemning anti-semitism as being anti-Christian. When we asked for some explanation of this very hard-line position, he said that the Jews had brought this situation on themselves by imposing godless communism on a God-fearing nation, and they deserved whatever punishment the Polish people were currently visiting upon them. He did not go so far as to say that Jews should be eliminated, but he approached that position very closely. The interview was over. We left deeply offended and depressed, but determined not to let the matter drop.

The end of this chapter took place two months later, in September, in the Pope's summer residence in Castel Gondolfo,

south of Rome. Bernstein and I were received warmly, graciously, sympathetically on a sunny afternoon by the same Pius XII who had issued the Papal Bull we had asked Cardinal Hlond to invoke. The Pope listened carefully, without interrupting, except for an occasional murmur of distress when we described something bloody or horrible. When we finished, he asked many questions, seeking to penetrate to the core of the matter, wanting to hear the responses of those we had interviewed, exploring the motives of the U.S. Army's willingness to receive all these Jews for an unknown number of years, and he continued until he was satisfied. He saved Hlond for last, and then said very simply that the Cardinal's conduct was unsatisfactory. Therefore, he, the Pope himself, would go over the Cardinal's head, and would issue the pastoral letter we had asked for. He would address every parish priest, giving moral instruction, and requiring that his letter be read in every church in Poland on the same Sunday three weeks hence, so that every church-going Pole would hear at the same moment his Pontiff's views forbidding pogroms against Jews. He commented on the shame that this should be happening more than a year after the world was rid of Hitler, and then asked us to accompany him to some French doors opening on to a balcony. There, below us, on a beautiful green hillside many children were playing - it looked like scores and scores. Pius then told us, with visible pride, that these were all Jewish children whom he and other priests had hidden and saved from Nazi death, and whom he was housing in his own palace until their future disposition



would be decided. It was a dramatic moment. And another dramatic moment developed some weeks later. After the pastoral letter was read, it was as though a blanket had been thrown over a fire and smothered it. The murdering ceased, and though the flight of the Jews continued and even accelerated, still no longer was blood being spilled.

One more curious interview during our trip through Poland is worth recounting. We went to see Yaacov Berman, the leader of the Communist Party, whose office, ironically, was in the most lavish baroque palace I have ever seen. Berman had spent the war years in Moscow, together with other leaders-to-be: Slansky of Czechoslovakia; Anna Pauker of Rumania; ? of Hungary; and others, all of whom were learning the trade of communist leadership which would be their vocation when the war was over. And here he was, ensconced. Our talk with him, conducted in Yiddish, did not involve putting out the murderous fire. Rather we asked for some technical assistance for the Jews in flight. He knew that the Haganah was managing the logistics, and he also knew how limited were their finances and other facilities. We thought that our conversation, Jew to Jew, in one of our own languages, would surely reach into his heart, so that if he had any concrete help he could offer, he would be perfectly happy to do so. Instead we got a blistering tirade of pure communist ideology, the essence of which was that these Jews must consider Poland as their motherland, must not desert her, should remain to help build a strong and successful socialist state - and if they

continued to flee, he would do everything possible to stop them, to the extent that he would make sure they left "nacket und borbess", naked and barefoot. And so did most of the scores of thousands arrive in Germany, not strictly naked, but almost, escaping from Berman, the murdering fascists, the indifferent Ambassador, the powerless Prime Minister, and the hating Cardinal. Shepherded by the caring Palestinians across barriers and borders, welcomed by the humanitarian Americans, they came in wave after wave, sometimes a thousand a day by train, sometimes fifty a day by truck, ever westward to safety, even though not to a clearly defined future.

We wanted to see the flight in operation before returning to Germany, and so flew to Lower Silesia, to a town called Nachod on the Polish-Czech border. During one long night we saw hundreds of refugees, harrassed and hounded, survivors of long years of terror or of work in frozen lumber camps in Siberia, boarding trucks, without baggage, without papers, hunkering down under the tarpaulins which were laced tight, parents holding their hands over the mouths of children, so that no accidental cry would escape, fear and fever in their eyes. A few encouraging words were whispered by the Haganah men, who went from truck to truck, checking the drivers, the weapons, the jerricans of fuel. The bribes were paid, the old tired engines coughed into life, and the convoy lumbered off into the darkness. It was heart-breaking and nerve-wracking to witness the indignity of this flight. These people, who had suffered so much and come



through alive, were once again assuming the role of the ever-wandering Jew. Germany would be safe, but only a way-station. When the wandering would truly end no one could prophesy, but we all knew that this flight was an in-gathering of people and strength whose will for a permanent solution in their own country could not for long be frustrated.

We flew back to Germany, wrote the final report, which received General McNarney's immediate approval, and found that yet one more flight was required. McNarney was sympathetic and was already mobilizing manpower and supplies to absorb the flood of refugees, but felt that higher political approval was necessary in order for him to keep the German border open. He suggested that Rabbi Bernstein fly to Washington, see President Truman and get the green light for an open border. No sooner said than done, and Bernstein was back in Frankfurt HQ within the week carrying Truman's letter of approval. A frenzy of activity followed, concentrating on a search for new locations, which had to be cleaned out, fitted with cots and kitchens and toilets, and the thousand details necessary to make life decent and clean. After the trucks crossed at Nachod, trains took the people west to Prague, east to Bratislava in Hungary, west again to Vienna, and thence to final stop in Munich, which became the center of a large Jewish population. By the time the whole movement wound down, around the middle of 1947, we had a quarter million Jews living in 64 camps in Germany and Austria. This was up from the original count of 35,000 on German soil two years earlier. It was

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a major migration, which foreshadowed all the later waves into Israel when that state was finally established.

After Rabbi Bernstein returned from Washington, he asked if I would come to Frankfurt HQ to serve as his aide, since the officer serving in that post, Chaplain Emanuel Rackman, was being demobilized. This same orthodox rabbi was later to become the famous President and Chancellor of Bar-Ilan University in Israel. I agreed, of course, honored to work with him at the very highest army level. It meant leaving Berlin, to which I had become very attached, leaving the DPs and the camp personnel and the Haganah "boys" and the JDC team - we had become a well-knit team managing two large camps and a steady flow from Stettin. All this would now become fond memory. One consolation was that my successor would be Chaplain Mayer Abramowitz, with whom I had shipped overseas, and whose spirit, enthusiasm and ability I knew to be first rate. Mayer (Mike) later became a JDC worker in a camp in Italy, married a lovely DP, and eventually wound up in Miami, where he has recently retired after a long and successful career.

From the vantage point of Bernstein's office, I could see the whole picture. Policy was set throughout the Theatre as a result of decisions made in our office. *insert another sentence about the Hyman* We worked with the major Jewish organizations from the U.S. and Palestine; mobilized a dozen new chaplains to ride the trains every day, offering comfort and security to the sometimes frightened refugees; visited the camps constantly to be aware of problems and to solve



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them; worked with the Central Committee, whose scope and name had expanded from Bavaria to encompass the entire American Zone. It was a rich experience, filled with enormous satisfaction, providing a feeling that one was really at the center of current post-Hitler history, which was about to take its next leap forward to Jewish statehood. I really felt fulfilled, that my earlier dreams had been realized, and that I was in a position to affect the future of my people.

I was enriched by the spirit of the DPs. They had a strength of spirit, a measure of courage which I had never seen before. They sang songs fiercely and proudly, as though to remind the world that they were alive and vibrant, therefore entitled to a political solution to their homelessness; and as though to remind themselves that they would not be forgotten, but would eventually be resettled in a homeland of their own. They were inspiring, and no matter how much any of us gave to them in the way of our efforts, we received tenfold more than we gave. I have been grateful all my life for the example which they gave of determination, faith in self, confidence, belief in man and, above all, the courage to believe, not to despair, but ~~set a goal and work toward it unceasingly.~~

~~to mitigate the harshness of his refusal~~

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Captain (later Major) Hyman lived in Frankfurt, while Rabbi Bernstein's simulated rank (Major General) entitled him to



a large villa in the neighboring suburb of Bad Homburg, a lovely wooded section in the foothills of the Taunus mountains. The house belonged to a general in the German Wehrmacht, who, at that moment, was living in prison. His wife and two daughters occupied the attic of their home. Part of Bernstein's family came over to live with him, and there was a room for me, which I happily accepted because it gave us more working time together. Bernstein skillfully used the house, and his large liquor ration, as a hospitality center, constantly inviting senior staff officers for evenings of feet-on-the-table discussions of what Jews were like, what were their hopes, what Zionism was all about, what the religion emphasized, what the basic notion of peoplehood meant. These low-key conversations, buttressed with cigars and drinks, aided by Bernstein's endless supply of stories and jokes, did more to explain to these senior generals the psychology and yearnings of the DP population than any number of pedantic briefings which usually left listeners half asleep. His approach reduced resistance, engendered support and sympathy, and made our fundamental job of interpreting the needs and wants of the DPs to the army infinitely easier. Bernstein was really a genius in his role.

Our work was that of middleman or broker, serving all sides in the complex calculus of sometimes conflicting and sometimes harmonious relationships between Army, DPs, international organizations, relief and welfare personnel, and governments. Overshadowing every other consideration was the

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elementary fact of political uncertainty as to the future of these refugees. There was a clear picture as to the present: passage into the American Zone, organized by the Haganah, was permitted; basic food, shelter and medical needs were being satisfied from an artfully constructed group of sources (Army, JDC, UNRRA, Jewish Agency); an umbrella DP supervisory organization, called the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Germany, was functioning; and there was an exiting movement from the American Zone southward to the coasts of Italy and France from which the "illegal" ships embarked toward Palestine. There was no clear picture as to the future. The only events to date were an investigatory commission under the chairmanship of Earl Harrison, which made a swing through the camps and took voluminous testimony as to what should be done; and a proposal by President Harry Truman that 100,000 Jewish DPs be transferred from the camps to Palestine as a humanitarian gesture, without prejudice to whatever might be the ultimate political solution. From the DP point of view, the former was just more talk, and the latter quickly became bogged down in diplomatic controversy with the British government. The future was bleak.

The major Jewish organizations in the U.S. understood all this very clearly. They were particularly sensitive to the mood of despondency in the camps, and were similarly alert to the wave of guilt passing through the American Jewish community which was now awakened to the scope and horror of the recent genocide, about which they had done little. Feeling the necessity to do



something to alleviate both moods, they organized the most prestigious mission ever assembled and sent it to Germany. The five members were:

Rabbi Stephen S. Wise - the top religious and organizational leader of U.S. Jewry, chairman.

Dr. Nahum Goldmann - Zionist and Jewish Agency

Mr. Jacob Blaustein - president, American Jewish Committee

Judge Philip Forman - Joint Distribution Committee

Mr. Isaiah L. Kenen - American Jewish Conference, founder of AIPAC.

The biographies and personal status of these men were sufficiently impressive to attract strong press attention, as well as to signal both the DPs and the Army that their statements and recommendations were to be taken with utmost seriousness. The strength of the delegation was intended to send a message to the DPs that American Jewry was solidly behind them and would do its best to achieve what they wanted - a free homeland in Palestine to which they could go openly, as of right. The delegation also brought a message of appreciation to the Army, which was very welcome. The Army, at its highest level, was sincerely and deeply involved in the effort to make life in the camps bearable, and was equally frustrated with the political stalemate which prevented a permanent solution. The American Army showed the very best side of American humanitarianism in its handling of a

civilian refugee situation, which was certainly not its basic mission and for which it was not trained, yet performed magnificently. A wonderful dinner was given by General McNarney at Headquarters in honor of the delegation, and when Rabbi Wise made his speech to the glittering array of stars and medals assembled at that table, thanking them, complimenting them, dwelling on their understanding and sympathy, never striking a false note of flattery, but stressing the morality of their conduct, one could almost physically feel the waves of bonding which flowed from them to him and the entire delegation. I, a lowly first lieutenant, sitting at the bottom of that table, swept up in the magic of the moment, dizzy anyhow from the rare atmosphere generated by all that brass, failed to hear McNarney's command to me that I should now lead the delegation to its army-provided vehicles. He laughingly repeated it, and I awoke.

This committee, led by Wise, already in his mid-70s, and fated to die within three years, moved indefatigably through a hard schedule of 12-hour days, visiting camp after camp, listening patiently, returning to their barracks or hotels in the evening to receive officials of the Joint or Unrra or Agency, in order to communicate to them what had been learned from the DPs. No details were too small to be noted, no complaint overlooked. These leaders were diligent, committed, eager to help, and profoundly convinced of the need for them to return and persuade their followers to a massive program of financial aid and political pressure on behalf of a permanent solution.



Their visit took place during August 1946 and a few weeks later Mr. Kenen wrote to the president of my congregation in Denver, Mr. Henry Winter, the following kind words:

"What impressed me most about Rabbi Friedman is the way in which he has dedicated himself to his task, his love for his work, his affection for the people whose lives he is helping to rebuild.

This was apparent from the beginning, for he approached every task and problem with an intense zeal, with high enthusiasm, and when we began our visits to the camps we discovered just how much this meant to the people there. We came to Ziegenheim one afternoon, and there we found thousands of Jews, newly come from Poland, living under the most impossible conditions. It was a new camp, opened in an emergency, to care for the new refugees. We were all deeply distressed by the conditions there and we all experienced a sense of helplessness because we came empty-handed. We brought no certificates for Palestine, no visas for America. We brought no help. We brought merely sympathy and greeting from America. And I for one felt inarticulate and helpless. While I thought before I came that I might have a word to say to these unfortunate people, I found it impossible. But soon we noticed that the refugees were not particularly interested in the American civilians. They were swarming around Rabbi Friedman; he became the center of a huge crowd which followed him as we walked through the camp. Many of them remembered him from Berlin where he had greeted them a short

time before upon their arrival from Poland. They plied him with questions - he had an answer and a sympathetic word for them all.

Then we went to a large hall where the refugees were gathered to hear a word from America. It was Chaplain Friedman who was equal to the task. He was spokesman for all of us. For some fifteen minutes he told them what they wanted to hear. He lifted their morale, he encouraged them, he gave them grounds for hope, he instilled them with a desire for self-help, he made them proud of their determination for survival and reconstruction. I had the feeling that what he said could not have been said better. All of us told him so. Chaplain Friedman does not know that I am writing to you. I am conscious that you and your fellow congregants must miss him greatly. If it is compensation, you have the assurance that he is performing a truly great service for his people, of which you may be deeply proud."

The delegation returned to the United States and added the strength of its conviction, that everything possible must be done to aid the DPs, to the already awakening consciousness of the larger Jewish community which was manifesting itself in a fantastically accelerating UJA campaign. For the calendar year 1945, the campaign had produced \$15 million. The war was still on, for most of that year, and the gloom was deep as the full impact of the horror of the Holocaust was sinking in. The attitude toward the fund-raising campaign was flat, for it was obvious that money could not help save the lives of Jews in Europe.



At the end of 1945, the UJA, under the leadership of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., former Secretary of the Treasury to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Henry Montor, the executive vice-chairman, who was a fund-raising genius, proposed a campaign goal for 1946 of \$100 million, which was accepted with enthusiasm. Now that the killing was over, and humanitarian relief was needed, at least for the survivors, it was clear that money would help, and the community responded. Lay leaders rallied; effective plans and good organization were created; pace-setting gifts were solicited; and the goal was surpassed. By the end of 1946, more than \$102 million was collected. From \$15 to \$102, in one year demonstrated that a basic change had occurred. Action replaced frustration; determination replaced impotent rage; feelings of solidarity and peoplehood overwhelmed an American Jewry which had been separated by oceans of space and a half-century of time from its European roots. The one year caused instant growth. The delegation's report added strength to a growing giant whose achievements in the decades ahead would be remarkable.

