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## Survivors' Talmud and the U.S. Army

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## Survivors' Talmud and the U.S. Army

### Abstract

[Excerpt] In many a library stands a set of oversized volumes which appear to be ordinary copies of the Babylonian Talmud but constitute in fact an extraordinary edition. On page one of each volume are sketches of camps and barbed wire, of palm trees from the Holy Land. The title page explains. At its head stands a tribute in the English language. The set is the Survivors' Talmud dedicated to the United States Army of Occupation in Germany.

### Keywords

Talmud, U.S. Army, Judaism, Holocaust, Shoah, Babylonian Talmud, Germany

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### Comments

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## Survivors' Talmud and the U.S. Army

Gerd Korman

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In many a library stands a set of oversized volumes which appear to be ordinary copies of the Babylonian Talmud but constitute in fact an extraordinary edition. On page one of each volume are sketches of camps and barbed wire, of palm trees from the Holy Land. The title page explains. At its head stands a tribute in the English language. The set is the Survivors' Talmud dedicated to the United States Army of Occupation in Germany!

The story of its inception, printing, and distribution deserves telling. Traditionally, governments, let alone armies, did not publish the Talmud. In Europe they usually pretended that it did not exist, or they hunted it as the source of heresy in Jewish life.<sup>2</sup> But beyond that rationale this publishing event has a deeper significance. It is part of a special historical moment which fanned post-war Jewish passions of despair and redemption; for in the days between 1945 and 1947 Jews faced alternatives they had not encountered for a long time.

They belonged to a generation that had experienced the Holocaust but had yet to hear the UN promise for a Jewish state.<sup>3</sup> To Zionists the Holocaust demonstrated a long-proclaimed position: a Jewish state is the only choice for Jews struggling to survive as human beings, and striving for Jewish institutional continuity between deep pasts and distant futures. The alternative, which gave rise to the Survivors' Talmud, involved the rebuilding of Jewish lives, organizations and institutions, more or less along the lines of the Euro-America past. Among the religiously observant, this perspective of the future required a program calling for the quick establishment of institutions of study and worship in lands where they could no longer find the Talmud of their fathers or brothers.

In 1946, when as special Jewish advisor, Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein of Rochester, New York, spoke with his commanding officer, General Joseph McNarney, about printing a Talmud in the American zone of conquered Germany, despair about the future of Eu-

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1 See, for example, the tractate *Shabbat* (Munich-Heidelberg: Carl Winter Printing Under the Supervision of Procurement Division, European Quartermaster Depot, United States Army, 1948).

2 H. H. Ben-Sasson, "The Middle Ages," in Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge: 1976), pp. 477-486, 591-592; Jeremy Cohen, *The Friars and the Jews* (Ithaca, N.Y.: 1982), pp. 51-76, 256-262.

3 For one set of contemporary assessments of the Zionist option see *American Jewish Yearbook*, 49, 244-265, 444-475, 483-520.

rope's Jews was well grounded. In the spring and summer Bernstein had placed himself between McNarney's army in Europe and the Zionist Jewish Agency. The army was alarmed about masses of Jewish survivors coming into its area of jurisdiction. The Zionist Jewish Agency tried to take advantage of the flight from Poland, especially after a pogrom in Kielce on July 4, where a traditionally anti-Semitic population killed and injured dozens of innocent Jews. Even as Bernstein appreciated the spontaneous nature of much of the flight toward Palestine, he sympathized with the Agency's efforts to organize it. Meanwhile as the weeks passed, a majority of its leaders had become convinced that a Jewish state in an "adequate" part of Palestine was the survivors' only option. At the end of June, England had struck hard at the central leadership of the Agency and its military force in Palestine. In October, at the White House, he told a surprised Harry Truman that ". . . no Government in Europe with whom I have dealt on temporary settlement projects is prepared to accept Jews on a permanent basis."<sup>4</sup>

The decision by the Agency to fight for any "adequate" area in Palestine and Bernstein's report to the President reflected the grave threats Jews faced. All about them were individuals and larger, more influential forces seeking to settle Jews and their questions by standards practiced before 1939. Russians maintained their fiction: "The Soviet Government is consistently and steadily following a policy which excludes all kinds of racial discrimination including that in relation to Jews." British and American officials pushed their version of unchanged attitudes. They saw affairs in Europe by the light of their old Russian enemy and by prewar Zionist ambitions. To Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin expressed one variant. On April 27, 1946 he worried about aggressive Jews who were "poisoning relations between our peoples . . ." just when England and America had to prevent Russia from penetrating the Near East. He knew that the Jewish Agency's concern about Jews in Europe derived from its Zionist ambitions: "most of the immigrants were carefully selected for their military qualities. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

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4 Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: 1970), pp. 140-141, 241-244, 255; *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, V (1943-1946), 7595; *New York Times*, October 11, 12, 1946. A convenient introduction to Truman's involvement with the DP's and Palestine is Allen Weinstein and Moshe Maoz, eds., *Truman and the Commitment to Israel* (Jerusalem: 1981). For the latest account see Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: 1982), pp. 9-116. See also Michael J. Cohen, *Palestine and the Great Powers 1945-1948* (Princeton: 1983), *passim*.

5 *United States Foreign Relations*, 1946, VII, February 19, 1946, p. 581; *ibid.*,

A few days later Gordon P. Merriam, chief of the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs, also expressed deeply rooted views on the subject in response to a memorandum from General John H. Hilldring, then Assistant Secretary of State for Occupied Areas in charge of DP problems in Europe. By the summer, Hilldring, who was well connected to Jewish organizations, would press American Jews to slow down the flow of Jewish DPs into the American Zone. But now, in May, he expressed an unorthodox position to his colleagues. He wanted the United States to support the Anglo-American Committee's recommendation for issuing 100,000 entry permits to Jews in Europe who wanted to go to Palestine. "I believe that unless we exercise unremitting pressure to this end . . . there will be no effective counteraction to British tactics of stalling and confusing the entire issue. . . ." The negative results would be felt by the army abroad and politicians at home. There "may very well be demonstrations by Jewish displaced persons in Germany and Austria and scathing comments by Jewish leaders and organizations in this country. . . ." Merriam rebutted with arguments reaching for a World War I mantle. Thanks to U.S. support of the principles of self-determination, Arab states were created out of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, American interest groups, including businessmen, had profited since they were not linked to political motives threatening Arab well-being. He told Acheson that Hilldring's position represented a parochial European view because it was not subordinated to America's long-term needs. As before World War II, American schools and colleges required Arab good will for sustaining their effectiveness. "Our educational interests . . . have taken more than a century to build up, and they constituted a sheet anchor in the Middle East when we were militarily weak."<sup>6</sup>

In military terms this kind of thinking tied American policy to British military capacities and to Arab oil reserves. A. J. McFarland, an official attached to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, identified the

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April 27, 1946, p. 588. For 1945 see Herbert Parzen, "President Truman and the Palestine Quandary: His Initial Experience, April-December 1945," *Jewish Social Studies*, 35 (January, 1973), 42-72.

6 *USFR*, 1946, VII, May 3, 1946, pp. 591-592, May 8, 1946, p. 598. One example of the depth of opposition to Zionist plans to be found in a position memorandum from the State Department's Policy Planning Staff under the direction of George Kennan. It recommended trusteeship and included this passage about the future if it contained a Jewish state: "The process of assimilation or integration of the individual Jew in the life of the country of which he is a citizen, which has been strongly advocated by World Jewry in the past, would be made more difficult, and he would be singled out for attack as an alien political factor . . ." *ibid.*, 1948, V, January 19, 1948, p. 552.

implications in a memorandum to his generals. The United States had to "oppose any actions regarding Palestine which are beyond the capabilities of British troops to control. . . ." After all, if force has to be used against the Arabs then the Soviet Union might replace the United Kingdom and America in "influence and power throughout the Middle East. . . ." Such a shift in turn would endanger America's access for the larger undeveloped oil reserves. In June 1946, McFarland warned that the U.S. may be coming to the limits of its resources "within this generation without having developed any substitutes. . . . A great part of our military strength, as well as our standard of living is based on oil. . . ." Clearly, loss of Arab reserves might even force Detroit to go to the four-cylinder engine.

In the wake of the Kielce pogrom of July 4 these policy considerations continued to reflect the years from the interwar period. On July 24, 1946, the special committee evaluating the Anglo-American Committee Report spoke for the Establishments in both countries. "The overwhelming majority of displaced persons, including a considerable number of Jews, will continue to live in Europe . . ."; in German and Austrian communities, the English and Americans "are prepared to assist native Jews to resettle . . . and reintegrate." Even as efforts by special American investigators to seek and punish Nazi financiers, industrialists, and government bureaucrats were being blocked by British and American judges and experts on international economic relations, the committee claimed that all "available means are being used to eradicate anti-Semitism. . . . Concentration camp survivors receive special treatment as to rations, financial assistance, housing and employment. . . ." The committee recognized that many of the DPs, "including Jews," had "irreparably" broken their ties with home communities, but nevertheless insisted that "Palestine alone cannot provide for the emigration needs of all Jewish victims. . . ." Once again the Establishments found the proper solution in the past. The committee spoke about other countries accepting DPs when Europeans were in fact refusing to admit Jews and when it was common knowledge that in the United Kingdom and the United States the opponents of Jewish DP immigration barred the door.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, on the ground in Europe, survivors and Jewish advocates had to deal with Allied soldiers on a day-to-day basis. As the army occupied European lands once held by Axis forces, it was

7 *Ibid.*, June 21, 1946, pp. 631-633. See also Benjamin Shwadran, *The Middle East and the Great Powers* (New York: 1955), pp. 310-353, 435-445.

8 *USFR*, 1946, VII, July 24, 1946, p. 653.

commanded to learn how to govern liberated populations. Surviving Jews in particular presented much more complicated problems than training groups had envisioned in the United States. Within weeks after V-E Day special demands from home on the senior officer corps in Germany were made by the requirements on the ground, by the exigencies of politics and diverse feelings towards Jewish survivors among soldiers, Germans, non-Jewish DPs, and Jews in America. Harry Truman had to use his presidential power as Commander-in-Chief to order his commanders to change their behavior which followed policies crudely equivalent to those being argued by the State Department's civil service. He called for special protection and consideration of Jewish Displaced Persons because as Jews they had been especially selected for the Third Reich's extermination policies. Starting in late summer of 1945, the American Army allowed Jews autonomous status and provided them with additional rations and other privileges. The army also allowed and acquiesced in special relations between Jewish DPs and their American co-religionists at home and in the army itself.<sup>9</sup>

This special status did not preclude serious opposition to the policies emanating from the highest levels of the army. As Jews refused to be policed by Germans, the army accepted jurisdiction and was usually welcomed by Jews as a protective shield against a hostile environment. But some Jewish DPs were also involved in black market activities. Consequently, the army authorized raids on Jewish camps. Suddenly survivors found themselves surrounded by tanks and troops as special units swept through a DP camp looking for the tell-tale evidence, usually in vain. Hometown experiences, rich in American traditions of bigotry and ignorance, had other opportunities for expression as well. It was convenient and, in the chill of the Cold War, desirable for occupiers to argue for quick rehabilitation and reconstruction, and against special treatment for Jews. Early in the American occupation officials in the military government pointed to Christians from the East: they constituted a much larger number of suffering displaced persons than did Jews. Officials also considered resident Germans more attractive than Jewish survivors: they were less demanding and more trustworthy than the

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9 This paragraph and some of the passages following it, in part are based on an informative unpublished manuscript, "The Undeclared: The Story of the Jewish Displaced Persons," by Abraham S. Hyman, an American Army chaplain who served as assistant to William Haber, General Clay's special Jewish advisor. For a critical scholarly account of the army and Jewish DP's see Dinnerstein, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 9-71. See also Bauer, *Briehah*, pp. 141, 344, n. 9 and for Bernstein's brief account of DP's and the American Army see "Displaced Persons," in *American Jewish Yearbook*, 49, 520-533.

Jews; and especially than the Zionists who, in part because of Stalinist sympathizers among them, were often suspect and confused with Communists. From the start, for some among British and American occupiers, the contrasts went well beyond these sorts of attitudes. The British, for example, treated Nazi financiers in ways comparable to those of American teams in search of scientists who served Nazi authorities. Among the ranks of American army intelligence officers some secretly recruited SS officials and other anti-Soviet espionage operators from the midst of Nazi Ukrainian collaborators and mass murderers. In other words, anti-Semitic suspicions and feelings affected the administration of a defeated society, itself full of antisemites. In post-World War I days, American government officials had accused representatives from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee of illegally stimulating Jewish emigration from a pogrom-ridden Poland and the Ukraine. Now, military officials – not all, to be sure – accused representatives from the Jewish Agency of illegally stimulating flights away from the Europe of Kielce!<sup>10</sup>

The past, which commanders and soldiers brought with them to Germany, had also combined anti-Semitism and ignorance about observant Jews. A graphic illustration is recorded in George Patton's diary. During the summer, when it became clear that the army had little if any appreciation of the needs and expectations among liberated Jews, Patton's behavior helped clarify the problem for President Truman. The general's combination of anti-Semitism, anti-Communism, and ignorance about Jews ill prepared him for understanding religious Jewish civilians. He served as commanding general of the famed Third Army which then had jurisdiction over most Jews in the American Zone in Germany. In early September he and Eisenhower arrived at a Jewish DP camp near Munich. It was a visit from mighty warrior liberators to liberated Jews who,