Another significant result of their visit to Germany took place just a few weeks after they left. On September 7, 1946, in the War Room of the Farben Building in Frankfurt, General McNarney and Mr. Samuel Gringaus signed a historic document which recognized the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in Germany as the legal representative, the acting government, so to speak, of the quarter-million Jews in the camps. This Charter

of Recognition expressed a political reality, that the body of refugees, presently homeless, was indeed a political entity, and their recognition as such was the first step toward the ultimately inevitable final step of providing them with a homeland. The ceremony that day foreshadowed a day 14 months in the future when the United Nations would confirm by vote the final step. History is usually made in small steps, one leading to another. We had worked very hard, with the Army, and with the dozen members of the Central Committee themselves, to arrive at this day. Every time I look at the photograph which captured that signing, I recall the actual sensation of the moment - the feeling of high relief, even exaltation, for we simply knew, or, at least insisted on hoping that the boundlessly grey future would shift to a bright solution.

The signing party was invited to the General's dining room, the same room in which the delegation had been feted a few weeks earlier, and this time the half-dozen refugees were treated with the same respect and dignity as had been extended to their famous American predecessors. The Central Committee members, all well-educated men (Chairman Gringaus had been a judge in Lithuania), all sophisticated, all tempered in the fire of the previous years, all experienced leaders (even though the youngest, Leon Retter, later to be known as Aryeh Nesher, was only 25) made strong impressions on the Army brass. The personal relationships were important, for the Army decided to issue identity documents to the Committee members entitling them to



usage of army transportation, entrance to areas controlled by the army, currency privileges, and many other logistical supports which would enable them to travel freely throughout the U.S. Zone visiting camps in the performance of their now-legal activities. A liaison officer of the G-5 Section, full Colonel Scithers, was appointed to be at their disposal, to fulfill their needs, interpret their desires, and occasionally explain why something they wanted was not possible. Through this Charter of Recognition the Army was saying something that no other arm of government was as yet willing to say - namely, that the Jewish DPs must be recognized as being different from all other DPs, for none of whom was a similar Charter issued. All other DPs possessed a nationality and a territory, and could be, as indeed they were continuously, repatriated to a homeland. Only the Jews were lacking these characteristics. Therefore, Jewishness had to be recognized as a nationality, and Palestine had someday to be recognized as the homeland of their choice. Thus, the basic premises of the Zionist Movement were accepted by the United States Army. How remarkable!

The incessant tempo of travel never ceased. Chaplain Abramowitz in Berlin maintained the flow from Stettin in the north, while the movement through the southern route increased daily. Soon the rate reached one trainload into Munich every day, with about 1000 persons aboard. These trains crossed four national borders, starting in Czechoslovakia (after the refugees crossed over from Silesia in Poland by truck), touching Hungary,

then Austria, finally Germany. The journey took several days, without any comforts whatsoever, no beds, not enough seats, often with no food except the parcel each person carried, and very often the cars were the same freight wagons which had carried earlier Jews to their deaths in Treblinka or Auschwitz. Thus there was every opportunity for trouble at borders, or trouble with babies and pregnant mothers, or trouble with previously traumatized persons who desperately sought freedom, but couldn't stand the shock of boarding these particular wagons

There were almost always escort personnel on the trains, either JDC or Jewish Agency or even Haganah in plain clothes, looking like refugees themselves, but Abe Hyman and I felt that an additional layer of support would be an American Army officer in uniform, carrying travel orders for the train, who could deal officially with border-crossing difficulties. Such an officer could be requisitioned through G-5, but we preferred someone who would be sympathetic and knowledgeable about the state of mind and nerves of the passengers, as well as familiar with either Hebrew or Yiddish, to communicate with the people. The ordinary G-5 officer would not be thus qualified. The solution, obviously, was to have a chaplain on board every train every day. By this date, more than a year after the war was over, the number of Jewish chaplains on active duty in Germany was down to a single-digit number. Many had been transferred to the Pacific theatre, and many others demobilized.

There was only one solution, and Rabbi Bernstein



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quickly agreed to persuade G-1 to requisition a dozen chaplains for temporary duty. The call went out - some old boys responded, some new boys volunteered - in a surprisingly short time every train rolling in to Munich Central Station had a chaplain stepping smartly onto the platform, reporting that all was well. Distribution of the people to internal tracks for various destinations throughout Germany also took place right there at the Munich station, and they arrived at their camps before the day was out. The fact was that this tremendous flow continued with hardly an incident. Hardly - but there was one.

On the morning of October 1, 1946, I stood at a railroad siding at Babenhausen, near Frankfurt, faced by a trainload of silence. Peering fearfully and questioningly out of the boxcars were 1200 infiltrates from Poland, still on the international train. My assignment was to persuade them to dismount and enter the camp which lay before their eyes. It was a former POW, prisoner of war, enclosure, in which the Nazis had held Russian and other prisoners. It was a rugged, dirty place; concrete floors strewn with straw; a few out-houses; some three-tiered bunks; watchtowers every 50 meters; and endless coils of barbed wire. The Jews were balking. Travel-weary, hoping for a better life, viewing Babenhausen with foreboding, they did the only thing they could do - strike. They refused to dismount. Their eyes, steadily staring above grimly-set mouths, were eloquent with arguments I was to hear constantly for the next 48 hours: "The Nazis packed us in boxcars and brought us to barbed

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wire camps...the Poles wouldn't let us live...we're sick of being ordered about by men in uniform...tired of being kicked around...conditions in the American Zone should be better than this...how can our youngsters and pregnant women live in such a place...did we flee for our lives...for this?"

This was the kind of deeply-ingrained distrust and bitterness which could lead to open riot - which nobody wanted. The Army would not and could not get tough with these recalcitrant victims of history. For their part, they instinctively felt the compassion and goodwill of the American Army. They heard officers criticizing other officers for not dismantling the barbed wire earlier, and they heard the explanation that the army was opening camps at a rate which was exhausting all personnel, so sometimes something slipped, and at Babenhausen it was the wire inadvertently left in place. Nevertheless, having been the victims of outrage for so long, they would not now submit to more, even from the Americans.

In this delicate crosspatch of emotions, my position, as a Jew and an American officer, was equivocal. I could not seem to be throwing my uniformed weight around to force them to move, nor could I let them stay in the cars. I must make clear my sympathetic understanding for their plight - yet must not reinforce their stubbornness. Although the situation was obviously critical and explosive, I was sure it was not hopeless. A heartening precedent had been set the day before, when a previous trainload had arrived at Babenhausen. Those infiltrates had also



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refused. A microphone and loudspeaker had been set up alongside the track. Pleading with the people all day long had been two Third Army chaplains - Captain Herman Dicker, a rabbi, and Lt.Col. Edward Martin, a Catholic priest. In addition, Captain Abe Hyman of our office, had been particularly persuasive. A long line of GIs had gone up and down the train distributing food and drink. Gradually some people jumped down, and by nightfall all but a handful had entered the camp.

Hopefully, therefore, the next day when the train arrived, I made the rounds of the boxcars, accompanied by two high-ranking G-5 officers, talked to hundreds of people individually, and frequently used the microphone. The gist of our argument was that, while the accommodations at Babenhausen were far from perfect, the Army, which had accepted their technically illegal infiltration and was providing a haven for them under the American flag, would do all in its power to improve conditions as quickly as possible. The faces listening to us remained impassive for the most part. When they spoke it was to voice their litany of bitterness or to ask when they would be enabled to get out of the camp and onward to Palestine. Today's bunch was tougher than yesterday's, for by nightfall we had convinced only 120 people to enter the camp - more than 1000 remained on the train. I slept fitfully in the camp that night.

If melodrama were to dictate this account, it would be fitting to report that the back of the resistance was broken by some deus ex machina, some momentous event, some single bold

stroke. Actually it was a series of acts which finally succeeded in emptying the train and filling the camp. First, early in the morning, I organized a group of about 100 inhabitants to come out of the camp, board the many boxcars, and persuade their new comrades that the camp could be made livable (already GIs could be seen dismantling the hateful barbed wire). This group took several hundred back inside the gates with them. Later in the morning, Rabbi Schechter of the Vaad Hatzala persuaded another hundred or two among the orthodox to disembark. And in mid-afternoon Lieutenant-General Keyes, Commanding General of the Third Army, arrived and took the microphone. As I translated his words, sentence by sentence, the people were quiet and more attentive than they had been all day. When he finished, he jumped into a jeep, took the wheel himself, shouted for them to follow him, and drove slowly into the camp. Behind him trudged most of the remaining infiltrates.

That was the end of the great DP silence at Babenhausen. At day's end, all but 105 were in the camp, and most of those entered the next day. Only 39 holdouts preferred to return to the Austrian border transient center at Freilassing, and the majority of these eventually returned to Babenhausen at the request of family and friends. All that day personnel of the Army and JDC did a magnificent job of feeding, registering, billeting the DPs and caring for the sick among them. Morale soared and the sounds of hope and busyness replaced the grim stillness of the previous 48 hours. When I left at 10 PM that



night, everyone had a cot and a blanket, had been fed and cleaned, new clothing was being issued, and the camp was quiet. This time it was a quietness betokening calmness, not the heavy silence of disillusion and latent hysteria. The situation seemed stabilized. But as the days and weeks passed, whatever camp I was visiting, I kept hearing the name "Babenhause" - not enough cots - or food - or medical supplies at Babenhause: grievances and demonstrations at Babenhause: growing restlessness at Babenhause, based more and more on the persistent question, "When will we get to Palestine?"

About two months later I was able to help supply them with an answer. David Ben-Gurion, chairman of the Jewish Agency, was in Paris, enroute to Basle, Switzerland to attend the World Zionist Congress, the first to be held since 1939, before the war. He wanted to visit a DP camp - not a model one, but one in which he could see the true rough fiber of DP life. I obtained military entry permits for him and his companion-bodyguard Mordechai Surkis to enter the Zone, and naturally I took them to Babenhause. We were joined by <sup>Abe Hyman and</sup> Dr. Chaim Hoffman (later Yahil), the head of all the Jewish Agency personnel working in Germany, himself a gentle, soft-spoken, educated European, representing the best type of immigrant who had gone to Palestine in the 1930s and was the backbone of the Yishuv, now communicating his strength and positive optimism to work among the DPs. ~~Adding Rabbi Bernstein and Abe Hyman gave us the most powerful group~~ <sup>the visit by prestigious group</sup> ~~even to appear in Babenhause, and I was certain this would do~~

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the trick of raising morale and stabilizing the mood. We publicized widely in the camp the time and place of Ben Gurion's appearance. It was in the biggest stable, with standing room for thousands of people, and a small stage at one end. His presence did indeed produce an electric wave of excitement. More and more they crowded in, until it seemed that every living soul in the camp, almost 5000, was pressed in that room. They knew that this dynamic white-haired man was their link with a history they thought had forgotten them. For the first time there were smiles inside the gates of Babenhausen. And then came the question - poignant, pleading, uncertain, wavering: "When, Mr. Ben Gurion? When will we get to Palestine?"

He was weeping, the only time in my entire relationship with him that I ever saw this. The tears were slow and softly falling. He spoke through them, quietly but firmly. I think I remember his words almost exactly. "I come to you with empty pockets. I have no certificates for you. I can only tell you that you are not abandoned, you are not alone, you will not live endlessly in camps like this. All of you who want to come to Palestine will be brought there as soon as is humanly possible. I bring you no certificates - only hope. Let us sing our national anthem - Hatikvah - Hope." And he turned to us, standing on the platform with him, for help, but there wasn't a good voice among us. The mass of people carried the tune.

In this way the people of Babenhausen finally understood that their unloved camp was not the end of the line



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but a way station on the road to freedom. The distrust and bitterness I had faced that day in October finally gave way to patient hope in December. Post-war Jewish history was proceeding once more along its true and troubled course.



## CHAPTER TWO

## Section 9

So much of the DP story seems to concentrate on the purely material aspects of life - trucks and trains, bed and breakfast, medicines and clothing - that it is important to balance this with some insights into the spiritual side. After the apparent absence of God during the maniacal years of their torment, the survivors were not notorious for their religious faith. But they were fierce in their ethnicity, clung to each other desperately, emphasized their peoplehood. And all these terms included religious holidays and ritual artifacts and books of traditional significance. So, in the camps, religious services, as such, were not overwhelmingly attended, while Passover and Chanukah involved massive preparations and major excitement. Equally, when an idea was mooted which contained the essence of Judaism, but skirted the problem of belief in God, it met with mass approval. One such idea began to surface toward the end of 1946, and even though it took several years to come to final fruition, still the continuous discussion about it, and progress reports concerning its development, were part of the spiritual balance I spoke of earlier.

The Chief Rabbi of the Central Committee, and thus of all the Jews in the camps, Samuel Snieg, and his assistant Rabbi Samuel Rose, were obsessed with the notion that an edition of the Talmud should be printed in Germany. It seemed to them that this



compendium, representing almost one thousand years of Jewish thought and continuous communal existence in the face of continuous threats to that existence, was exactly the correct symbol to mark the Nazi period. Reprinting the Talmud on German soil would be the example par excellence of Jewish indestructibility in the face of the most vicious and successful attack ever launched, for even such an attack had failed and we were still on the stage of history. Reprinting the Talmud would prove it. His idea of a Sheerith Hepletah edition, produced in the land of book-burning and cultural destruction, contained a touch of genius.

The idea captured the imagination of Rabbi Bernstein, who sold it to General Lucius D. Clay, the Military Governor who was shortly to succeed General McNarney as the Commander of the entire European Theatre. The practical difficulties were immense. To print 19 large folio volumes required the use of a major printing plant over a number of years, if one such could be found in destroyed Germany, mountains of scarce paper and huge sums of money. Part of the expense was quickly guaranteed by the JDC, and a quarter-million Reichsmarks was guaranteed by the Army out of the German economy. By 1947 part of the paper was available, brought down from Sweden, as I recall, and a printing firm in Stuttgart began setting the type. Rabbis Snieg and Rose commuted from Munich to supervise and correct the proof sheets. The first volumes were bound in 1949. Seven hundred and fifty sets of 19 volumes each were completed, dedicated to the U.S. Army of

Occupation, and shipped to notable individuals and the great libraries of the United States, Israel, Europe and Canada in 1951. His task completed, Snieg made a last pilgrimage to Dachau to bid farewell in prayer to the dead and left Germany.

The title page contains some drawings of a Nazi labor camp, together with a sandy beach in Israel, and these words:

"Published through the Rabbinical Association  
in the American Zone of Germany  
With the help of the American Military Command  
and the Joint, in Germany

Munich - Heidelberg 5709"

The Dedication page contains a paragraph in English, as follows:

"This edition of the Talmud is dedicated to the United States Army. This Army played a major role in the rescue of the Jewish people from total annihilation, and after the defeat of Hitler bore the major burden of sustaining the DPs of the Jewish faith. This special edition of the Talmud published in the very land where, but a short time ago, everything Jewish and of Jewish inspiration was anathema, will remain a symbol of the indestructibility of the Torah. The Jewish DPs will never forget the generous impulses and the unprecedented humanitarianism of the American



forces, to whom they owe so much.

In the name of the Rabbinical Organization

Rabbi Samuel A. Snieg

Chief Rabbi of the U.S. Zone"

In the Hebrew Introduction, there is a paragraph specifically devoted to Bernstein. It reads:

"As time passed we longed to produce the complete Talmud but it was beyond our capacity to do so. Therefore we turned to the authority of the American Army in Germany that they should enable us to produce the Talmud. This wish succeeded, thanks to the help of the Advisor on Jewish Affairs to the Army, Dr. Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, and our request was fulfilled, with the help of God. And this day is a day of good news in Israel."

A set of the German Talmud sits on my bookshelf, and while my efforts to study it are still fraught with difficulty, my appreciation of it as the symbol it was intended to be grows deeper with each passing year.

There were small numbers of DPs in other locations than the U.S. Zone of Germany, where almost 160,000 resided: 16,000 in the British Zone; 2000 in the French Zone; none in the Russian Zone; 25,000 in Italy; and 28,000 in the U.S. Zone of Austria. I therefore spent a certain amount of time in Austria, both because of its importance as a transit link on the southern route, and

also because of the size of its permanent population. Stationed in Vienna was the Haganah Aliyah Bet chief, code-named Artur, real name Asher ben-Natan, later to be Israel's Ambassador to both France and Germany. He is alive and well to this day, tall, impressive in demeanor, intelligent, friendly, likable. All these characteristics endeared him to the refugees, and impressed the Austrian and Allied officers with whom he worked. There was never a major incident in Austria, neither on the trains going through, nor in the camps throughout that small country. He had everything under control, in his calm and efficient manner.

The center of the operation was the Rothschild Hospital in the XXth district of Vienna - an extensive set of large buildings used as a way station, capable of handling thousands of people at a time, sleeping on floors and eating in a big mess hall. The walls and corridors had tens of thousands of names scrawled from floor to ceiling, which gave an eerie feeling that these people were being re-born in this hospital. Every name, especially those which also had a date or town appended, was like a birth announcement, shouting "I am alive. Anyone who cares should try to find me. I am alive." Every visit I made to Vienna, perhaps a dozen all told, took me to Rothschild, and I would read a few dozen names, not looking for anyone in particular, but drawing strength from the re-assertion of life from that mosaic on the walls. It was a clear demonstration of the slogan "Am Yisroel Chai" - the people of Israel lives.

In Austria, south of Berchtesgaden, the town in the



Austrian Alps where Hitler had his Adlerhorst, Eagle's Nest, on top of a mountain, was a camp called Saalfelden. This camp had a very special significance, for it was the staging area from which organized groups, willing to take the risk, attempted to walk over one of the highest mountains, the Gross Glockner, and come down the other side close to Italy. The G.G. was 12,500 ft. high, snow piled up most of the year, oxygen quite thin, very cold and windy - hardly the place for a casual stroll. Yet many persons, plagued by years of struggle to ward off a Nazi-imposed death, and eager to avoid an indefinite number of additional years waiting for a homeland, when offered an escape route, however difficult, even perilous, seized it willingly.

I made one march with one such group, so that I could feel on my body what they felt on theirs, and have never forgotten it. At Saalfelden there was every opportunity to prepare carefully. First, the selection was slow and individual, as to health and strength, for it was enormously difficult from a purely physical point of view. Yet, in spite of this selection, old people were smuggled in to the column, at the last moment, in the dark of night, by their adult children who did not want to leave them behind, and even babies were smuggled in, hidden in knapsacks carried on the backs of their parents. Every person received warm clothing, which added weight and made climbing more difficult, but without which many would freeze. For when fatigue overtook, and the column halted for rest, many simply fell into the soft snow and fell asleep. It was relatively easy to drift

into death. Some did. And so the preparations continued. Each got food and a large canteen of water, which added more weight, but the total journey ahead could easily be 48 or more hours, and this nourishment was necessary. A full pack on the back, with all the miscellany, and sometimes a small case in the hand with precious things which could not be discarded, like a family photo album of mostly dead victims, or notebooks with accounts of what had happened during the past bad years, or a good luck sweater - the ultimate remnants. Thus garbed and loaded and burdened, they set forth, silent in the night, for sound carried far in the high Tyrolean Alps, and they must go unnoticed, if possible. The Haganah escorts and guards, additionally burdened by strong torches, heavy weapons, ice axes and long staves to help pull weary people up slippery patches, marched on both sides of the column, also front and rear, like shaggy sheep dogs watching the flock as it moved slowly along.

The journey on foot was truly arduous. Sometimes struggling through hip-high snow, sinking in and pulling out, falling, tipping, calling softly for help, panicking; sometimes crossing a wind-swept bare stony ridge, picking the way between large boulders; above the tree-line most of the way, therefore vulnerable to the bitter wind; it was a miracle that the column was not cut to pieces and thoroughly decimated. But the escorts were skilled, the will power of the refugees was massive, and slowly slowly they came to a destination point. Either it was Lienz, still in Austria, where the trucks picked them up, bribed



their way across the Italian border, and drove to Merano; or, if an unguarded point could be found, it was preferable to walk across the border to the Italian village of Brunico, where they could be driven to Merano. There they boarded trains, headed for the Mediterranean coast. Two large ports, Genoa and La Spezia, were mainly used, as well as nearby small coves and bays for small vessels. Both the larger ports were known to the British, whose forces on land and at sea tracked the movements of the DPs, and interdicted them at place and time of British choice.

One point about the whole Aliya Bet movement must be understood, whether from Austria to Italy, or from Germany down to the French Riviera coast. The British always knew that the Jews were coming; the Jews always knew that it was 90% certain they would be caught; the Jews also knew that the British would impound them in prison camps on the island of Cyprus. But Cyprus was only about 8 hours from Palestine. Thus it was almost home, and as such a worthy goal. Out of 66 vessels sent by the Haganah, 57 were caught and approximately 60,000 passengers taken to Cyprus. That was a great victory, and the fact that the Haganah viewed it as such, and continued the operation infuriated the British. Ultimately, they lost their cool and made a serious error in judgment, which blew the whole situation wide open, to the great advantage of the Jewish side.

During the summer of 1947 (jumping ahead in the story) preparations began for the largest shipload ever to be attempted. We were told there would be a vessel arriving, probably on the

French coast, somewhere near Marseilles, capable of carrying four or five thousand people, sometime in July or August. That was a blockbuster! The process of selecting the passengers immediately took center stage. We knew that whenever word would leak to the general DP public, there would be immediate disturbance in every camp, for everyone would demand to be included. There has been a system operative in the Zionist movement for perhaps a century, known as "The Key", which refers to a formula by which decisions are made according to the number of political parties involved. All the Jewish Agency personnel, whether doctors, teachers, social workers, etc, who were sent to work in the camps in Germany, were chosen, of course, according to their professional skills, but also according to their party affiliation. For example, if the Labor Zionist party was assumed to have a weight of 35% among the Jewish voters in Palestine, then that party had the right to appoint 35% of the Agency personnel going to Germany, or 35% of the passengers to be selected for the upcoming ship. There was a small committee, representing all the Zionist parties working in Germany at that period, which meant frequently and allocated places on the refugee ships, according to the party key. It was called the Vaad Aliya, meaning the immigration council, and the arguments around the table were sometimes unbelievable. One such argument in Innsbruck resulted in the representative of one party shooting to death the representative of a rival party. The issue behind all this was the political strength each party would have in the future state. If party A



told a DP that it was obtaining a place for him on an illegal ship, that DP, a future citizen of a state yet to be born, would be a loyal follower of Party A for the rest of his natural life, and presumably every member of his family and close circle of friends would also follow suit. I found this whole procedure inhuman, tainted, and involving norms from a narrow Shtetl existence of a previous century. I could understand military considerations which dictated sending young men first, for they would be needed to defend the state; or humane considerations, such as, women with children first; or technical criteria, such as, electricians, plumbers and carpenters first, for housing must be built. But political party considerations first? I could not foresee, then, that this was actually a cultural or societal value which would determine to a very great extent how everything would function in the future state - elections, jobs in the civil service, universities, the welfare system, the national government itself. If Israel needs one fundamental improvement, it is the elimination of "The Key".

To return to our story, as we began to prepare for the accumulation of this huge passenger list, and all the incredibly complicated logistical arrangements involving such a large number of people, excitement began to run very high, both among our people and among the British, who had their own decisions to make regarding blockade. The British were understandably nervous, probably more than we were. And so they miscalculated. We gathered 4400 persons, in a long convoy of 100 big trucks, with

outriders, fore and aft, armed with lots of false documents, each containing yards of red ribbon flowing from big red seals; crossed the bridge at Kehl into Alsace, turned left and headed for Port du Bouc, near Marseilles. We parked up in the hills and waited ten days for the ship to arrive. It turned out to be a ferry boat which usually crossed the Chesapeake Bay out of Baltimore, flatbottomed, no keel, named the Wallace Warfield (remember the Duke of Windsor who gave up the British throne for the lady?). When it was finally loaded and set sail, it changed its name to Exodus 1947, voyaging into history as the most famous of all the illegal ships, actually changing the course of history through its influence on the UN decision a few months later in favor of partition of Palestine, which, in turn, led to the creation of the State of Israel a few months after that.

The British brought up the Ajax, its most renowned battle cruiser, which had sunk the German battleship Graf Spee off the coast of Montevideo early in the war. Compared to the Exodus, the Ajax was so overpowering as to make the juxtaposition of the two vessels look ludicrous. Looming nine stories high over the tiny ferry boat, the huge war machine could not be conceived as having any relationship whatsoever to the dumpy ferry with its human cargo of beleaguered and bewildered refugees. Yet it did, waiting out there beyond the three-mile limit, trailing the Exodus eastward across the Mediterranean, to a point about 50 miles off the Palestine coast, when it nudged its steel prow into the side of the wooden vessel, almost cutting it in two, and



ordered its marines down the boarding ropes onto the Exodus' deck. A fight ensued for control of the wheel-house; Bill Bernstein, an American volunteer crew member, was killed, others were wounded; and the Haganah HQ on shore radioed orders to the ship to surrender. The lives of 4400 DPs on board were at stake.

In Haifa harbor, the DPs were transferred to three British prison ships, having walked on Palestinian soil for about 100 meters. Naturally, everyone thought they were being taken to nearby Cyprus. But the British, enraged at the amount of bad publicity which had escalated daily during the nine days of crossing the Med, decided secretly to take the people back to Europe, as a punishment, and as a deterrent to further illegal ships. That decision was the major error in judgment referred to above, for that blew the publicity into a storm. At first, the British attempted to return the refugees to the place from whence they had originally sailed. But the people struck, and refused to disembark; and the French, in their characteristically stubborn manner, refused to cooperate with their British allies. The stand-off endured for three days, in full view of hundreds of correspondents who had gathered in Marseilles, after tips were telephoned world-wide by the Haganah as to what was happening.

Infuriation usually leads to further bad judgment, which did indeed occur in this case. The British decided to go the limit, and if France was not available as a dumping-ground for this lot of bloody Jews, then Germany it would be, and that would be the ultimate lesson for anyone trying to tweak the

British lion's tail. As the British prison ships steamed out through Gibraltar, up through the Channel, and into the North Sea, with overcrowded conditions on board deteriorating steadily through the hot summer days, it became clear that the destination was Bremerhaven. The newspaper stories, filled now with all the human interest vignettes, mounting their attack on British inhumanity, which went far beyond the political problem of the future of Palestine, reached a crescendo when the journalists actually saw the Jews being dragged off the British ships, onto German trains, bound for - where? Bergen-Belsen, unbelievable as that sounds. More than two years after Hitler is dead, Jews are being sent back to one of his infamous concentration camps? Is that possible? Have the British lost their minds - let alone their cool? It was so outrageous as to provoke an enormous press explosion. And world opinion slowly, ever so slowly, but just enough, veered toward the conclusion that this nagging problem must be solved in the manner that Britain herself had suggested 30 years earlier, when it issued the Balfour Declaration supporting the idea of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. Two months after the events described, on November 29, 1947, the United Nations, by a majority vote of only two, but still a majority, ruled that Palestine should be partitioned into two states, one for the Arabs and one for the Jews. The Arabs refused and started a guerilla war the very next day, but the political decision legitimized what had to be won in a very bloody war the following year. In my opinion that political



decision was made possible by the story of the Exodus, which highlighted the fact that even after the earlier murder of six million, the world's conscience still had not been sufficiently stirred to find the only just solution for the handful who had escaped the ovens, and it took the inhuman handling of 4400 to make the plight somehow real. Perhaps the large number was incomprehensible, and the smaller could be grasped in human terms more readily. Who knows?

Howard Sachar, professor at George Washington University, is one of this country's pre-eminent historians of modern Jewish history, especially Zionist and Israeli history, concerning which his two volumes entitled "History of Israel" are the most complete record. Referring to that sticky period of 1946, he writes:

"There was no meeting of the minds between the British and the Zionists. Ernest Bevin himself, the Foreign Secretary, admitted this (in rejecting the report recommending sending 100,000 to Palestine):

'I say this in all seriousness. If it were only a question of relieving Europe of 100,000 Jews, I believe a settlement could be found...Unfortunately...from the Zionist point of view the 100,000 is only a beginning, and the Jewish Agency talks in terms of millions...The claim made by the

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Arabs is a very difficult one to answer... Why should an external agency, largely financed from America, determine how many people should come into Palestine, and interfere with the economy of the Arabs, who have been there for 2000 years? That is what I have to face.'

Soon afterward, on October 4, the eve of Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, President Truman issued the customary presidential statement of greeting to American Jewry. Undersecretary of state, Dean Acheson, helped him prepare it. An advance copy was sent to Prime Minister Clement Attlee the day before. The prime minister was horrified by what he saw. He pleaded that the statement be postponed at least until he could discuss it with Bevin. Truman refused. The greeting then was issued.

Officially endorsing the partition approach, the statement urged further that 'substantial' immigration into Palestsine, which 'cannot wait a solution to the...problem' should commence immediately. Bevin, of course, was livid and attacked the statement as a blatant play for the Jewish vote. Acheson denied the political motivation: 'About the Yom Kippur statement the president was very serious. The Day of Atonement seemed to come on a particularly dark day in Jewish history. The president chose it as a fitting occasion to announce that he would continue



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his efforts for the immigration of the 100,000 into Palestine.'

The British colonial secretary was determined to reduce tension in Palestine itself, hoping to induce the Zionists to join the...London Conference. He requested the mandatory government to abstain from further searches (for arms) in Jewish villages. General Barker, who had issued an angry anti-semitic remark in the aftermath of the King David Hotel bombing, was replaced. The British released from internment the Jewish Agency leaders to allow them to refer the question of participation (in the London Conference) to the 22nd World Zionist Congress, which was scheduled in Basle, Switzerland for December 1946."

Rabbi Bernstein, who had been invited to speak at that Congress, had a wonderful idea. The previous Congress had been convened for the first week of September, 1939, also in Basle, and two days after its opening, was interrupted by the outbreak of war. Soul-searching conversations took place in the corridors among the delegates from Poland and other east European countries as to whether they should return to their lands now being overrun by the Nazi blitzkrieg, or stay in the safety of Switzerland. Most elected to return, to their families, and the partings between comrades of long standing were sad and tearful. They knew, intuitively, they would never see each other again.

This Congress, seven years later, the first after the war, marked the beginning of the next period in Jewish history,

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shrouded in uncertainty. Bernstein's good idea was that all the chaplains in Germany and Austria would be thrilled to be present at this gathering, which would probably be determining the most important matter since the destruction of the Second Commonwealth by the Romans - namely, whether the Third Commonwealth was to rise in our day. He therefore organized permission from the topmost level - General Lucius Clay himself, who agreed. I contacted the 14 chaplains then in the theatre, all accepted eagerly, and official army travel orders were cut, providing transportation, quarters and seven days leave time. Swiss visas were obtained, and the show went on the road.

To quote Howard Sachar again:

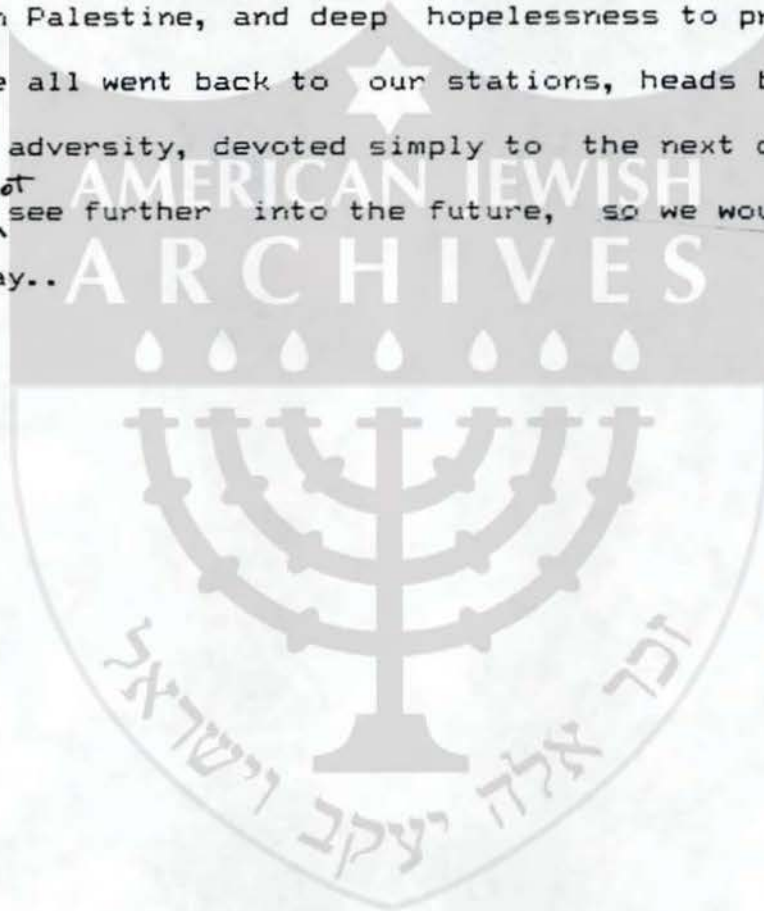
"The Congress was a melancholy affair. The two major groups were the Palestinians and the Americans. Between them sat only isolated representatives of European Jewry. The reservoir upon which Chaim Weizmann had depended for the two decades of his moderate leadership had vanished. The Americans, led by a fiery Cleveland rabbi, Abba Hillel Silver, were hardly less militant than Ben-Gurion and the Palestinians, and were convinced of the need to attack British authority head-on. Weizmann issued an appeal for a final effort to seek a compromise solution, perhaps on the basis of a transitional regime that would lead to partition. He met with a cold response. It was the consensus that the Zionist Movement ought not to be represented at the London Conference except on the basis of Jewish statehood. The Congress then pointedly refrained from re-



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electing Chaim Weizmann to his traditional presidency of the World Zionist Organization."