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10 Dinnerstein, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 49–71; *New York Times*, May 10, 1946, October 2, 1946; Bauer, *Briehah*, p. 242. See also *Keesing's Contemporary Archives*, V (1943–1946), 7431A, 7560A; Frank Hain, "Status of Jewish Workers and Employers in Post-War Germany," *Visiting Expert Series*, No. 10 (August, 1949), Office of Military Government for Germany (U.S.) Manpower Division, 1–3, 5–10; Tom Bower, *The Pledge Betrayed: America and Britain and the Denazification of Post-War Germany* (New York: 1982), pp. 4–13, 97–99, 160–168, 394, n. 12; Anna J. Merritt and Richard L. Merritt, *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany: The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949* (Urbana: 1970), pp. 146–147, 239–240. On the charges against HIAS and the JDC see Charles Reznikoff, ed., *Louis Marshall, Champion of Liberty* (Philadelphia: 1957), Vol. I, pp. 74–75; John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New Brunswick, N.J.: 1955), pp. 309–310.



now, in this camp, worshiped publicly on their first Yom Kippur, their first Day of Atonement in liberation. The Jews "were all collected in a large wooden building which they called a synagogue." Eisenhower was to speak.

We entered the synagogue which was packed with the greatest stinking bunch of humanity I have ever seen. When we got about half way up, the head rabbi, who was dressed in a fur hat similar to that worn by Henry VIII of England and in a surplice heavily embroidered and very filthy, came down to meet the General. Also a copy of the Talmud, I think it is called, written on a sheet and rolled around a stick, was carried by one of the attending physicians!<sup>11</sup>

Considering Patton's orders about Jews, it was only a matter of time before he was transferred from his command of the Third Army. By the fall of 1945 he was gone and so, for that matter, was the army's exclusive jurisdiction of the camps; afterwards, when the UNRRA and the International Refugee Organization became involved, the military limited its role to police work.

Even if Jewish DPs and their refugee counterparts abroad could not read diplomatic dispatches or private diaries of American generals, they fully comprehended the hatred and ignorance that surrounded them. Besides their daily experiences, their newspapers informed them. To be sure, these reflected the Zionist passion of the leadership of the Jews' Central Liberation Committee in the camps.<sup>12</sup> This press devoted continual coverage to the *Drang Nach Palästina*; it stressed especially coverage of the refugee ships trying to run the British blockade, and the rising tides of anti-Semitism in Germany, as well as in the rest of Europe. Readers learned about the charges against American soldiers and officers and their marked tendencies toward slipshod de-Nazification. They also heard about the difficulties the army faced in preparing young GIs to cope with the special problems of Jewish survivors and the relative attractiveness of German civilians to those same soldiers.<sup>13</sup> Perhaps Zionist propaganda did affect the flight towards Palestine, declared the *Neue Welt* in its first issue on behalf of Jewish congregations in Bavaria, but that appeal, the paper argued, did not preclude the fact that anti-Semitism made most Jews see their future exclusively in Palestine!<sup>14</sup> The *Aufbau* in New York published one report that

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11 Martin Blumenson, ed. *The Patton Papers* (Boston: 1974), 684-685, 689, 701, 708, 735, 738, 744, 751, 754. The quotation is on p. 754.

12 On Zionism among the DP's see Hyman's "Undefeated," and Bauer, *Brichah, passim*.

13 *Neue Welt*, 1947; *Aufbau*, 1945-1948.

14 Mid-September, 1947, Vol. I, No. 1.

translated fear of anti-Semitism a bit differently. The older Jewish DPs were selfish, unproductive, and worked the black market because they had no intention of using Germany for rehabilitation purposes. There is no point in doing anything here or elsewhere in Europe, they declare. In 50 years "they'll" build another Auschwitz anyway. To readers of these papers it was obvious that anti-Semitism in postwar Germany was very much alive, that if Hitler returned a majority would embrace him. Jewish DPs found it impossible to understand how any Jew could ever again think of making a home in Germany!<sup>15</sup>

Rabbi Bernstein, who was in America in early fall of 1946, confirmed these newspaper stories. He reported on conditions in Europe at a time when the Zionist alternative was still the only solution espoused by Jews and their few non-Jewish supporters. Representatives of leading Zionist organizations assembled in the Hotel Biltmore heard him say that, at best, European countries would only provide Jews with a temporary haven. Anti-Semitism remained everywhere. Germans may "think that the Nazis were too crude in techniques of persecution and extermination. . . . But they remain anti-Semitic." He spoke of the continuing flight from the East as Jews sought to make their way from the world of Kielce. On October 8, Bernstein speculated about a future for Holocaust survivors if the Zionist solution were rejected. Accepting the Honorary Degree of Divinity from the Jewish Institute of Religion, General McNarney's special Jewish chaplain saw dark days: "If the decision on Palestine should be negative and contrary to Jewish rights and needs, the consequences to the Jewish displaced persons in Europe would be too terrible to contemplate. . . ." <sup>16</sup>

Perhaps President Truman had the last word on the subject. On October 9, 1946, McNarney had been quoted in the *New York Times* about the coming winter: the "most critical" stage of the American occupation was coming. The influx from the Russian zone and from Czechoslovakia was increasing the crowded conditions of Germans; the shipping strike in the United States threatened food supplies in Germany. Two days later, Rabbi Bernstein called at the White House to tell Truman the Europeans rejected Jewish aliens. The next day a source close to Truman told the *Times* that he had told Clement Attlee, Prime Minister of England, that the Jews had experienced a "terrible ordeal" before and during the

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15 *Aufbau*, April 18, 1947.

16 *New York Times*, October 2, 8, 1946.

war and still up to now "virtually nothing had been done to alleviate their condition since the war."<sup>17</sup>

In other words, in 1946, when the subject of printing Talmud volumes was broached to the American Army, a post-Holocaust alternative to a Jewish state in Palestine, which required rebuilding Jewish lives, organizations and institutions in Europe, had in fact started to manifest itself. At the time, leaders of the DP's said that they considered these efforts as transitional programs, preparations for going home, to Palestine.<sup>18</sup> But outside Jewish circles, and even within them, especially in America, the old consensus remained powerful: many could not imagine a Europe without Jews.<sup>19</sup> As did Jewish Communists and Bundists in Russian occupied Europe, advocates of the old consensus also could not or would not conceive of Europe's Jewish survivors as standing in line to serve Zionism in Palestine. Instead, they saw migration from Europe as a socio-psychological response to the pain of the past. Those who allowed it committed an act of charity to those who would no longer live in Europe where stones reeked of the blood of relatives. The Talmud project was another kind of sedative.