Thus, it was adjourned. He was publicly repudiated, as was his policy. The Organization was left headless, gloomy was the mood, the future unclear, violence sure to be the order of the day in Palestine, and deep hopelessness to prevail in the DP camps. We all went back to our stations, heads bent against the winds of adversity, devoted simply to the next day's tasks, for we could <sup>not</sup> see further into the future, so we would try to stay alive today..



## CHAPTER TWO

## Section 10

One of the most profound events of my stay in Germany occurred in December. The Nazi regime, under the direction of its philosopher, Alfred Rosenberg, planned to accumulate a vast library of Judaica for its scholars to analyze, in order to find those quotations which would serve to condemn the Jewish people and their religion in the eyes of the world, thus validating the Nazi charge that this whole people was a danger to the world and must be exterminated. The intention was to prove that Jews worshipped money, extorted money from Christians whom they despised, were sexually unclean, believed in communism, spat at churches, possessed a secret government which plotted to take over the whole world, and many other similarly poisonous accusations. The most insidious aspect was to prove all this by using the Jews' own words, taken from their own documents. To this end, a large warehouse in Offenbach, just across the Main River from Frankfurt, was commandeered as a repository to which Jewish books were shipped from all countries in Europe which were under the domination of the German conquerors. In the course of time, the accumulation grew to something more than 3 million books and documents, and knowledge of the existence of this collection spread through the Jewish world, especially the scholarly world.

When the war ended, and inventories were taken in all the buildings of the Nazi government, this collection was



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discovered and ultimately came under the authority of the Fine Arts section of the American Military Government. A professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, the already world-famous Gershom Scholem, applied through the Jewish Agency for permission to look through the collection. After due process, permission was granted by OMGUS (Office of Military Government of United States) for him to come to Germany on two conditions: that he remain for a maximum of 90 days; and that he not remove one single article. The conditions were accepted; he arrived; paid his respects at our office; and went across to Offenbach. We heard nothing from him until a distraught call brought me to the warehouse.

There he explained what was happening. In his diligent search through the enormous pile, he had set aside 1100 items of incunabula, medieval and earlier documents, manuscripts, all hand-written, of incalculable value for each one was a unique piece, all looted from museums, synagogues, private collections, and all absolutely irreplaceable. He was so nervous about this treasure that, having located these items, and not wanting to have them thrown once more into the anonymous pile, or even worse, having them be stolen for sale on the black market then flourishing in Germany, he kept them segregated in five large wooden crates, which he had marked with his name and address, but without any description of contents. Then he had asked Fine Arts section to review its previous ruling, and to allow him to take the five crates to Jerusalem where they would be carefully kept in the Rare Book Vault of the Hebrew University Library. He was

refused, with the explanation that the Jewish Theological Seminary in the U.S. had put in a bid for the Offenbach corpus, or part of it, at least, and Fine Arts did not want to get in the middle of an argument between a Palestinian and an American institution. Therefore, they ruled that it should remain under their jurisdiction in Germany until some indefinite time in the future when final disposition would be made. Scholem was beside himself with fear that if the crates were left in the Offenbach Depot, word of their value would leak and they would be vulnerable to theft. Single pages of Mozart manuscripts, even with the most dubious provenance, were commanding \$10,000 on the black market. Even at much lower rates, the parchment manuscripts in all those boxes would fetch millions. He was also enraged that the Seminary in New York had intervened, and thus actually prevented the material from going to Jerusalem. When he finished telling me the whole story, he actually broke down from fatigue, strain and worry.

I volunteered to steal the boxes - right then and there, without further thought, without consulting anyone, and without having a plan in my head. This decision was obviously not from the head, but straight from the heart. I told him not to worry, to use the last few days of his time to see the city of his birth, Berlin, where I had friends who would care for him, and tried to soothe and calm him. I promised to let him know, after I had formulated some sort of plan by which to accomplish my rash promise, how and when the crates would reach him, and



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assured him that I had the most remarkable reputation in the world for keeping promises. I wanted very much to comfort him.

Slowly his face untightened, he even smiled, and as we parted, he said carefully that he was inclined to believe me. He left for Berlin and home, and the next time I saw him was two years later in his house in Jerusalem.

The following plan evolved: I would tell Captain Jacob Benkowitz, the officer in charge of the depot, of my intention to remove the crates of books (of whose real contents he was unaware) for distribution to the DP camp libraries. I would "borrow" a JDC ambulance, just the right size non-windowed vehicle, and appear on New Year's eve, a few days hence, at the back loading dock, around midnight, when the personnel on duty would likely be at something less than sharp perception. All they would see was a khaki-colored vehicle, with army plates, being driven by an officer in uniform. I would ask one or two to help me load, and then drive the ambulance to a locked garage, where it would sit until I could get orders to go to Paris to consult with Jewish Agency officials. Such a request on my part was most ordinary, and January 15 found me at 135 Avenue Wagram in the Jewish Agency office, with the ambulance parked on that elegant street. I was somewhat less elegant, having slept in a freight car alongside my precious vehicle. They agreed to send a message to Prof. Scholem, but also insisted that they would not compromise their status in Germany by trafficking in stolen army goods. Illegal immigration against the British was one thing, but

entering a conspiracy against the Americans was another. They did, however, give me some helpful advice.

They told me that Dr. Chaim Weizmann's library in England was being packed and shipped to Palestine, on a vessel leaving from Antwerp in a few days, and suggested that I attempt to integrate my five crates among his dozens of boxes, which would be the easiest way to smuggle them in. No sooner said than done. I drove the ambulance to Antwerp, got my cargo on board, informed Scholem how and when it was due to arrive, and considered the matter closed.

That was not to be the case, however. Several months later, upon returning to my office after a short leave in Scandinavia, taken with my wife, whom I had not seen for almost a year, I found two CID (Criminal Investigation Department) men waiting for me. They quietly and calmly charged me with grand larceny, laid out their evidence, indicated they were submitting it to the Judge Advocate General, and a court martial would be convened. They had done a very thorough job, and had me dead to rights - the license number of the ambulance, the number of the freight car, the name of the Jewish Agency man in Paris, the name of the vessel from Antwerp, and even the receipt I had signed to get the boxes out of the Offenbach depot. I had signed the name of Koppel Pinson, the JDC education officer who was authorized to draw books of no value for distribution in the camps. The fact that he had left Germany months before didn't bother me, although I did put my initials under his name. I denied everything, simply



to stall for a short time, until I could plan a strategy.

Upon reflection, I decided that the best course was to tell the whole story to Rabbi Bernstein, whose reaction was wonderful. At first he was worried that I would have to endure some serious punishment, and then he chuckled over the complexity of the adventure, and then he praised me for the idealism of the deed. This last thought gave him the clue as to how to proceed. He suggested that he would pave the way for me to see General Clay immediately, and that I should throw myself on his mercy by stressing the motives which had impelled me. Admit to the crime, and ask for clemency. Clay was a quiet, firm, intelligent man - a four-star general who was more of an administrator than a warrior - a man who clearly understood the circumstances and the motivation behind my action. He stood and thought for several moments, then called the head of the CID, informed him that charges against me were to be dropped, no court martial to be convened, and that he, General Clay, would personally handle this matter.

He then turned to me, gave me a short lecture on the dangers of excessive zeal, and said he would order the recall of the crates from Jerusalem, following which I would be ordered back to the U.S. to be honorably discharged from the army. From his point of view, it was a just and humane solution. From my point of view, I accepted the second point, for there really was no choice, but decided instantly that I would push my luck and seek to change his mind on the first point. I pleaded with him

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not to submit the crates to another journey. Travel, by any means, was hazardous. We were terribly fortunate that nothing had happened to them up to now. They were safely in Jerusalem and should be left there. I made the suggestion that Prof. Scholem be ordered not to open the boxes, except in the presence of some U.S. authority, either military or civilian, in Jerusalem, so that an inventory could be taken and an affidavit could be prepared for General Clay that nothing was missing. Then the crates could safely be left in Jerusalem under the joint custody of Scholem and the American army's representative until final disposition was agreed upon. He listened carefully, said it made sense, and gave orders accordingly to an aide. I breathed a great sigh of relief, expressed profound gratitude for his broad-mindedness, and left full of wonderment that this difficult and dangerous thing I had done was now ended with such success. I was also awed at the historic proportions of the episode. These manuscripts, remnants of our people's past, doomed for destruction in the present, had been saved for the future, and I had been privileged with a role in the adventure.

My joy was short-lived. The boxes were stored, by agreement, in the library of the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem. Eighteen months later, during the War of Independence in Israel, that part of Jerusalem fell into Jordanian hands. What tricks fate plays. Once again, patience and ingenuity solved the situation. A clause in the armistice agreement permitted the stationing of a small number of Israeli



soldiers in a 100 meter trench on Scopus as a symbolic gesture of supervision over the few University buildings. This group of men was rotated every two weeks. They were taken down in UN vehicles, and the relieving group taken back up. Over the course of several years, no less, all the manuscripts were brought down, one by one, and carefully gathered by Scholem, with no loss whatsoever. And so, in the end, the story does conclude happily - rescued from the Nazi trap, brought to British Palestine, carried through the fire of the birth of Israel, caught once again in Jordan's hands, and free at last - these manuscripts seemed like living beings, whose fate paralleled that of the Jewish people itself. The last time I saw Professor Scholem, shortly before he died in 19??, we reminisced and he told me that occasionally he looked into the Rare Book Vault and smiled contentedly. So did I.

The first chapter of the story, the theft, was revealed to the press by General Clay himself, when he left Germany a year after the event. An article appeared on the front page of the "Stars and Stripes", the army newspaper, on December 9, 1947, under a large headline:

#### LOST EC TREASURE

#### FOUND IN PALESTINE

by Robert Haeger and Bill Long

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Offenbach, Dec. 8--Two American Army Captains, one a chaplain, illegally removed rare Jewish books and manuscripts worth between \$3,000,000 and \$5,000,000 from a Military

Government storehouse here, General Lucius D. Clay, U.S. military governor told United Press before leaving for London today.

Later, the treasure, gathered by Nazi looters from all over Europe, was unlawfully shipped to Palestine and is there now, Clay said.

The documents, 1100 of them, filling five packing cases, were taken from the Offenbach Archival Depot where they were in American custody on Dec. 30, 1946. This has never before been disclosed, despite a series of prolonged army investigations.

The monetary evaluation is based on an inventory taken in August 1946 by Gershom Scholem of the Hebrew University of Palestine. The inventory showed that the items were ancient Hebraic documents, variously described as "rare", "unique", and "irreplaceable" by authorities.

Following army investigations which indicated the five cases had found their way to Palestine, Clay asked American consular officials there for verification. The volumes were discovered, complete and undamaged at the Hebrew University and a receipt was given to the State Department representative who forwarded it to Berlin, according to Clay.

The general explained that this was done rather than risk damage or loss which might result from shipping them back to American Military Government, their legal custodian. He emphasized that the treasure is not being used and will not be moved pending receipt of claims from original owners of the



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material, who have not yet been heard from.

Clay pointed out that neither of the "overzealous" officers had gained personally from the deal. He added that he "let them go on home" when their European duty tours were completed rather than prosecute, since the missing items had been located.

After two weeks of investigation, interviewing and examination of official records in various German cities, all verified by Clay, United Press was able to reconstruct the incident thus: on the morning of Dec. 30 the chaplain visited the archival depot, then under the direction of the second captain. Following a conversation between them, a receipt for "1100 items" was prepared. The depot record book logs the incident in its "outgoing" section as follows: "American Joint Distribution Committee (a Jewish welfare agency) 30 Dec 46 - 5 cases - 1100 items"

These records also show the crates were allowed to leave the depot under a Clay letter which authorized the loan of 25,000 novels, readers, prayer books and other books "of no historical or artistic merit" for use in Jewish DP camps in Germany. The receipt was signed with the name "Koppel S. Pinson", educational chief for the AJDC and the only man authorized to sign for such loans. The Chaplain's initials were scrawled below the signature. Pinson had left Germany more than four months before.

The afternoon of the same day the chaplain returned

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with an AJDC ambulance and took the crates away. German employees at the depot later told investigators that the name of an official of the Hebrew University of Palestine was stencilled on the cases. The papers were traced to AJDC headquarters in Frankfurt. Employees there said the boxes were removed about a week later, again in an ambulance, for an undetermined destination under the chaplain's supervision.

The chaplain told investigators he simply turned the books over to the AJDC and "assumed" they had been distributed to DP camps. AJDC officials contradicted this, saying the chaplain removed them himself.

Clay pointed out that probably 90 percent of the items eventually will "wind up in Palestine anyway." This is impossible under present MG regulations which state that all looted materials must be returned to the country of origin. The 1100 are thought to have originated entirely in Europe. Similarly, if their pre-Nazi owners resided in Germany, there is no provision for restitution to them and MG is wholly responsible for safeguarding such materials.

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*Not to be put in  
with 1100 here - don't  
want you to handle  
with them*



CHAPTER TWO

Section ~~11~~ ~~11~~

Following the decision of the Zionist Congress not to attend any more conferences in London with the British or the Arabs, the political process seemed to be dead-ended, at least for the time being. The army, in an effort to be practical and to get some relief from the major burden of supporting a quarter-million people, reverted to Truman's original suggestion of transferring 100,000 to Palestine simply as a humanitarian gesture, without reference to eventual political solutions. In order to push this idea once again, General Clay suggested that Rabbi Bernstein go to London, carrying a letter from Clay to Ernest Bevin, the Foreign Secretary, asking Britain to agree to this move. Bernstein accepted the assignment, of course, took me along, and off we went, expecting a rebuff, but not in the form which encased it.

It was the end of January 1947, the second winter after the war, and England was still freezing, short of fuel and food. Both the weather and the mood were very grey. We entered Bevin's office in Whitehall, to find this most senior officer of His Majesty's Government sitting huddled behind his desk, wearing an overcoat, a small heater at his feet, scowling, barely civil. He read Clay's letter, wasted no time in thinking about it, and started off immediately on a vulgar, profane, anti-semitic attack. Bevin started life as a stevedore, was proud of his working-man's origin and his career as a trade union official,

and was known to adopt this posture sometimes as a negotiating stance. But he also had experienced years of dealing with people in the highest stations and knew perfectly well how to act smoothly and refined. In our case, he had apparently decided to be rough. He pounced so quickly that it was clear he had made his decision in advance, and was simply waiting for us to appear so that he could vent.