One of the units of American Military Government, if it wanted to do so, or if ordered by men of the rank of Eisenhower, McNarney, or Lucius Clay, was especially capable of responding to the Jewish request transmitted by Rabbi Bernstein. The District Information Service's Control Command, part of the Information Control Division, operated out of Frankfurt and Munich. In Munich its offices were in a bomb-cracked building that had served as an old folks' home and then as the headquarters for the German Army's quartermaster corps. ICD had been conceived before War's end in the Psychological Warfare Division, the state-side predecessor of ICD. Under the command of Colonel William Paley, the former head of Columbia Broadcasting, ICD expected to re-educate Nazified Germans. Its authority was wide-ranging, including the right to requisition the facilities of printers, radio stations, or theaters. By spring 1946 in the Bavarian Zone alone, ICD established 21 newspapers (with a claimed combined readership of 2 million, in-

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17 *Ibid.*, October 11, 12, 1946. See also U.S. *Foreign Relations*, 1946, July 24, 1946, p. 653.

18 Hyman, "Undeclared," *passim*.

19 See for example American Jewish Committee, *The London Conference of Jewish Organizations*, February 23-March 2, 1946. See also Nathan Reich, "Overseas Aid," in *American Jewish Year Book*, 49, 227-242; Jacob Kaplan, "France," in *ibid.*, 319-324; Regine Orfinger-Karlin, "Belgium," in *ibid.*, 325-330; Andrea Tabet, "Italy," in *ibid.*, 347-354; Boris Sapir, "Germany and Austria," in *ibid.*, 362-380.

cluding DP's), opened theaters and movie houses, and launched a book publishing program comparable to that of a major American house. David Davidson, who served with ICD in Munich, recalled years later how he exercised some of that authority.

I would confiscate printing plants that had belonged to the Nazi party and individual Nazis and lease them to the new publishers, search out supplies of newsprint and ink, arrange for the salvage of bombed presses, [and] supervise a swap of wheels of Bavarian cheese for British-zone zinc needed for making photographic plates. . . .<sup>20</sup>

Jewish overtures to ICD's publishing and printing programs came from a variety of people using all sorts of approaches. The most important came from the American Joint Distribution Committee, active in international relief and rehabilitation since 1915. By the end of World War II the Joint was the wealthiest and best staffed of all organizations in the field; it was active all over Europe in relief and rehabilitation programs, including educational efforts which required a substantial publishing and distribution program.<sup>21</sup> But there were other important organizations as well. Rabbi Abraham Kalmanowitz, President of the Mirrer Yeshiva in Manhattan and an important figure in the Union of Orthodox Rabbis and its Vaad Hatzala (Rescue Committee), started his campaign early in the American occupation. Persistent and hard driving, as always, he made useful contacts with sympathetic and influential commanders, and sometimes earned their respect and admiration. In 1945 he involved John Hilldring and Lucius Clay by coming into Civilian Affairs Division's headquarters for three months "often exhausting to no avail every possibility in Army Service Forces about sending some religious articles to Jewish DP's in Germany. I [finally] sent you a [two-way] radio," Hilldring reminded his friend Lucius, "and in forty-eight hours we had authority to make the shipment." Two years later, when Hilldring was back home, serving Truman "in the Palestine question" at the United Nations, Kalmanowitz could still count on him when he needed authorizations from the Economic Division of Military Government in Germany. Hilldring wrote Clay in 1947: "He is unable to get anyone interested in his project of getting some Tahlmuds [sic] printed in Germany for issue to Jewish DP's." Hilldring knew how difficult it was in Germany to manage competing claims and projects requiring hard-to-get paper and printing materials. But his friend was special. "All I know is that Rabbi Kalmanowitz is a patient and appreciative old patriarch.

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20 David Davidson, "Looking for the Good Germans," *American Heritage*, 33 (June/July 1982), 90-95. The quotation is on p. 93.

21 Reich, "Overseas Aid," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 49, 235.

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. . . I can think of no assistance I gave anyone in Washington . . . that gave me more satisfaction than the very little help I gave the old Rabbi. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

In the event, in November 1947, Rabbi Kalmanowitz was not after "Tahlmuds," per se, but rather the "publications of Bibles and religious books in Germany . . ." for the elementary religious schools that he had helped to organize in Germany and France, and which he now supervised under the auspices of the American Union of Orthodox Rabbis. He and his small group of co-workers needed from General Clay, and the Military Government of Germany, priority permits for paper and electric power, and a transport license to ship books from Germany to displaced persons in France. Clay turned him down, with an explanation, a suggestion, and an expression of sympathy. "The shortage of paper here is so acute that for the next six months there will be no paper available except for the publication of essential government documents." He suggested using the American Bible Society as a model. It had used its own funds for purchasing printing materials in America in order to print Bibles "for use of Protestants in Germany." Clay thought that funds could "be collected from Jewish people in the United States and elsewhere. . . . When such funds are obtained, it can then best be decided whether it is easier to print the Bibles in Germany despite the serious difficulties of transportation or to manufacture and ship [them] from the United States." Appreciative of what his Jewish aide later called the "sentimental and public relations value" that Kalmanowitz's type of projects had for the U.S. Army, Clay assured him "that he had every sympathy for the unfortunate peoples of your faith who have suffered so long"; he regretted "that present conditions did not permit a more encouraging answer. . . ."<sup>23</sup>

These kinds of connections had resulted in ICD's response to Jewish requests for all sorts of religious books. As early as winter, 1945-46, the army, in conjunction with UNRRA, acted upon the initiatives from some local DP rabbis in contact with Kalmanowitz. In February, Alexander Rosenberg reported to the American Joint Distribution Committee in New York on new publications: "Three

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22 Hilldring to Clay, November 17, 1947, in OMGUS Educational and Cultural Relations, Religious Affairs Branch, 5/388-2, Folder 22, Box 158, RG 260, National Archives; interview with Rabbi Appelbaum, Brooklyn, New York, July 24, 1981.

23 Rabbi Seltzer, Union of Orthodox Rabbis to Office of the Director, Economic Division, OMG, November 7, 1947; Kalmanowitz to Economic Division, OMG, November 19, 1947, to Clay, November 19, 1947; Clay to Kalmanowitz, December 20, 1947; Clay to Hilldring, December 20, 1947, OMGUS, ICD/ISD, 5/240-2-43, Box 237, RG 260, National Archives; William Haber to Gerd Korman, August 20, 1982.

tractates of the Talmud, a prayer book, a Haggadah, a book of Esther, and a guide to religious marriage are either in process of publication or are already published.”<sup>24</sup> But these efforts did not represent the actual starting point of the publication project Bernstein proposed to McNarney. The Talmud tractates and others of the books that Rosenberg mentioned belonged to the huge program of the army’s ICD division. They were publications released in response to religious needs in occupied Germany right after the war ended. “The efforts made by Information Control in the early months of occupation to reproduce religious literature banned or discouraged by the Nazis resulted in very generous paper allocations to religious publications.” Even as late as November 1946, continued a confidential report from Information Control to McNarney’s office, “the amount of book and magazine paper used for religious works is 336 tons per quarter or about one fourth of the actual quarterly delivery from the mills.”<sup>25</sup>