It is not possible for me to repeat his tirade for too many words were of the four-letter variety. He particularly favored the use of a certain adjective beginning with "f" which preceded the noun "Jews" in every instance. He started in a general fashion to talk about the war, which Britain had won, but was now suffering as much as if she had lost. Perhaps it would have been better if she had lost, for then the Americans would have offered relief, as they were now giving to the German economy. It was a sour and bitter approach. After further bemoaning, his main point emerged - namely that England could no longer afford to maintain certain obligations which weighed too heavily, and which he had decided simply to off-load. Never mind talking about the 100,000 f---ing Jews. Why should they always come first? Let's talk about the 100,000 British troops in India. They are costing us a fortune. If the wogs want their independence, let them have it. We are going to pull out. We cannot maintain this pretense of an Empire upon which the sun never sets. It is a 19th century concept we can no longer sustain.



And what about another 100,000 troops in Palestine? Why should we carry a world problem on our backs? We were saddled with it after World War I, when we were appointed mandatory power, but this has gone on for too long. Let the bloody Arabs and the f---ing Jews kill each other if they want, but we British should get out of the expensive role of trying to stand in the middle between them. And then he continued with an attack against the Jews for the manner in which they were exploiting the hurt they sustained from the Nazis by giving the whole world a guilty conscience. Is it England's fault that the Nazis killed Jews? Why should we have to pay for it? If the Jews want a homeland that belongs to someone else, let them fight for it, but we do not have to stay in the middle. It's absurd. And if there are Jews clogged up in some dirty camps in Germany, why should England have to be concerned? If we agreed to allow another big bunch of Jews into Palestine, the Arabs will make our life hell, and we'll never be able to pull out, but only get mired in deeper. I am sick and tired of the constant whining and moaning of the Jews. I cannot help the Americans with their problem. We have said no to Truman on this matter, and I am now saying no to General Clay. Let him find a different solution. If he loves the Jews so much, let him take them to America. As far as I am concerned, I say the hell with the Jews.

I have not put all this in quotation marks, for there is no way to reconstruct his exact words, except the profane ones. But I have given the essence, the tone, and the line of

logic. Aside from the vicious hatred he was expressing, and the indifference to the fate of these DPs, he was stating the larger matter of British policy. He was actually announcing a hint that England intended to pull in her horns, to withdraw from two major world problems, India and Palestine, thus contracting her spheres of interest, which would result in a leaner and less costly operation. This really was the beginning of a new role as a minor power rather than a major one. There was absolutely nothing further to be said. We were shocked beyond speech. We were dazed. It was *deja vu*, reminiscent of the conversations we had heard in Poland a half-year ago, when those various authorities had refused to try, at least, to ameliorate the dangerous situation in which the Jews lived, and instead placed the blame for the danger on the Jews themselves. We returned to General Clay with the important political intelligence that England would probably make a public statement shortly of her intentions. And a few weeks later, in February, she announced that she was turning the Palestine problem over to the United Nations for solution, devolving responsibility. The matter took from February to November, during which time it was clear to the U.S. Army that there was to be no relief, and instead we would all pursue a holding pattern. On Nov. 29, 1947 the United Nations voted to partition Palestine into two states, Arab and Jewish; and the British announced they would withdraw their administration and their troops by May 15, 1948.

The next few months consisted of almost constant



travel. With the exception of a short leave taken in Scandinavian capitals, and a side trip to Hamlet's castle at Elsinore, I spent my time going from camp to camp throughout the U.S. Zones trying to build morale, create projects to keep people busy, and talk about the future, in order to combat the hopelessness of the present. It was a very tough period. The DPs were intelligent and cynical. Their own analysis revealed the basic facts: political deadlock, which would keep them stuck in the camps; friendly factors providing a foundation of support, so there was no fear of hunger, disease or danger; make-work projects in the camps just to keep busy, but as time passed their children were missing years of education and adults were not creating an economic base for themselves. And their cynicism about the concern which the world powers felt for them led them to conclude that no miracles would be forthcoming. Nobody really cared except the Jewish welfare organizations. The mood was depressed and even hard work often failed to lift it. But we had to keep trying.

I went to Munich many times to consult with the Central Committee. Purim was coming, and we worked out a major program in all the camps to create a festival spirit. Lots of wine, troupes of singers and dancers travelled for days before and after the holiday, ingredients were found in army commissaries for baking mountains of hamantaschen, balloons and toys for the kids were bought in the German economy, kakhi cloth was procured to make uniforms for the effigies of Hitler who was the most popular candidate for Haman. The Central Committee, with its official

authority to organize transport, provide supplies, pay workers and handle all the details of such a major logistical operation, did a marvelous job in a short time, and it worked. The mood in the camps lifted, at least for the week of rejoicing.

Passover followed immediately, and this became the basis for an even larger mass operation, involving thousands of DPs in the preparations. This time it was not a matter of my going to the main quartermaster depot with a few trucks to draw the supplies, as I had done a year earlier. Rather, a large distribution network was set up, requiring dozens of trucks, hundreds of loaders, drivers, accountants, cooks, etc., etc. And books, and new clothes, and flags, and white tablecloths, and flowers, etc., etc. And rabbis and cantors and choral groups and local dignitaries, different for each camp, etc., etc. Since there was to be no physical freedom this Passover, we tried to achieve mental and spiritual freedom, a release from the spirit of despair. And once again it worked. After the experience of these two holidays, I suddenly had an insight into the manner in which Jews must have lived during all the tough centuries of oppression in all the various places of their domicile. If the outer circumstances of their lives were inhospitable, gloomy, hopeless, they turned inward, and lived an inner life based on the calendar and rituals and holidays, finding a peace and a lifting of the mood in the practices and beliefs of Judaism. Before my eyes, this was happening in the 20th century, not just in some shtetl of the 18th or ghetto of the 16th. Our people



maintained their religion, which, in turn, maintained them. Peoplehood, ethnicity, nationality, all revolving around a specific homeland, and a sense of God-given, messiah-driven mission and purpose, composed the elements of a strong will-to-survive. This kind of talk was as important as bread at this particular moment in history.

I spent many days in Munich consulting also with the great wonderful welfare organizations, thinking of what could be done in the camps to improve daily inner life. I remember one long conference with the top officers of the AJDC. Moses Leavitt, the chief executive, had come from New York headquarters for an inspection tour; Herbert Katzki, the assistant chief at European headquarters, had come from Geneva; and Samuel Haber, the director for Germany, hosted the meeting. There was no worry about money. It was available. As a matter of fact, in that year of 1947, the JDC got a larger share of the national UJA campaign than did the Jewish Agency for Palestine. It was understood by all, that, even though Palestine would eventually receive all these homeless people, meanwhile they and the organizations that cared for them in Europe, required the maximum support. I think this was the only year in the more than half-century existence of the UJA that such was the case. With money not in question, the problem demanded ingenuity for its solution. We brainstormed and tried to think a year ahead. What would do the most good - more doctors and health workers, more luxuries like cigarettes, more visits by delegations of American lay leaders to show them they

were not forgotten, more books (JDC was already involved in the Talmud project), more entertainers, more subsidies for ORT to open more vocational schools in the camps? Some thoughts were accepted, some rejected, gradually a consensus developed, and more pieces were added to the foundation of support. Thus not only the continuation of life in the camps, but its very quality was improved.

I wish it were possible to pay adequate tribute to the organizations and personnel who sustained the Shearit ha-Pletah. Time has blurred many names and programs. The U.S. Army stands uppermost, as an instrument of the U.S. Government, by the hard reality of dollars spent, energy devoted at the very top, and numbers of people employed up and down the line. The JDC and Jewish Agency were the two strong bulwarks of the international Jewish community, who threw in every resource they possessed, financial and human, and I cannot imagine what life would have been like in those hard years without them. Their people were sincerely devoted and worked with compassion and skill. ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation through Training), founded 100 years ago in Russia, with the concept of teaching trades so that people could become independent wage-earners, and today operating hundreds of schools all over the world, set up a network in the camps, with an eye toward future freedom when mastery of a skill would make possible the founding of a family and a new life. Machinery and instructors were brought in, these in turn brought a wave of optimism that camp life was not to be forever. HIAS



(Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) stood at the assistance of those who had the opportunity to apply for admission to the United States. Already at work shortly after the war ended in 1945, HIAS assisted thousands through the bureaucratic maze and the blizzard of paper work, and escorted many shiploads, with effective care and concern. The Vaad Hatzalah, organized through the orthodox community in the U.S. and England, served the unique function of caring for those special needs of the orthodox DPs which sometimes required intervention with or interpretation for the largely non-Jewish UNRRA directors of the camps. Whether it involved the need for a mikveh or a kosher supervisor, the camp inmates knew that there was an organization to which they could turn, which had an accepted status in the welfare establishment, and this was a source of comfort for them.

Of them all, effective and loyal as they were, I think one merits an exceptional praise, and that is the Haganah, in its many branches. The reason for this conclusion lies in the fact that the men and women involved in Haganah operations in Europe and Asia quite literally risked their lives, which was not required of the people working in all the other organizations. The bricha, meaning flight, and the aliyah bet, illegal immigration, demanded a certain kind of courage and heroism as the only means of overcoming the risk and danger. Whether crossing borders or climbing mountains, travelling on false papers or skulking through strange countries with only the flimsiest knowledge of the language, whether leading a convoy of

nervous refugees whose single outcry might cause disaster or brashly confronting some official with a bribe, the refusal of which could mean prison or worse, almost every act during the course of almost every day meant an encounter with danger. These young Palestinians were beautiful in their fearlessness, devotion and modesty. In a dark century, they shine brightly, with their idealism, selflessness, and love for their people and land. No better role model exists for young Jews than those unnamed heroes, and every new generation should read of their exploits, which embraced a territory as far east in Asia as Uzbekistan, and as far west in Europe as Belgium. They spanned a quarter of the globe, herding and shepherding a quarter-million wandering Jews, watching over them in the night, urging them forward, nursing and caring, slowly bringing them to the edge of final freedom. There is no comparable story.

Beside the bricha and aliyah bet people, there were those who worked at sea, the Palyam, a branch of the Palmach which was the elite corps of the Haganah. The legendary generals, Dayan, Allon, Rabin, were all officers in the Palmach and helped to create its traditions and reputation. A small section of the Palmach devoted itself to the sea, learned what they could working with small boats, and when the War of Independence came they formed the Israeli Navy. But before that, they manned the scores of illegal ships, recruiting some Jews from the Diaspora to help, but mainly relying on their own numbers. The ships they operated were mostly decrepit, tired, ill-fitted, possessing



inadequate technical equipment, certainly not comfortable for the passengers, but even more important, not seaworthy in all cases. They were essentially tramp steamers, rusting in obscure Mediterranean ports until some Haganah scout found them and made a deal with the captain, often the owner. The deal usually included a specific sum for him, deposited in a bank somewhere, whose name and number would be known only to him and the Haganah, which would be waiting for him when he came out of jail. He knew the odds that almost every ship was being caught by the British, the vessel confiscated, and the master jailed. So, in setting the price, he calculated the worth of his ship, as well as a lost year of his life. The young lions of the sea accepted such vessels with disregard of caution, sailed them into sometimes unfriendly ports, loaded the eager exiles bound for home, and sailed out, waiting for the British patrol plane which inevitably spotted them. Then the race was on, even though Palyam and DPs both knew how it would end. We lift a symbolic glass to those gallant sailors of almost a half-century ago who sought neither gold nor new lands, neither silver nor slaves, but only the privilege of carrying some weary survivors home.

The final project of the Haganah with which this tale is concerned was known as "rechesh", broadly translated as "gathering or accumulating weapons". Only a small number of people was admitted to this circle, for its affairs were the most delicate and sensitive. History has credited various individuals with leadership roles in this operation, but the fact is that

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Ben-Gurion himself was preoccupied with this subject and frequently interjected himself, into both policy and implementation. He preached incessantly that independence would come only through war. He believed in trying to find a common path with the Arabs, he was always prepared to compromise on the land itself, accepted every suggestion made in favor of partition, and this was his consistent position during the long decades of Zionist struggle before 1948, as well as after. But in his heart he felt that the Arabs would never agree and that the Jews must be prepared to raise their muskets. But muskets in Palestine were in very very short supply, and this genius concentrated with utter singleness of purpose on the one task of building an army and supplying it adequately. He left many matters to others, having no head for economics, nor much interest in the daily husbandry of government. But the preparation for war, he dealt with himself, in great detail.

There were two sources - the United States and Europe. In the U.S., he would find sympathetic friends who would take the shopping lists containing thousands of items, create a network of devoted Jews who would put out the call, and a vast cornucopia would pour out its surfeit of surplus army equipment. This, indeed, came to pass, for in 1945, already, he had found the man, Rudolph Sonneborn, in whose home in New York the network was formed through the skill and broad knowledge of Henry Montor, then executive director of the UJA. It was called the Sonneborn Institute, quite an academic name for a program whose product was



to be uniforms, tents, flashlights, entrenching tools, revolvers, rifles, ammunition, boots, sleeping bags and endless other paraphernalia. What began with this "soft" materiel expanded later to much "heavier" stuff, but some details of that development must wait for another chapter. Stockpiling through the Sonneborn Institute continued for more than two years, and it still was not enough when war broke out. Where would Israel have stood without Ben-Gurion's forethought and execution? Those political figures, some inside Palestine and some in the Diaspora, who counselled against declaring the State in 1948 would probably have prevailed if the military preparedness had not been started when it was.

The second source was Europe, where huge munitions-dumps existed in many locations, and the Haganah "rechesh" operation was set the task of penetrating these dumps, to carry off, through purchase, bribery or liberation, a short list of the items considered most critical. Liberation was an amusing army slang term for stealing, or getting a desired object very cheaply. If one GI asked another whether he had yet liberated a Leica camera, the answer was either that it had simply been taken (i.e. stolen) from some luckless German, or that it had been acquired for a pack of cigarettes. The Haganah men were quite flexible. They were prepared to pay some reasonable price to a quartermaster officer in charge of the dump, for every army was often selling this vast surplus rather than going to all the trouble of crating and shipping it back to the States or England

or wherever. Where such a purchase could not be made for whatever reason, and there could be many, an attempt was usually made to find a hungry sergeant, in the right position of access, who was willing to be less rigid and personally pocket the bribe. This method could produce small quantities, which were welcome and useful, but could not satisfy the needs. Therefore, liberation came to be the method of choice, for once access could be gained, by bribe or break-in, very large quantities were available. All it took was a big enough fleet of trucks and a pre-arranged hiding place. The most useful items were Bren and Sten guns, .50 caliber machine guns, both water-cooled and air-cooled, light and heavy mortars, automatic rifles, carbines, Thompson (Tommy) sub-machine guns, grenades, and millions of rounds of ammunition for all the above items. Once stolen, driven away and hidden, the items had to wait until a ship was available, and when it was, the crates, boxes and bales containing all these goodies were loaded first and the DPs were loaded on top of them, providing some meager cover in case the ship was boarded by British marines. Actually, the British seemed less interested in the weaponry than in the refugees. They were intent on proving to the Arabs that they would stop the flow of Jewish population, and after they carted the people off to Cyprus, and tied the ship up to the dock in Haifa, they often left it, which gave the Haganah an opportunity to remove the precious cargo.

One remarkable episode occurred, which is worth



recording. There was a remarkable man named Ehud Avriel, member of kibbutz Neot Mordechai in the Galilee. He was poking around a huge military-industry plant near Prague called Skoda. The Skoda Works was one of the largest in Europe, and after the Nazis took over Czechoslovakia (remember Neville Chamberlain's appeasement?) they utilized this plant for their own war production. One of the items manufactured here was the famous German Messerschmidt ME-109, considered one of the very best warplanes of WWII. While meandering around this plant in 1947, which was not very active because no one really had any use for it, not even the Russians who much preferred to strip Germany of its industrial capacity rather than bothering with little Czechoslovakia, Ehud Avriel found a hangar containing 11 brand-new ME-109s. Eureka! This was an incredible find, and could give the Yishuv an element of strength which it did not possess and saw no way of acquiring.