Among the DP’s were rabbis who had been liberated, recovered, and who remained strong enough once again to become activists on behalf of observant Judaism. Rabbi Solomon Wieder, then in Montreal, in his newly acquired English recalled his activities six years earlier in a Jewish DP camp in Windesheim. “I also established there everything pertaining to Jewish life, such as Sinagoes [sic], Jewish Chadorim, Mickwah, Yeshivos, and Matzho – bakery.” He also travelled among the different camps on behalf of the dietary laws which observant Jews obeyed, even in those circumstances. “I was also active to procure Kosher Meat for many other Camps by going myself every week to the City of Nuremberg, where the slaughtering of cattles were under my personal supervision, where from the Kosher Meat was distributed to the other camps. . . .”<sup>26</sup>

Rabbi Snieg, and the younger Rabbi Rose, linked the Survivors’ Talmud project to the Orthodox DP rabbis of Vaad Harabanim, the Rabbinical Committee of the Jewish DP’s Central Committee of Liberated Jews. As had a number of the leaders of the CLJ’s executive committee so, too, had these men come from Kovno in Lithuania. Samuel Abba Snieg, who during World War II served as a rabbi with Lithuania’s military, had been among the trapped of Kovno and imprisoned in its Slobodka ghetto. When the Germans

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24 Henrietta K. Buchman to Philip Bernstein, October 20, 1953; Abraham Klausner to Tarshansky, November 2, 1950, Joint Archives.

25 G. H. Garde to Commanding General, United States Forces, European Theater, 26 November 1946, OMGUS ICD/ISD, RG 260, NA. See also *Neue Welt* II, No. 22 (January 1948), for a fuller description of the accomplishments of the U.S. Vaad Hatzala in Munich.

26 Weider to JDC, June 25, 1951, Joint Archives.

dissolved it, Snieg became one of many sent to Dachau, the concentration camp near Munich. American liberators sent him to the hospital to recover his strength and allowed him to join with other rabbis to establish in Munich – the headquarters of U.S. military government in Bavaria – an organization on behalf of survivors, the Agudath Harabanim, a regional central committee of rabbis connected to the Orthodox rabbinate in the United States and Canada. In the winter of 1945–1946, when Kalmanovitz of the American Orthodox Rabbinate had obtained the help of the army and of the UNRRA to publish some Talmud tractates, Rabbi Snieg dreamt about printing an entire Talmud, a complete Shaas in the land that had tried to destroy Jewish life forever.<sup>27</sup>

Samuel Jacob Rose had studied at Kovno's famed Slobodka Yeshiva. In 1941, at age 25, he received his ordination but within a few months the German army invaded Lithuania and Rose found himself in the same Slobodka ghetto into which Rabbi Snieg had been forced to move. In August 1944, Rabbi Rose, with his family, was also sent to Dachau. His father and siblings died of starvation, but U.S. troops came in time to save the ill Samuel. Once recovered, he moved to Munich where he became a collaborator in Rabbi Snieg's Talmud project.<sup>28</sup>

Together with others in the Central Committee who did not have Talmud sets or particular volumes for their Talmudic students in the various DP camps, they worked out a plan for printing a Talmud on German soil. As they had no type available they turned to "photostating or photo-offsetting." Besides needing such materials as good white paper, cord, and cardboard, they also needed a photoengraving firm with appropriate film and equipment and, of course, Talmud volumes from which to make a new set of master plates. By the spring of 1946 the rabbis were ready to turn to the military. As luck would have it, some Talmud volumes had turned up in a Munich cemetery, not far from the Scheiterhof on Lake Necker where on Kristallnacht in 1938 Nazis hurled Talmud volumes into a roaring bonfire. Everyone assumed other volumes could be found, somewhere. The rabbis also located the "right" firm in Heidelberg and thought they could lay their hands on the required materials. All that remained was to present the plan,

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27 *Jewish Daily Forward*, December 28, 29, 1950; *Der Tog*, January 28, 1951; Rabbi Manuel Lederman in *Denver Jewish News*, March 1, 1951.

28 OMGUS, *Information Bulletin*, November 1950, 35; *Forward*, December 28, 29, 1950; *Der Tog*, January 25, 1951.

together with appropriate endorsement, to the commander of the American Army of Occupation.<sup>29</sup>

Rabbi Snieg approached Rabbi Bernstein. He was the Reform rabbi from America, who in May 1946 had been appointed as the third special Jewish advisor to General McNarney's staff in order to assure reasonable working relations between the U.S. Army and survivors of the Holocaust. Joining forces with Snieg, Bernstein became a crucial supporter of Snieg's project, for he saw all sorts of problems which he decided to overcome. Perhaps the hardest task, in this early phase, was to find one Talmud set. In post-war Europe complete sets were hard to find because in the previous ten years the Talmud had been hunted as of yore, in the centuries when, as an embodiment of heresy, Christians had burned thousands of volumes at the stake.<sup>30</sup> As it was the rabbis started with the cemetery volumes and found six more in Switzerland and France, but in the end they turned to Shlomo Shapiro, Religious Director of the JDC in Germany, who brought two sets from New York.<sup>31</sup>

So armed, Bernstein arranged a meeting for a delegation of DP rabbis. They travelled to army headquarters in Frankfurt, to the commanding general of the American armies in Europe. There they put the questions to McNarney, the soldier who in the war had also served in Washington as George Marshall's manager of military bureaucracies, who remained well-connected to the former Chief of Staff, soon to become Truman's Secretary of State.<sup>32</sup> Kielce had not yet happened but post-war anti-Semitism had manifested itself everywhere. Individual officers remained friendly but more and more of the officer corps and rank-and-file in 1946 identified with the vanquished, who eagerly wanted to forget the past in order to rebuild their nation, this time without Jews. Immigration doors remained shut to most Jews. Palestine and the sea to its west were in British hands.

The rabbis appealed to McNarney for teachers, "Yeshives," for children and their families who had to stay in the American Zone, that is, for the Holocaust survivors who would have to remain in Germany, Austria, in the European past. They appealed for an

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29 Rabbi Bernstein, "Memorandum on Publication of the Talmud," August 29, 1946; *Information Bulletin*, August 9, 1949, p. 10, November 1950, p. 35; *Forward*, December 28, 29, 1950; *Der Tog*, January 25, 1951.

30 Bernstein, "Memorandum."

31 *Forward*, December 28, 29, 1950; *Der Tog*, January 25, 1951.

32 On McNarney, who graduated from West Point as a classmate of Eisenhower and Bradley, see *New York Times*, February 3, 1972; Gordon W. Prange, *At Dawn We Slept* (New York: 1981), pp. 594, 622.