The dilemma lay in getting them from Prague to Lod airport in Palestine. It was simply too complicated to try to fly them, because of the number of refueling stops necessary, each one of which would require landing permits in five or six different countries enroute. Nor was there any possibility of sending them by ship, for the Haganah illegal network had no ships with the requisite space on the open deck, nor the cranes to lift them through the air onto the deck. Ehud asked me for help - ideas and physical assistance in implementing the ideas. I shall not reveal all the technical details, because many other people were involved, but the solution was as follows: three

transport planes were acquired, C-54s, which could land and takeoff from the private Skoda airstrip; mechanics were acquired, who could detach the wings of the Messerschmidts; ground crew were acquired, who could load the 109s inside the 54s and lay the wings alongside; pilots were acquired, who could fly the transports from Prague to a friendly military airfield near Rome, refuel, and make it nonstop to Lod. There was one accident, causing loss of pilot, transport and cargo inside. On the plus side, the new State of Israel found itself with a small air-fleet with which to fight off the Egyptian Spitfires supplied by England. The ultimate irony was to recall that eight years earlier, in 1940, when the determinative Battle of Britain was fought in the air over England, the Nazi Messerschmidts were driven back by the Spitfires, and shot down in such numbers as to cause Hitler to turn back from his projected invasion across the English Channel. This saved the Western world. Now, over the skies of the Middle East, these very same aircraft were once again in battle, and this time the Israeli Messerschmidts beat back the Egyptian Spitfires. There must be a moral here - does it have to do less with the planes than with the pilots and their defense of homeland against aggressors? Ehud Avriel, later in his life Ambassador to Italy, and still later, modest member of his kibbutz, has entered modern Jewish history as one of the saviors of his country.

Before leaving Germany, and the army and this chapter in my life, I wish to pay tribute to the two men with whom I



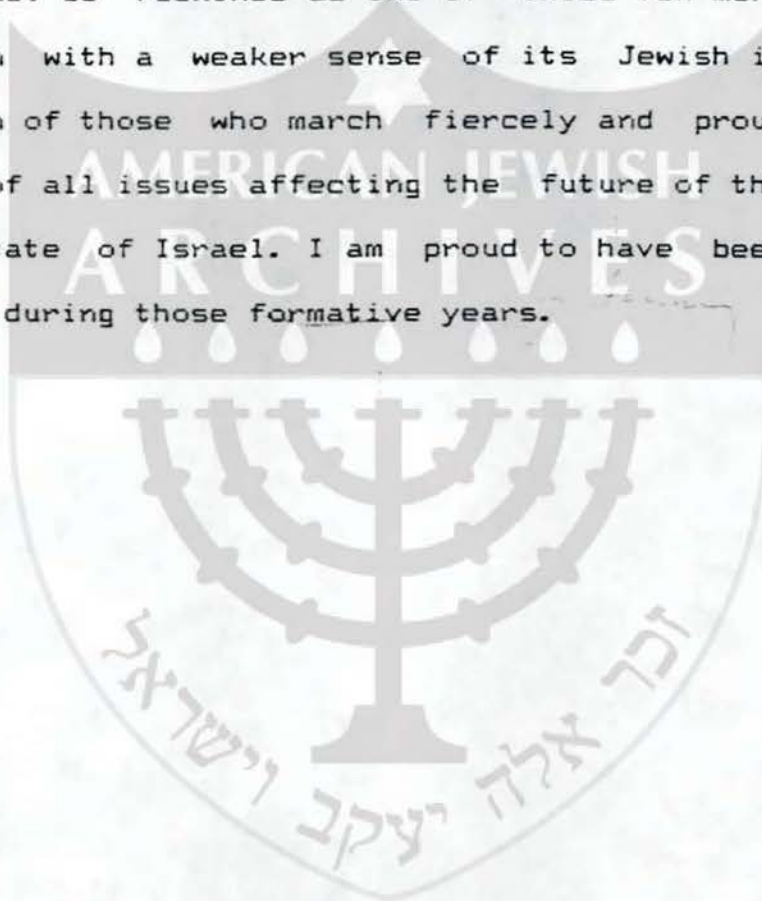
worked most closely - Rabbi Philip Bernstein (Maj.Gen.sim.), and Abraham Hyman (Major). I met Abe in the army, and when I found him at the time of the Landsberg Trial, he was about to be discharged. The quality of the man became apparent immediately, as he thought about the request I was making of him. He told me about his long years of service, how eager he was to get home to family and friends in Chicago, about the intuitive feeling he had that if he accepted this assignment as defense counsel, and postponed his discharge, he would be burying himself in Germany for another five years, and yet, having said all that, he did not see how he could refuse. He was not particularly close to the DP problem, knew no more than any intelligent well-read person about the sufferings, the despair, the depressed mood of these survivors. Nor was he particularly religious. But he was a deeply nationalistic Jew, with a broadly liberal world-view, and this combination was pushing him in the direction of feeling a sense of duty. He hated Hitler; these men in the docket had suffered at Nazi hands; the whole world had turned its back on the Jews in earlier years; now this handful was once again facing punishment. Something kept saying to him that if he was deemed to be in a position to help, he was obligated to do so by the liberal conscience of his universalism, and the strong Jewish feelings of his particularism. All this, even though his keen brain was telling him that once he ggot mixed up in this DP business, it would be a long time getting out, simply because it was clear that this situation had no quick solution. And he was so right.

The last DP camp in Germany, at Föhrenwald, south of Munich, was closed in 1950, and Major Hyman stayed to the end. He was promoted to be the last Advisor, and closed the office when the last DP flew away, like the authentic captain of the ship he truly was. After some years in the States, now with wife and children, he migrated to Israel where he has lived for decades, retiring recently to a kibbutz where his son is a member. There was a bitter, unhappy, cynical side to his personality as well, for he was always very bright, very sharp, so that the flaws of other people, or the weak points of Israeli society were always obvious to him, and he would rail against what he considered wrong or unjust. But on balance his life has been a great testimonial to his character, intelligence, love of the Jewish people, and incredibly strong conscience.

There is really no way I can sum up my appreciation of Rabbi Bernstein. I have such deep feelings about his skills, the quiet manner by which he persuaded, the gentleness, the sincerity which entered the heart of every listener, the warmth, the intellectual integrity - and such memories of his successes on behalf of his flock - and such recollections of his interventions on my behalf, when I would get into trouble as a result of over-zealous conduct - that this eulogy would run to interminable lengths. It must, therefore, be sufficient to say that, in my judgement, he was one of the best rabbi-administrators, rabbi-advocates, rabbi-expositors of the middle-20th century. Holder of major positions during and after WWII; rabbi-president of 500



other rabbis; chairman for a dozen years of the Israel Lobby in Washington (AIPAC - America Israel Public Affairs Committee); he was a shaper of ideas and executor of programs. Throughout all this he never lost his humanity or humility. The Jewish people was so well served by him all through the war and postwar periods that he must be reckoned as one of those few men who brought a generation with a weaker sense of its Jewish identity into a generation of those who march fiercely and proudly forward in support of all issues affecting the future of the Jewish people and the State of Israel. I am proud to have been his Aide and assistant during those formative years.



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CHAPTER TWO

Section 12

There was one important chaplaincy duty which had nothing to do with DPs or any other Jewish question. Rather it dealt with the TIP - Troop Information Program - whose purpose it was to explain U.S. policy toward Germany and the Germans in the post-war period. It was intended especially for new soldiers coming overseas as replacements for those being demobilized, and for dependents coming over to live with their husbands now that the fighting was over. The program consisted of four sessions, with lectures and discussions, on the following subjects:

OUR JOB IN GERMANY  
GERMAN HISTORY AND PEOPLE  
PROGRESS IN GERMANY  
AMERICANS ABROAD

An outline was prepared for those officers assigned to give the lectures, and I have included that outline here to give an insight into the thinking of the Army of Occupation and the American Government vis-avis future relations with the defeated enemy.

TROOP INFORMATION PROGRAM

Lecture One - Our Job in Germany

I.

II. INTRODUCTION

- A. Occupation families should be well informed in order to know why they should and how they can help bring



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about successful accomplishment of the occupation mission. Each should know:

1. Why we are occupying Germany, and something of occupation policy and how it was formulated.
2. Something of German government, history and people.
3. What problems we faced at the beginning of the occupation and what progress we have made.
- 3.
4. How the Army wants you to act in Germany.

B. The US spent \$200 million last year on the occupation.

There were good reasons for spending it:

1. The Germans are our direct responsibility. We learned after the last war what could happen when we failed to meet the responsibility that automatically goes with victory.
  - a. Last time, we took the "easy way" out, occupied only a small part of Germany, and pulled out completely by 1923.
  - b. We failed to punish war criminals and to destroy armed forces.
  - c. After withdrawing, we lost interest in developments in Germany.
2. The US and the Allies are occupying Germany to see that the same thing does not happen again.
3. A formula has been developed for treatment of

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Germany.

- a. The Army is the instrument for carrying out American policy in Germany.

### III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALLIED FORMULA FOR GERMANY

- A. Problem of what to do with Germany was so big that only heads of state, through international conferences, could decide a policy.
- B. Yalta - Four-zone plan for occupation was stated at Yalta in February 1945.
- C. Potsdam - Heads of US, Britain and Russia met at Potsdam, near Berlin, and finished planning begun at Yalta:
  1. Fixed zonal boundaries, and decided to treat all of Germany as a single economic unit.
  2. France was given a zone.
  3. General McNarney became Commanding General, European Theatre, and Lieutenant General Clay became his deputy as head of Military Government in the US Zone.
  4. The program of the "Three D's" was instituted.
- D. The Three D's - the negative phase:
  1. Demilitarization - the complete disarmament and demilitarization of Germany was specified at Potsdam.
  2. Denazification - members of the Nazi Party would



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be removed from positions of influence.

3. Deindustrialization - industry that might be used for military production would be removed or placed under Big Four control.

E. Re-education - the positive phase:

1. The German people must be re-educated along democratic lines.
  - a. Free elections in the US Zone are part of the program to teach democratic processes.
  - b. To learn democratic processes, the Germans are being given more and more opportunity to run their own government.
2. There are many older Germans who remember the freedom under the Weimar Republic of the 1920's.
  - a. But many of the older Germans have lost hope.
3. German youth:
  - a. This is the generation we must educate.
  - b. German youth is still in formative years and is the hope of a new Germany.

IV. MR. BYRNES' SPEECH AT STUTTGART.

- A. Former Secretary of State Byrnes outlined US foreign policy in an important speech at Stuttgart, 6 September 1946:
  1. Senators Connally and Vandenberg were with Mr. Byrnes at Stuttgart.

- a. One a Democrat, one a Republican, they showed the world that both major parties supported US foreign policy.
- 2. The main points of the Stuttgart speech:
  - a. The US has learned that it is living in one world.
  - b. Germany must be demilitarized and must pay fair reparations.
  - c. There is need to unify zonal economics.
  - d. Germany must be made self-supporting.
  - e. US wanted the end of unnecessary zonal barriers.
  - f. The US was going to stay in Germany as long as other nations.
  - g. The US aim is to aid the German people in winning an honorable place in the world.

#### V. MISSION OF THE ARMY

- A. The Army carries out a two-fold mission in Germany - political and tactical:
  - 1. Political Mission: "To prepare for eventual reconstruction of German political life on a democratic basis" -quote the Potsdam Agreement.
    - a. The Army, through Military Government, is the instrument for carrying out this political mission.



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2. Tactical Mission:

- a. To provide security.
- b. To support Military Government.
- c. To care for DPs in the US Zone of Germany.

VI. THE OCCUPATION AND YOU.

A. Each head of an occupation family has a mission to perform:

1. His immediate mission is to do his job well, whatever it may be.
2. His larger, long-range mission is to help reorient the Germans along democratic lines.

B. Other members of the occupation family also have a responsibility in the occupation:

1. They should understand why the Occupation Forces are in Germany.
2. They should help in the work of reorienting the Germans along democratic lines.

C. The negative phase of your mission - the "Three D's" - having largely been accomplished, the emphasis now is on constructive policy:

1. We are re-educating and rehabilitating the Germans in order that they may again take a place in a peaceful and democratic world.
2. Actions of all Americans, and especially the women, are scrutinized closely by the Germans and

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conclusions drawn on that basis.

3. Each member of the occupation family can and should play a part:

a. By helping in approved ways, such as with German youth groups.

b. By conducting themselves in such a way as to reflect credit on America, Americans, and the American way of life.

#### VII. SUMMARY.

- A. Well-informed occupation families can help bring about the successful accomplishment of the occupation mission.
- B. Allied formula was developed at Yalta and Potsdam.
- C. Secretary Byrnes' speech at Stuttgart clarified US aims.
- D. The Army was designated to govern occupied countries. In Germany it transmits the policies of the US to the German State governments through Military Government which supervises, but does not run, government by the Germans.
- E. The Army provides security and support for MG and is helping to re-educate German youth. It provides necessary care for DPs. It will remain here until the German government is democratically run and has proved its peaceful intentions.



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F. As members of occupation families, we have a responsibility to re-educate the German people. This we can do through good personal example and work with German youth.

## LECTURE TWO

### GERMAN HISTORY AND GERMAN PEOPLE.

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. The German people seem to be a lot like us, but politically and psychologically they are very different.
- B. If we are going to re-educate the Germans we must understand them.
- C. German people are not warlike by nature; that is, they were not born that way:
  - 1. Environment is a determining factor.
  - 2. Many good Americans are of German descent. Some of the influences that have made the Germans act the way they have:
    - a. Geography of Europe.
    - b. Militaristic history.
    - c. Inexperience in democratic government.
    - d. Overly disciplined life.
    - e. Follow-the-leader principle.
    - f. Nazi propaganda.

#### II. GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY.

- A. Some factors of geography that have tended to make Germany a warlike nation:
1. Smallest bit of land important.
  2. Germany in center of Europe - no natural boundaries.
- B. Some factors of history that have influenced the German people:
1. Germany dreamed of unity for centuries, finally became a unified state in 1871.
- C. Some of the steps that led to unification of Germany, and some of the outstanding leaders during this period:
1. German states had common culture in the 18th century.
  2. They had been united, but weakly, under the Holy Roman Empire.
  3. Strongest state was Prussia, ruled by the House of Hohenzollern.
  4. Frederick the Great set pattern for German militarism.
- D. Parts of that pattern included:
1. Large and glorified army.
  2. Large and efficient civil service.
- E. There was a liberal, democratic movement to unify Germany:
1. Inspired by the example of the US and France.
  2. Failure of the Revolution of 1848-49.



3. Prussian armies and German princes together killed or jailed liberal leaders.

F. Germany was unified in latter part of 19th century:

1. By Otto von Bismarck.
2. By a series of three wars - with Denmark, Austria and France.
3. Bismarck's successors came to believe in the success of strength and brute force.

G. Kaiser Wilhelm II took over from Bismarck:

1. Developed an unnecessarily strong army and navy.
2. Substituted nationalism (in the form of Pan-Germanism) for liberalism.
  - a. Germany to rule the world.

H. Prussian militarism, coupled with Pan-Germanism, largely responsible for World War I.

I. German history for the period between the end of World War I and Hitler's era:

1. Germans disillusioned.
2. Coalition of parties ran Weimar Republic.
  - a. Weimar Constitution provided for democratic form of government.
3. This coalition was confronted with many serious problems:
  - a. Food riots.
  - b. Uprisings.
  - c. Bad reputation for having signed

"humiliating" peace treaty.

J. Germans and the Versailles Treaty:

1. No harsher than that imposed by Germany on France in 1871.
2. Not as harsh as that forced on Russia by Germany in March 1918, or the Treaty of Bucharest which Germany forced on Rumania earlier that same year.
3. Versailles Treaty restricted size of German armed forces, set reparations, forced Germany to acknowledge hers and her allies' responsibility for the war, took away questionable lands from Germany.

K. Failure of the Weimar Republic.

1. Some reasons for the failure:
  - a. Didn't "clean house".
  - b. Liberal elements lacked experience.
  - c. Economic conditions.
  - d. Lack of experience in self-government.
  - e. Inflation.
2. Attempts to save the Weimar Republic:
  - a. Dawes Plan, 1924.
  - b. "Era of Good Feeling".

L. Hitler was in the tradition of Frederick the Great and Bismarck.

1. Following that tradition, he developed Nazism, which:



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- a. Did away with individual rights and liberties.
- b. Perverted arts and sciences for own ends.
- c. Made robots out of human beings.

2. How the Nazis came to power:

- a. So-called "legal" methods.
- b. Supported by middle and upper classes, industrialists, and militarists.
- c. Working classes initially opposed Hitler's rise, but later accepted and supported the Nazi regime.

M. German ideas of government differ from ours:

1. They prefer an all-powerful type of government.
2. German democratic governments so far all unsuccessful.
3. Germans believe democracy is something that comes to Germany only after defeat.

III. THE GERMAN PEOPLE.

A. Germans are subject to rigid discipline from childhood.

1. Discipline in the German family:
  - a. Father head of family.
  - b. Father rules with iron hand.
2. Discipline in the German school system.
  - a. Teachers almost entirely male.
  - b. Overdone course in discipline.
3. Results of the German way of life:

- a. Germans become accustomed to discipline.
- b. Fuehrerprinzip - look-to-the-leader psychology - developed.
- c. State became all-powerful.

B. Influence of the German churches and Hitler's reaction:

- 1. Church exercised great influence.
- 2. Hitler set out to destroy it.
- 3. Many clergymen accepted Nazi ideas; many others offered heroic resistance.

C. Hitler's psychology:

- 1. Hitler understood the German people completely.
- 2. He found in Goebbels the perfect propaganda minister.
- 3. Some examples of the sort of propaganda with which the Hitler-Goebbels machine filled the German public:
  - a. Hate for the Jews.
  - b. Lebensraum - living space.
  - c. Persecution of Germany.
  - d. Decadence of democracy.
  - e. Superiority of Aryan peoples.

IV. THE GERMAN TODAY.

A. Some of the characteristics of the German people we need to change:

- 1. Militarism.
- 2. Blind obedience to the state.



3. Desire for a strong leader.
4. Idea that they are better than anyone else.
5. Persecution complex.

B. The average German's character today.

1. The Germans have a two-sided character:
  - a. They love art, music, the comforts of home; are busy, thrifty and clean.
  - b. However, they are still militaristically inclined, love pageantry, military display.

C. Psychological weapons with which the Germans could still fight:

1. Play on the sympathy of warm-hearted Americans.
2. Spread Nazi propaganda "line" among the occupying forces.
3. German arguments that are dangerous:
  - a. "Hitler was good but went too far."
  - b. "Germans guarded the culture of Europe."
  - c. "No one approved of Hitler's policies."
  - d. "We know nothing of democracy. You had better run it for us."

4. We must refute these German arguments with truth.

V. THE GERMANS AND US.

A. Cure for Germany lies in re-education:

1. We must not confuse the mechanics of democracy with its spirit.
2. Germans in the past have shown inability to find

their way to a peaceful government on their own.

3. Our job here is to show them the way.

B. A fine start has been made:

1. Democratic institutions at lower governmental level now being used throughout Germany.
2. Labor unions restored.
3. Multi-party system has replaced one-party system.
4. State constitutions written and voted into law.
5. Germans vote again - and vote secretly.

C. Two pictures to study:

1. Big picture - three D's and re-education.
2. Little picture - individual American.
3. We are here to make the Germans respect us and our way of life, therefore our example - personal conduct and attitude - should be exemplary.
4. As determined at Potsdam, Germany should have decent standard of living - but not higher than any of her border countries.

## VI. SUMMARY

A. The Germans have two sides:

1. A deep appreciation of culture and certain good attributes.
2. They retain, however, their love of militarism and excessive discipline.

B. Environment - history, home and school life, etc., are responsible for their characteristics.



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- C. Germans have sympathy and propaganda on their side - we must guard ourselves against these things.
- D. We have the responsibility of guiding Germany along democratic lines:
  - 1. We must give democratic elements in Germany all possible aid.
  - 2. We must, by our example, gain respect for ourselves and our way of life.

## AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

### LECTURE THREE

#### PROGRESS IN GERMANY

#### I. INTRODUCTION.

- A. Victorious Allies confronted with a Germany reduced to rubble and ruin:
  - 1. Cities in ruin, public utilities inadequate.
  - 2. Industry crippled, transportation and communications systems wrecked.
  - 3. Threat of starvation and disease.
  - 4. No responsible government able to run the country.
- B. Long-range problems included:
  - 1. Re-education of a defeated people in whom the spirit that created Nazism had not been defeated.
  - 2. Establishment and nursing along of a German government to help us do the job of running

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Germany.

3. Revival of trade and commerce; hand-feeding German economy in order to enable Germany to pay her own way.

## II. CLEARING THE GROUND.

### A. Potsdam meeting during the summer of 1945:

1. Allies called for complete re-education of the German people, but decided, before there could be any large-scale reconstruction - physical or political - Germany must be cleansed of her war-making power and war leaders.
2. They formulated the now-famous "Three D's" which were to clear the ground for re-education:
  - a. Demilitarization.
  - b. Denazification.
  - c. Deindustrialization.

### B. What we've done to carry out the "Three D's".

1. Demilitarization:
  - a. Of weapons and equipment of war -
    - (1) By July 1946, 98 percent of 8 million US-held German prisoners of war had been discharged, uniforms and war insignia forbidden, and military or para-military organizations outlawed.
    - (2) Military installations and equipment were given priority for destruction;



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this program is still going on and will continue until all German military installations and war equipment are destroyed.

b. Of organizations that furnished the army with manpower:

(1) These included the Hitler Youth, Storm Troopers, Gestapo, the labor corps, various bunds and Teutonic brotherhoods, etc., all of which have been outlawed.

2. Denazification:

a. Nazi Party declared illegal, and entire German population investigated to determine party membership.

b. At first MG operated denazification courts, but later turned over to the Germans full responsibility for denazification.

(1) Of Germans reviewed for denazification thus far, 4 million found "not chargeable" and roughly 3 million "chargeable" under German Law of Liberation from National Socialism.

(2) Major "offenders" lose civil rights, and are subject to hard labor sentences ranging from two years upward.

(3) Lesser "offenders" punishable to varying

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degrees and generally limited, in regard to employment, to manual labor jobs.

c. At Christmas time 1946, General McNarney granted a general pardon to 800,000 "small fry" Nazis.

d. The pageantry and symbolism - the swastika, imperial eagle, golden dagger, death's head, etc., - that went with Nazism, no longer visible.

3. Deindustrialization - and reconversion:

a. War plants that could not be converted to peacetime uses without leaving a war potential are being dismantled or destroyed.

(1) This includes the Krupp, Messerschmidt, Mauser and many other arms plants.

b. Many plants, on the other hand, could be used for peaceful production.

(1) US policy is to encourage reconversion to peaceful production to make Germany self-sustaining (quote Mr. Byrnes), and to help in the economic recovery of Europe as a whole.

(2) Merging of US and British Zones expected to increase peaceful production.

(3) Economic rehabilitation now beginning to be noticeable.



C. Restitutions:

1. Restitutions are the return of property to rightful owners.
2. Has been going on since war's end, and has been limited to those United Nations which were, during the war, occupied in whole or in part, by the Nazis.
3. Concerned with various kinds of property ranging from art treasures, to toothpaste factories, to railroad rolling stock.

III. BUILDING A NEW FOUNDATION: PHYSICAL.

A. Physical and moral gains:

1. Preceding discussion has dealt with negative phase of occupation.
2. On the positive side we have made both "physical" and "moral" gains in rehabilitating the German people.

B. Physical gains:

1. Starvation, food riots prevented:
  - a. Germans supply most of their own food; we have helped to increase German production.
  - b. US has also distributed food to help prevent Germans from starving.
    - (1) In 10-month period preceding June 1946, US distributed more than half a million tons of food in Germany.

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(2) This included mostly flour, wheat, cereals, also seeds.

2. Railroad system back in operation.
3. communications system salvaged.
4. Coal production revised.
5. Housing situation inadequate, but there are no roofless people.
  - a. 40 percent of livable rooms in Germany either totally destroyed or badly damaged.
  - b. Families doubled up.
6. Epidemics averted.
7. DP problem met:
  - a. Those who wanted to go home have been repatriated.
  - b. Remaining half million, known as "hard core" of DP problem, housed in camps.
8. The Army has assisted in relocating "refugees" and "expellees."
9. Economic merger of British and American Zones.

#### IV. BUILDING A NEW FOUNDATION: MORAL.

##### A. Return of self-government:

1. Political parties authorized in August 1945.
2. Gemeinde (community) level elections held in January 1946.
3. Landkreis (county) elections held in April 1946.
4. Stadtkreis (large city) elections held May 1946.



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5. Constitutional Conventions elected June 1946.
6. Constitutions ratified (approved) by the German people in November and December 1946.

B. Laenderrat, or Council of States:

1. Set up in October 1945; composed of Minister-Presidents of the three states of the US Zone, together with their staffs.
2. Purpose: to coordinate work of the separate state governments.
3. Until June 1946, all Laenderrat proposals were submitted to OMGUS for approval; new Council has authority to make final decisions on matters of German civil administration not involving major policy problems.
4. Directorate:
  - a. Permanent representatives of Minister-Presidents form Directorate which meets weekly to handle problems that cannot wait for monthly meetings.
  - b. Their decisions are binding if unanimous and if not vetoed by any of the three Minister-Presidents.

C. German Policy - another feature of self-government:

1. Doing a job American soldiers would otherwise have to do.
2. We have established police schools.

D. Re-opening of schools:

1. At war's end almost all schools bombed out or closed.
2. Under the Nazis, schools were factories which transformed young minds into robots.
3. Most pressing job was to get kids off the streets, so schools were opened immediately.
4. Then began the process of screening teachers - roughly 65 percent of pre-occupation teachers removed; pre-Hitler and newly trained, young teachers now running schools.
5. Nazi textbooks scrapped.

E. Youth program set up to supplement schools, to teach democracy and fair play, to lower delinquency rate:

1. Youth program has official Army backing, including use of excess supplies.
2. Americans take part through discussion groups, teaching sports and games, hobby groups, etc. Many Youth Centers established.
3. Both youth and soldier participation steadily increasing - half a million youth and 40,000 soldiers by late fall 1946.

F. Rebirth of Trade Unions:

1. Trade Unions before Hitler were centers of liberal thought:
  - a. Among first to suffer under Nazis.



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2. With Army assistance, Trade Unions are pulling themselves up by their bootstraps.
3. Shop Steward elections.
4. Works Councils.

G. Sources of information and truth:

1. Free press being restored to Germany by degrees.
  - a. All German newspapers and radios licensed by MG.
  - b. No censorship prior to publication, though no criticism of occupation policy is allowed, and MG does review papers after publication to see that this regulation has been carried out; offenders reprimanded, and if offense is serious, license can be revoked.
  - c. DENA - the Germans' own news agency.
2. Radio, books, magazines and other media of information rapidly assuming proper place in German life.
3. Discussion groups.

H. Theatre, Art and Music also regaining proper place:

1. Music, writings and works of "inferior" people, banned by Nazis, now appearing in Germany again.
2. These works of art help demonstrate fallacy of Aryan myth - literature, music and art are all above race, color or creed.

I. Freedom of Religion:

1. Churches suffered greatly under Hitler.
2. Many clergymen offered heroic resistance to Nazis; others supported Nazis; therefore churches have not escaped denazification.

V. WHY WE SUPPORT THESE ORGANIZATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS.

A. The Army stands behind these organizations and institutions.

1. First reason a purely practical one:
  - a. To take the burden of government off the Army's back.
  - b. If Germans didn't run their own affairs, American soldiers would have to do it.
2. Health is second big reason:
  - a. If German health, sanitation and food distribution systems collapsed, disease and famine would spread.
  - b. The Army does not want to needlessly expose itself to the disease and unrest which would result from famine.
3. Final big reason is that these organizations and institutions represent the beginnings of a post-war Germany based on democratic principles.
  - a. Our long-range mission is to teach the Germans to govern themselves democratically so we can leave Germany confident of its peaceful intentions.



- b. Through experience with these organizations and institutions, Germans are learning to think for themselves, how to govern themselves, how to help themselves.

B. SUMMARY

- 1. Accomplishment has been great in the face of terrible problems and handicaps.
- 2. We've set Germany on the path toward peace, and must continue our help and support until she can walk the path by herself.

Lecture Four

AMERICANS ABROAD

I. INTRODUCTION - LIVING ABROAD.

- A. You have come abroad mainly to re-unite your family, but living abroad will also be valuable experience. It gives you a chance to:
  - 1. Visit historic places.
  - 2. Broaden your view of life.
  - 3. Learn a foreign language.
- B. Living abroad also carries with it certain responsibilities:
  - 1. The relative handful of Americans in Europe represent America; in a sense, we are "standing inspection" for America and American ideals before all of Europe.

- a. What we few do will be interpreted as official acts representing the will of all Americans.
  - b. The example we set in our daily life in Germany will help determine whether or not the Germans can be taught to appreciate our form of life.
  - c. The example we set in our travels throughout foreign countries, and in working with Allied nationals in Germany, will have an important effect on our country's foreign relations.
  - d. The example we set through our attitudes toward, and relations with, DPs will better or worsen the American people's reputation for being fair, just and understanding.
2. In addition, the impressions we get here will influence American public opinions and policies.
  3. Let's discuss more fully, first our relations with Germans, Allies and DPs, then the importance of our own impressions.

## II. THE GERMANS AND US.

- A. It has been suggested we bring each German to America for a while to show how our way of life pays off:
  1. Such a plan is obviously impossible.
  2. Next best thing is to bring America over here.
    - a. That, in effect, is what our presence here



amounts to.

B. German misinformation about US:

1. Germans never did get much information about America.
2. What they did get came chiefly from:
  - a. American tourists.
  - b. American movies.
  - c. Nazi-approved books.
3. None of these sources give particularly true impressions of America.

C. Our presence in Germany adds up to a new source of information about America:

1. Americans will be here a long time.
2. The lasting impression we leave behind will have a lot to do with the future peace of the world.

D. Americans through German eyes:

1. Look for the bad.
2. Like ripples in a pond, word of our bad actions spreads.
  - a. Black market.
  - b. Reckless driving.
  - c. Wastefulness.
  - d. Unfairness in dealing with German help.
3. Good deeds are expected but they carry little weight, therefore it takes many good deeds to erase one bad.

- a. Good deeds don't mean false sympathy.
- b. They do not mean, either, that we should be taken in with propaganda or efforts to please.
- c. They do mean work with German youth, encouragement of liberal, democratic elements in Germany, fair and square relations with the Germans who work for us.

E. Why it is important that we do care what the Germans think about us:

- 1. All the high-sounding phrases in the world won't mean a thing if we can't prove ourselves better persons for having lived the American way.

### III. THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE.

A. Americans abroad may visit some countries and will come in contact with citizens of many.

- 1. These countries may be visited easily:
  - a. Great Britain.
  - b. France.
  - c. Luxembourg.
  - d. The Low Countries - Belgium and The Netherlands.
  - e. The Scandinavian Countries - Norway, Denmark and Sweden.
  - f. Czechoslovakia.
  - g. Switzerland.



h. Italy.

2. In addition, we are likely to meet people of other nationalities - Russians, Greeks, Poles and Yugoslavs, to name a few.

B. Let's stop for just a moment and recall what some of these peoples contributed to victory so that we may understand why conditions in Europe are different from those in the US:

1. Britons bore the brunt of resistance during the early part of the war, withstood the buzzbombs and bombings, dug themselves out of the ruins, tightened their belts because of short rations, and made a comeback with our help.
2. The French were among the first to suffer under German occupation; the French underground fought stubbornly for freedom; French forces were fourth strongest on the Allied team.
3. The Russians defended in depth, burned their own houses and crops. In three years they lost more than five million soldiers killed, missing or captured, plus heavy civilian losses. The heroic defense of Stalingrad is considered by many the turning point of the war.
4. Other Allies - to a comparable extent, the same sort of contribution and effort and suffering applies to our other war Allies.