“evolving process” over whose treasures Jews “have pored in every land and age . . .” for “one of the source-springs of Jewish religion and tradition.” They came on behalf of that very foundation of Judaism which National Socialists had tried to destroy. “Every Jew in Poland was ordered, upon pain of death, to carry to the Nazi bonfires and personally consign to the flames his copy of the Talmud.”<sup>33</sup>

They put their momentous questions to the General of all American soldiers in Europe. Would the army make a major effort in rebuilding that culture which the Nazis had sought to obliterate, thus vindicating the finest principles for which American democracy stands? Would the army provide “the tools for the perpetuation of religion, for the students who crave these texts spring from the strongly orthodox element”? Would the General print the Talmud in Germany? “A 1947 edition . . . published in Germany under the auspices of the American Army of Occupation, would be an historic work.”<sup>34</sup> No Gentile ruler had decided ever before to print and publish a Talmud for the Jews. It would be a distinctly American event, for it is impossible to imagine a European commander in 1946 doing what McNarney did.

Still, from the start, the project belonged to the choices of the European past, alternatives with a distinctive American influence resulting from the occupation. The dependence on the good offices of the Gentile men of power and their brokers was self-evident. In this instance sentiment and good public relations for an army under Jewish fire at home provided opportunities which McNarney and Bernstein could each exploit to advantage.<sup>35</sup> After all, President Truman, Commander-in-Chief, was also head of a Democratic Party about to enter its first post-war election against a vigorous Republican Party.

Beyond such considerations there was also a contrast of passions. For the DP rabbis and the Orthodox supporters this was a project of urgency, of moment. Rabbi Bernstein, as a Reform rabbi from Rochester, New York trying to persuade American officers, may have been able to discuss the Talmud in naturalistic historical terms, but for Rabbis Snieg, and such Orthodox rabbis as Rose, the Talmud was the eye, the essence of their religious devotion and behavior.<sup>36</sup> In the European past, anti-Talmudic zeal had driven

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33 Bernstein, “Memorandum.”

34 *Loc. cit.*

35 William Haber to Gerd Korman, August 20, 1982.

36 Compare Bernstein’s “Memorandum” with the Talmud’s “Dedication” written by Snieg et al.

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Christian hunters and later the National Socialists. That time was over but the Americans did not replace a negative force with a positive one. For McNarney and the other officers who responded sympathetically to the project, there existed no passion. If McNarney and his officers were driven by anything beyond sympathy for the plight of suffering Jews, political concerns at home and in Germany, it was by the force of indifference towards the Talmud and whatever it represented.

However, with the general's approval, the military bureaucracy started to respond to the rabbis' request. On August 29, in his official capacity as Advisor to the Theater Commander on Jewish Affairs, Rabbi Bernstein submitted a short "Memorandum on Publication of the Talmud." In it he expressed the commitments that moved the rabbis and summarized the practical considerations which they faced. The multi-volume work was hard to find anywhere for their purposes, in part because there was "a serious shortage in America . . . since the American-Jewish students had always relied upon the Polish source. There was no printing of the Talmud in America," Bernstein revealed to the military. He also reported on the needs and printing possibilities as seen by the displaced rabbis and recommended that their "Religious Department of the Central Committee" be authorized to proceed with the Talmud project. He then stated the obvious. In occupied Germany authorization for the use of required supplies and services "must be obtained from the Military Governor."<sup>37</sup>

By October 8, while Bernstein was still in the United States and before he saw Truman, his memorandum and a statement entitled "Paper Supply for One Set of 16 Volumes" was in process. Colonel George F. Herbert, writing out of McNarney's headquarters, justified the "extensive undertaking" to the sympathetic Lucius Clay, the Military Governor in Berlin, on two grounds. The effort "warrants consideration" because of the Talmud's "virtual destruction by the Nazis." Herbert's second justification cut differently. He placed the project on the kind of comparative basis that sounded reasonable but would in fact work against the Jewish project: "religious publications for the displaced persons of other faiths have been furnished through normal procurement channels."<sup>38</sup>

Since the rabbis' request loomed as an "extensive" one for the Army, McNarney's office also asked Berlin to prepare a feasibility report. At this point the project involved 3,000 sets of 16 volumes

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37 Bernstein, "Memorandum."

38 George F. Herbert to Commanding General, OMG for Germany, October 8, 1946, RG 260, NA.

or a total of 1,200 printing plates of 8 pages each requiring 1,980,000 sheets, 1,200 films for photostat procedures or 10,560 for offset printing, and tens of thousands of meters of different bonds and strips of linen paper. Clearly, Frankfurt needed detailed information and recommendations from the Office of Military Government for Germany: "Review . . . requirements . . . determine the amount of each item . . . available from the German economy, with due consideration that in effecting [sic] payment the project will be charged to that chapter in the German civilian budget relating to the care of displaced persons. . . ." Herbert told Berlin that Frankfurt did not want the project charged to the "U.S. military indigenous budget," and explained that the actual publication of the Talmud volumes could be spread out "over a period of one year [sic], should this tend to relieve a critical situation. . . ." He did want the "earliest practical date," presumably for starting the project, although in Herbert's letter that point remained vague.<sup>39</sup>

Military bureaucrats went to work on the project and quickly revealed the difference between themselves and the impatient and desperate rabbis for whom the Talmud's publication in post-Holocaust Europe would become a great historical event. Among the bureaucrats, criteria from the prewar past dominated their desk work. Some scribbled on Herbert's memo. One asked "Hebrew or German?" Another noted "Talmud is for study research - not like Bible" and wanted to know "How many orthodox Jews?" "1 to 18 for others" came the answer. "Gifts from U.S." also occurred to the same scribbler.<sup>40</sup>

By 21 November, Lieutenant Colonel G. H. Garde, writing from Berlin to McNarney's office in Frankfurt reported on behalf of the Director of Information Control, that is, William Paley's office. He and the Education and Religious Affairs Branch agreed that "publication of the Talmud in Germany . . . would be [a] worthy educational project, especially in view of the systematic destruction of this important book [sic] . . ." But now, just six weeks after Herbert's request from Frankfurt, the project was "impracticable by the extreme scarcity of the materials required and the consequent strict rationing through allocation of the small quantities available." Garde lined up his evidence carefully in order to follow what IC in 1946 considered normal procedures. There was no paper available. With a representative from the American Joint Distribution Committee at the "interview," IC and UNRRA had agreed upon "50 tons

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39 *Ibid.*

40 *Ibid.*; Edward T. Peeples, Memorandum, File No. IC461 (PUB), January 31, 1947, RG 260, NA.

per quarter" of paper, for UNRRA's book and magazine needs for all the Displaced Persons. "This amount," declared the colonel, "is the most that present paper production will allow to be diverted from other essential uses." The required materials are "not legally available . . ." It was one thing for Rabbi Bernstein's Central Committee of Liberated Jews of Bavaria to have located what they needed; it was another to purchase their requirements legally. Such legal purchases could be made only by "licensed German publishers and only in such amounts as are needed to purchase the titles specified by Information Control to meet the required priorities." Allocations for paper for religious publication now had to compete with changing demands for "other scientific and other publications essential to Military Government . . ." Supplies had become especially tight because coal and other necessities were in short supply. For the next quarter allocations had been cut back by ten percent.<sup>41</sup>

These considerations pointed to criteria of comparability as if the Holocaust had not occurred.

If from such reduced allocation for all religious publications in Germany, the requested amount of 115 tons of 70 gram paper were supplied to one religious denomination of the several denominations represented by Displaced Persons, the injustice to other Displaced Persons denominations and to the religious groups of German nationals could not be justified.

Garde provided what to him served as telling evidence. The U.S. Zone contained 1,400 tons of paper. Divided by 16 million nationals those book and magazine supplies came to 88 tons for each million. There are 190,000 Jews in Germany. All are not "Orthodox." Conclusion: "115 tons of paper for one book title even though it be the Talmud, would be far in excess of reasonable demands. . . ."<sup>42</sup>

Colonel Garde was obviously a practical man. "An edition of 3,000 sets of the Talmud," he wrote, "would appear to be excessive . . . for the whole of Germany. The libraries now functioning in the American Zone which would be satisfactory depositories for such sets," he explained a year after the Holocaust, "do not number more than ten. For the whole of Germany the number is believed not larger than fifty. . . ."<sup>43</sup>

Garde recommended following IC's normal procedures for obtaining "doctrinal publications" - Bibles, hymn and prayer books - needed by any religious denominations in Germany. The scribbler's

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41 G. H. Garde, Lieutenant Colonel, AGD Adjutant General, OMG for Germany to Commanding General, United States Forces, European Theater, November 26, 1946, RG 260, NA.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Ibid.*

notes had pointed the way: "request coreligionists in the U.S. and other nations to donate the materials required." Garde assumed that "Orthodox Jews in the U.S. would presumably welcome an appeal to supply the materials or funds to purchase outside of Germany the materials needed to produce a reasonably large edition of the Talmud in Germany."<sup>44</sup>

Within a few weeks Garde's recommendations were implemented. His number of fifty for all of Germany became the operative figure for the army. On 30 January, 1947 Douglas Waples, Chief of the Publications Control Branch asked the Information Control Division in Bavaria to "investigate and advise" the Director of Information Control "on the practicability of having the 50 sets of the Talmud produced under the direction of the Religious Department, Central Committee, Liberated Jews of Bavaria. . . ." Rabbi Bernstein would supply names and phone numbers needed to contact this group and would assist in other ways. His office would also distribute the volumes at a price that would cover the costs of production "plus a reasonable profit." "This price," wrote Waples, "will be charged the civilian budget for DP's." Approval from the appropriate offices and divisions came in due course, after some technical difficulties had been cleared up. The Economic Division of OMGU could not "concur . . . without a full statement of requirements." Established procedures also called for OMGUS to "evaluate the impact of the proposed procurement on the German economy." The official authorization for the 50 sets came on 4 February 1947. General McNarney explained that Rabbi Bernstein "has received our original request for the publication of 3,000 copies of the Talmud in the light of existing paper shortages and agrees to the publication of only fifty sets at this time." The other problem had also been solved. "It has been further agreed that American Jewish Voluntary Agencies will provide at a future date the paper stock for the subsequent printing of all copies of the Talmud in excess of fifty sets."<sup>45</sup>

In the next eighteen months, when Jews in Europe seemed to be expressing some symptoms of permanent residence in Europe, predispositions and priorities among army officers combined with the mobilization of Zionist passions to crowd out the rabbinic enthusiasms which had given birth to the Talmud project in the first place. Jewish Palestine and underground migration to it had come under British colonial police-state practices. Fighting between Jews

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44 *Ibid.*

45 Waples to ICD, January 30, 1947; Garde to ICD, January 31, 1947; Douglas H. Patterson to IC Division, January 31, 1947; Beeth to OMG for Germany, February 4, 1947, RG 260, NA.

and British sailors, soldiers, and counter-terrorists had become ferocious. Since the summer of 1946, England's navy had intercepted blockade runners in the name of the "Cyprus or Elsewhere" deportation decree. The search and seizure operations resulted in boarding parties, "tear-smoke grenades" and "oil sprays" used against passengers and swimmers whose "arms were branded with German concentration camp numbers." By spring, Jews eager to leave Central Europe for the American Zone had also heard about the crowded displaced persons camps. And meanwhile, post-war Polish authorities had made their borders more secure against unauthorized departures. In sum, events of these months combined to ease emigration pressures among Holocaust survivors. For the time being the *Drang Nach Palästina* had abated and American doors remained all but closed.<sup>46</sup>

In such circumstances efforts to develop Jewish institutions of religion and education seemed more urgent than ever, yet the much stripped down Talmud project continued to encounter obstacles. In line with occupation practices of confiscation and requisition of German properties, the Procurement Division of the European Quartermaster requisitioned the necessary printing plant in Heidelberg, and in May the American Joint Distribution Committee undertook to finance, print, and distribute an additional 1,000 sets of the Talmud. But by fall, when an order for copies of the new Talmud came to the Joint from the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York City, the Joint's Committee of Cultural Affairs apologized: "The plan for the photo offset reproduction of the four volume Horeb edition that we contemplated earlier this year was set aside . . . and arrangements are now underway for reproducing the original Vilna Shaas. . . ." Actually, the printing had not started, let alone been completed. As before there had been too many other priorities. Paper shortages interfered. The process for transferring "photographical print from old pages to zinc plates . . . required collodion," a commercial product banned during the war, and now available in Germany only in Zwickau, a city in the Soviet Zone that was unreachable because of the Cold War. The army had to order the collodion from America. And finally, there had been the impact of the weak German currency which had become practically worthless; printers would not work for valueless money. For a proj-

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46 Arthur Koestler, *Promise and Fulfillment: Palestine 1917-1949* (New York: 1949), pp. 134-140; Bauer, *Briehah*, pp. 268-282; Dinnerstein, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, pp. 136-182. See also Hyman, "Undefeated," *passim*, and George Kirk, "The Middle East 1945-1950," in Arnold Toynbee, ed., *Survey of International Affairs* (London: 1950), pp. 187-251.

ect that was to be partially funded by the German economy, the currency crisis meant delays until the economic reforms of the late spring of 1948.<sup>47</sup>