- C. It is important that we know these facts:
1. They will help us to understand better the problems of Europe while we are on the spot.
  2. This understanding will lead to better relations, enhance the cause of peace.
  3. The US policy is to support the UN.
- D. We should make an attempt to understand the people we meet:
1. We should understand why such conditions as geography, economics and history influence the living standards of continental nations.
  2. We should realize that much of US culture comes from Europe.
  3. We should realize that to many Europeans the US is a "young country."
- E. While the impressions we get of Europeans is important, the impressions they get of us are equally important in creating good, friendly relations.
1. Our attitudes toward Europeans will be reflected in our bearing, in our dealings with them, in restaurants and stores, in private conversations.
- We must avoid:
- a. Boisterousness.
  - b. "Know-it-all" attitudes.
  - c. "US won the war" attitudes.
  - d. Grabbing for scarce commodities.



2. From association with us, Europeans will form their opinions of Americans as a whole.

#### IV. THE DP's - A PROBLEM IN HUMANITY.

A. Plight of DP's was one of the biggest problems resulting from the war. American policy is to help them.

1. Six million DP's in Germany under SHAEF control at the war's end:
  - a. One-half million remain - known as "hard core" - either don't want to or can't go home, for various reasons.

2. Situation of Jews especially difficult:
  - a. Nazis wiped out six million European Jews.
  - b. Nazis reduced number of German Jews from 600,000 in 1933 to about 15,000 by war's end.

B. Why it is important we try to understand the DP's and their problems:

1. Many suffered profound psychological and physical shock.
2. Some have grown to hate or distrust all officials:
  - a. Because of recollections of Gestapo and other Nazi agencies.
  - b. Comparatively few DP's have been arrested for violations of various sorts.
  - c. We should not let misdeeds of a few prejudice us against all DP's.

3. We are trying to re-educate the Germans by our example:

a. If we are arrogant toward, or show lack of understanding for DP's, the Germans will wonder if our way of life differs so much from the Nazi ideology.

V. YOU'RE THE EXPERT.

A. Americans who have been abroad will be looked upon as "experts" - people who know:

1. We've had opportunity to visit foreign countries.
2. We've seen the occupation from close up.

B. For these reasons our opinions will count for something:

1. Will influence the thinking of people we know at home - in other words, will influence public opinion.
2. Ultimately will influence the policies of our government, because these policies depend on public opinion.

C. We will be considered experts on:

1. The occupation - the job the Army is doing.
2. What the Germans are thinking and doing.
3. Our Allies.
4. The way permanent world peace is shaping up.

D. Our responsibility is to give friends and family a reasonable true picture of problems facing Europe and



the world. To do this we should not:

1. Talk without facts.
2. Make broad general statements based on only a single instance.
3. Accept comments and opinions of others without question.

SUMMARY

- A. Americans abroad have the power to do good or bad for America's reputation:
1. By our example we can attract the Germans to, or repel them from, our way of life.
  2. In our contacts with Europeans and travel through European countries we can leave behind either good or bad impressions of Americans.
  3. By our attitudes toward and relations with DP's we will affect the reputation America has for producing a fair, just and understanding people.
- B. The impressions we gain of other people may influence American public opinion, and consequently American policies:
1. We are the "experts" whether we want to be or not.
  2. For this reason we should attempt to understand Europeans.
  3. We should make an effort to know the problems and progress of the occupation.
  4. We should make sure our opinions are well made.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### Section ~~12~~ 13

In June 1947, I flew back to the U.S. via commercial aircraft, at my own expense, with orders to report to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey to be processed for discharge. I simply could not contemplate another bout of seasickness on another troopship, preferring the non-pressurized DC-4, which made five stops and took almost 24 hours to get to New York.

I do not recall why I stopped at the UJA office, but fate was certainly directing my steps, for they were looking for me as I walked in the door. An Emergency Conference of leadership from every community in America had been convened at this midpoint of the campaign in order to re-stimulate the key workers. The main theme of the Conference was the condition of the Jews in the DP camps. The main speaker was to have been General Joseph T. McNarney himself, who was compelled to cancel at the last moment because of some unexpected situation in the army which required his personal attention. And the UJA was looking for me as an authentic witness and participant, just arrived from Germany, still in uniform, to take McNarney's place and to read the speech he had prepared. I agreed and proceeded to Galen Hall in Wernersville, Pennsylvania. I didn't know much about the UJA, but I did know a lot about the DPs, and what money could do for them.

At the conference I saw some old friends, who had passed through Germany on inspection visits - among them Sam



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Rothberg of Peoria, who was to become a legendary figure in all fund-raising for Israel, Sam Daroff of Philadelphia, Joe Holtzman of Detroit, Abe Feinberg of New York, Sol Luckman of Cincinnati, and Henry Montor, the executive director. Most of the persons present, all of whom were, or were to become, key leaders in their own communities and central figures in the national hierarchy, I met for the first time. The general chairman of the national campaign was Hon. Henry Morgenthau, former Secretary of the Treasury under President Roosevelt, who was in the chair at this conference. Two other personalities, both destined to be future general chairmen, Mr. Edward M.M. Warburg and Mr. William Rosenwald, were both seated on the dais, as was the most continuously effective woman leader of an entire half-century, Mrs. Mathilda Brailove. [Was Joseph Meyerhoff of Baltimore there? He certainly ranks among the very best.] Memory is dim as to each individual, though the occasion and its dramatic main event are still very clear.

The conference was droning along, dragging along, I thought to myself, moving through a pre-arranged agenda of reports, not very interesting, and certainly not exciting, when a short man at a front table jumped to his feet in an obviously agitated mood, interrupting with a furious question as to why he had been dragged from Los Angeles clear across the country to listen to this drivel. He suggested, with a certain sarcasm, that the national office should think twice before summoning people to an emergency conference which had no emergency tone or feeling

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about it. What was the emergency? What was he supposed to convey to his people back home to stimulate them to greater efforts? He himself had come here hoping to hear something new which could inspire him as the chairman of the second largest Jewish community in America, and he had heard nothing new. This was all old stuff. Give me something new, new, new, he demanded, or he would return empty-handed and the campaign would slump.

All during his tirade I had grown increasingly angry, starting to squirm in my seat, muttering, leaning forward to listen, then turning away in disgust. I couldn't understand what he was driving at. I knew nothing about the psychology of advertising or sloganeering, but it seemed to me that was not the way to raise money for this particular campaign. Or was it? I was conflicted, wanting on the one hand to shout back at him that this was history in the making, not new slogans, and afraid, on the other hand that I might do harm, because there was probably something about the fund-raising business that I simply did not understand. Mr. Morgenthau had been watching my restlessness, and made his decision. When the man finished and sat down, Morgenthau rose, and barked an order to me, almost as though he was my commanding officer, that I should get up and answer the man. The fashion in which he did it, without any introduction, released the energy in me, and I started to tear into the unfortunate man sitting there in front of me. It was as though there was no one else in the huge room. Everything I felt poured over him in a torrent. What kind of a person was he? What new things did he



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want? The fires in the ovens had been banked now for two years. Did he want them re-lit, so he could report some scoop he had heard at this conference? The gas in the chambers had not hissed for two years. Had he already forgotten what that must have sounded like? Were his people out in the tinsel-land so jaded that they needed blood to run again from bullet holes in a million bodies? I could not bring him news of blood, thank God, but I could give him plenty of mud. And I tried to draw a picture of what life was like in one ordinary DP camp. How each day stretched endlessly, for there was no hope. There was a dream about a some-day homeland, but meanwhile this grey monotonous barracks was the only home, and they had no evidence that any power in the world was working toward a solution for them. Children were born, and just washing a diaper was a major problem, for thousands lived in the camp, and there were only a few laundry tubs. Old folks died, and just burying them was a major problem, for their relatives did not want to leave them behind in German soil. Every single act of life, every minute of every day, was a problem. There was nothing new, nothing ever new. That was the greatest problem of all, for they were marking time while history worked out their destiny which was completely out of their control. How would you like to be not in control of your life, Mr. Los Angeles? The only message to bring back to your community is that the survivors are waiting to be rescued; that the DPs must be patient and the free Jews impatient, straining to help; that the struggle for independence in

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Palestine is the only ultimate solution, toward which all energy must be directed; and that the final victory over Hitler will come when the camps are emptied out and the survivors are living free and normal lives in their own land. Don't look for sensations, stories of dying Jews, pogroms. Hope instead for the same thing you want in your own life, that when someone asks you what's new, you can answer, nothing new, everything's OK. That is what you should want for the people in Europe. Be strong, be steady, increase your support, and always remember that money = morale as well as material things which it buys. Maintain the morale of the DPs while they wait for history to decide their fate. That's not new - that's an old Jewish story.

I sat down, wringing wet, purged; and he stood up and slowly applauded, and others did the same, and the whole room was on its feet in a stunning signal of support for those on whose behalf I had pleaded. The conference passed its resolutions, assigned quotas for increases, did all the necessary business and adjourned successfully. "He" was Max Firestein, the head of Max Factor perfumes, and the most important leader in L.A. We became great friends, and I saw him many times in the decades ahead. His support of Israel and endangered Jews the world over was solid, sincere and generous. When I apologized for lashing into him, for wiping up the floor with him, so to speak, he told me how grateful he was to me for responding as I had. With forethought he had offered himself as a target, hoping that someone would start the adrenalin of the whole audience by shooting at him.



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Mr. Morgenthau asked me to come to his office the next morning. He said I could be enormously useful to the campaign, and wondered whether I could accompany him on a barnstorming tour around the country for the next three weeks. He had chartered a DC-3 and wanted to visit as many as four or five towns every day. I explained that I was under orders to report to Camp Kilmer for separation from the service, and when he asked what he could do about those orders, I suggested that he call the staff sergeant at the separation center and explain what he wanted. This patrician, accustomed to dealing at the highest levels of government, said that he would not know how to negotiate with a sergeant, but he would know how to talk to his former colleague in the Cabinet, Mr. Robert Paterson, the Secretary of War.

Lifting the phone, he got through immediately, explained to Bob that he had a chaplain with him, wanted that chaplain to remain in uniform another month and be assigned to duty with him, and would Bob please arrange it. Thanks. During the conversation I was signalling frantically, trying to interrupt, to say that he should ask for written orders for me. The army worked solely through paper, and I knew I would be in trouble without new orders. Morgenthau paid no attention to me or my protests. As far as he was concerned, his friend the Secretary of War had approved this, and what better authority could I want. Resignedly, I said I wanted a piece of paper, but he was no longer listening, rather starting to work on our itinerary.

We started in Tulsa, stayed a few hours, went on to

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Oklahoma City, stayed a few hours, went on to Salt Lake City, and on and on, as day blurred into day. The Jewish leaders in each city were most obliging, meeting us usually at the airport, where some room or other was placed at our disposal, whatever time of day or night we arrived. For some reason it was usually two o'clock in the morning or eleven at night or some hour equally inconvenient. But the leadership people and bigger givers all seemed to understand the seriousness of what was being done, and cooperated handsomely.

As part of this itinerary, I had requested one stop in Denver, having agreed while still in Germany that if I got back to the States by June 17, I would appear at the community mass rally on behalf of the campaign. Morgenthau accepted this, and did two things: sent a telegram and made a phone call to the president of my congregation, Mr. Louis C. Isaacson. The telegram read as follows:

AM PLEASED TO INFORM YOU THAT SECRETARY OF WAR PATTERSON HAS DETAILED CHAPLAIN FRIEDMAN FOR SERVICE WITH ME DURING NEXT THREE WEEKS. PLEASE CONVEY TO THE MEMBERS OF YOUR CONGREGATION MY VERY DEEP APPRECIATION FOR YOUR ENABLING AMERICAN JEWRY TO HEAR THE STIRRING STORY OF YOUR RABBI. WARM REGARDS.

HENRY MORGENTHAU JR.

Following receipt of that wire, Mr. Isaacson wrote to the entire membership as follows:



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Dear Member,

Early Monday morning I was awakened by a telephone call from Henry Morgenthau in New York. He said: "Your rabbi delivered a talk here last night and it created a sensation. It was the most stirring appeal that has been made here for many years. We would like the permission of your Congregation to have him travel with me during the remainder of June for the relief of the destitute millions overseas. Will you lend him to the nation until July 1st?"

After discussing the matter with the Ritual Committee, and arranging with the Reform Rabbis of Pueblo and Colorado Springs to serve our congregants in case of need, I granted his request with the understanding that Rabbi Friedman would fulfill his engagement in Denver on June 17th. Mr. Morgenthau agreed and said that he expected to be here with him.

You, your family and friends are urged to attend the mass-meeting Tuesday evening, June 17, 8 o'clock, at East High School Auditorium and hear this vital message of our beloved Rabbi and pay tribute to Mr. Morgenthau, the most highly honored Jew in American history.

Sincerely yours,

Louis C. Isaacson, Pres.

When we landed in Denver, it was like the homecoming welcome of a victorious football team - a band, balloons and banners. The large crowd cheered, and I was acutely embarrassed.

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Morgenthau was delighted, as were the campaign officials and the two largest contributors, Jesse Schwayder and Adolph Kiesler, for this augured well for the success of the fund-raising. The numbers who jammed into the hotel room; the festive dinner before the rally; and the audience of 2000 who sat and stood in the high school all created a doubly-intense mood of personal greeting to me and appreciation of the cause which had kept me away for years and had now brought them to support that cause. It was a brilliant, soul-satisfying day in every way. To jump ahead of the story, the following year, 1948, I was the chairman of the Denver campaign, and brought Golda Meir to Denver, to address a similar mass rally. I have a photograph of her sitting on a couch between Messrs. Schwayder and Kiesler.

When the tour was done, I reported to Camp Kilmer, to the separation center, was promptly arrested for being AWOL (Absent without Leave), and thoroughly reprimanded in a scathing condemnation by the commanding officer, who pointed out the fact that never in his army career had he seen a clergyman guilty of this misdemeanor for such a long period. Where had I been all these weeks? What had I been doing? He would have to appoint an investigative team, in order to make certain there were not more serious crimes to be unearthed. And as he went on, I kept interrupting to explain, but every time I mentioned the names of Secretary Morgenthau or Secretary Patterson, he would become furious, actually livid, shouting that this was the craziest excuse he had ever ever heard. Did I think he was some kind of



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fool to swallow such a story? The angrier he became, the harder did his position become, until he finally assigned me to the guard-house, so that I could cool my heels while he tried to cool his wrath. It took two days, during which he sarcastically told me that if I could produce written orders to substantiate my story, he would apologize, and if I could not, he was going to put me up to a court-martial. Here we go again, I thought, and recalled my premonitions of a month ago, when I had begged Morgenthau to get me something in writing. After more verbal tussles, we finally made a deal: he would allow me one phone call, and if that produced nothing, I would agree to his starting proceedings.

With heart in mouth, I called Mr. Morgenthau, luckily caught him, explained my plight and he promised an immediate resolution. Within a half-hour an official telex arrived from Washington, containing the following paragraph which was later incorporated in my permanent record:

BY DIRECT ORDER OF SECRETARY OF WAR ABOVE-NAMED  
CHAPLAIN WAS PLACED ON SPECIAL DUTY FOR ONE MONTH  
AFTER RETURNING TO ZONE OF INTERIOR (U.S.), WITH  
FORMER SECRETARY OF TREASURY, HENRY MORGENTHAU,  
FOR PURPOSE OF EXPLAINING DISPLACED PERSONS  
PROBLEMS IN EUROPE.

When the commanding officer strode in to the guard-house with that telex in one hand and a cigar in the other, I knew the crisis was over. He invited me to his office, offered a

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whiskey to go with the cigar, and, utterly bemused, begged me to understand that he was only a lowly colonel, never dealt with Cabinet Secretaries, thought I had concocted a most unlikely story, and had decided not to be gulled by it. I assured him that I understood his predicament, that I held nothing against him, but would appreciate his putting me through all the red tape of demobilization as quickly as possible. He got me through in one hour. There was only a single hitch. In my 201 file there was a note to the effect that, upon separation from active duty, I was not to be invited to serve in the Army Reserve Corps, which was the usual offer made to every officer being honorably discharged. He looked at me quizzically, I remember, shaking his head but not wanting to ask what that note was all about, for he probably did not want to hear another outlandish explanation. And I did not offer one, but the thought crossed my mind that this was probably part of a deal that General Clay had made with the CID months ago. I walked out of Kilmer, took a bus to New York, bought a civilian suit in Brooks Brothers, and flew home to Denver.