As 1947 and early 1948 witnessed these obstacles and delays, the urgent need for rapid development of Jewish educational and religious institutions in the lands of the Displaced Persons also did not bring Jewish efforts that could match the enthusiasm of the founders of the project. The very news that helped to dampen the *Drang Nach Palästina* also helped to fuel the Zionist movement among the Jews of the post-Holocaust world. From the moment that Bevin referred the Palestine question to the United Nations, on February 18, 1947, the critical struggle for homeland and even statehood had been joined. British tactics, at the UN and among U.S. State Department supporters of English aims in the Arab world, kept results in doubt up to the last moment. Even in the days when the U.S. and the Soviet Union both had decided to support partition of Palestine, Britain's refusal to use its troops to enforce a UN Assembly's decision on partition left His Majesty's Government considerable influence in affecting the outcome, in debates and in the casting of ballots. In such circumstances Zionism and its demands became the primary magnet attracting the allegiance of most Jews. After November 29, the day the UN voted for partition, the attractions intensified; for the vote was followed by a full-scale civil war between the Jews and Arabs of Palestine, and after May 15, 1948, by a war between the newly established state of Israel and its neighboring Arab states.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps, if organized Orthodox Jewry and devotees of Talmud had enjoyed a larger following and had been less sectarian in nature, the passions of DP rabbis would have been matched by dollars and decisiveness. Telling in this respect was a note from Shapiro to New York around the time the project was coming to an end. At the beginning of it, his staff in Paris did not know much about the Talmud:

. . . you will be interested to know that there has been a great amount of reading of books about the Talmud among members of our staff as a result of our involvement in the project . . . Many people became involved in one way or another in the Transportation Department, in the Accounting Department, in the Budget Department, and in turn those

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47 Edward M. Warburg to David Niles, March 11, 1945; Edward Phillips to Edward Kiev, October 20, 1947, Joint Archives; Bernard Quinn, in *Information Bulletin*, November 1950, 33-35; *Forward*, December 29, 1950.

48 For recent contributions to the extensive literature on these months see Weinstein and Maoz, *Truman*, 82-151.

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who are in close relationship with these departments have been requesting material on the subject and we have not enough to go around.<sup>49</sup>

It was also revealing that Bernstein did not mention the Talmud project in his *American Jewish Yearbook* report on "Displaced Persons." In fact, in that volume it is mentioned once, and then only in passing and incorrectly.

The religious Department of the JDC was instrumental in organizing kosher slaughtering for the Jewish population in the camps and the communities. As of December 1946, some 35,000 prayer books and thousands of other religious prerequisites were distributed including 1000 sets [sic] of the Talmud, especially printed by JDC with the cooperation of the U.S. Army and distributed among the students of the many Yeshivoth maintained in the camps.<sup>50</sup>

Between 1946 and 1948 the large majority of Jews in Europe, America and Palestine were simply preoccupied with other programs. Only a distinct minority knew or cared about Talmud or Yeshivot; neither was held in esteem. Few shared the passions of the Kovno rabbis. The DP's hungered for new secular homes outside of Europe. In America Jews hurried into lives shaped by the clocks, rhythms, styles, and values of the Gentile middle classes.

In these months Jewish leaders in the ranks of American labor, and business, and in the domain of the professions, who were influential in Jewish affairs and in American politics, still took seriously ideological devotions, especially their anti-clerical convictions. In that sense they also belonged to the same past that had shaped so much of the outlook of officialdom serving the American people in Washington and in the military occupation of Germany. They were attracted to an intensifying Zionist movement itself dominated by anti-clerical and anti-Orthodox Jews. They were rallied to fight for opening U.S. immigration doors for Displaced Persons. But in 1947 and 1948 when army priorities and German economic conditions precluded printing the Talmud, American Jews or money could not be especially mobilized on behalf of the Survivors' Talmud project. It simply remained one of a number of projects in the Joint's relief and rehabilitation program for Jews who had survived the Holocaust.

The actual printing occurred as almost all of the Jews for whom the project had been undertaken in the first place left for the United

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49 Shapiro to Tarshansky, February 5, 1951, Joint Archives.

50 Reich, "Overseas Relief," *American Jewish Yearbook*, 49, 236. Herbert Agar, *The Saving Remnant: An Account of Jewish Survival Since 1914* (London: 1960), pp. 168-192 and Oscar Handlin, *A Continuing Task: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee* (New York: 1964), pp. 90-106 also did not mention the Talmud project.



States or Israel. Between July 1948 and 1952 about 58,000 Jews arrived in America; in 1949 over 31,000 entered; in 1950, 10,000; in 1951 and 1952, 13,500 arrived each year. Between May 1948 and the end of 1951 about 304,000 Jews from Central Europe arrived in Israel. In other words, the printing started after most survivors of the Holocaust had begun to orient their thoughts about the future towards Israel and its policy of free and open Jewish immigration, that is after almost all of them had decided to leave Europe.<sup>51</sup>

Under Rabbi Rose's close supervision, and sometimes with the help of Theodore Schwartz, the Secretary of the *Agudat Harabanim* in Munich, the actual printing at Carl Winter in Heidelberg started in November 1948 and then proceeded apace. The first volume served as an object of muffled celebration. Two single volumes went from Germany to the Joint in New York, both targeted for international conferences, one held by the Joint and the other by the United Jewish Appeal. In Munich DP rabbis and Rabbi Shapiro, the Joint's Director of Religious Affairs, had big plans befitting the special moment for which they had waited so long: "We are planning a world-wide presentation in Germany to General L. Clay, in the United States to President Truman and General Eisenhower, and in Israel to Dr. Weitzman [sic] and Rabbi I. Hertzog [sic]. . . ." (Incidentally," wrote Shapiro, "we think it would be a good idea if Rabbi Snieg and myself could make the presentation in Israel. . . ."<sup>52</sup>

But in New York the passion of the Munich rabbis did not determine priorities. In these days all Jewish eyes rested on Israel's victories over the Arabs. Truman, who had recognized the new state in May, had won the election in November and needed now, in 1949, to cope with angry Britishers and Arabs and their supporters in the United States. Raphael Levy, the Joint's director of publicity, appreciated American realities. He recognized a "publicity stunt" when he saw one. Shapiro's approach was too complicated, the interests too diffuse; each would "cut into the publicity" for the Talmud project. Levy opted for the clear and simple approach. "Frankly, I suggest we pick a two-man team representing JDC . . . and have them make a presentation. . . ." In Germany it was recommended that the presentation to General Clay should take place at once, "particularly in view of the fact that he may shortly be leaving the American Zone." In the United States delay was in order, till a

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51 Dinnerstein, *Survivors of the Holocaust*, p. 251; Ben-Sasson, *Jewish People*, p. 1076.

52 Shapiro to Haber, June 15, 1950; Haber to Shapiro, June 20, 1950; Shapiro to Tarshansky, December 29, 1948, February 9, 1949; Theodore Schwartz to JDC, March 5, 1951, Joint Archives.

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time "when the United Jewish Appeal settles down and when it looks appropriate . . . [to] approach Truman with the idea of presenting . . . [a volume] to him." And then, warned Levy, let's remember who he is. "President Truman's days seem to be very busy and he is not at the beck and call of press agents and their stunts. . . ."<sup>53</sup>

Edward M. Warburg, the Joint's chairman, explored the Truman option with David Niles. Niles, a Jew, was one of the President's important personal advisors who specialized in Jewish affairs. With Hilldring he had helped to orchestrate the partition vote of November 29. Could Niles advise and help "in bringing to the attention of the public a most unusual event—the publication of the first edition of the Talmud printed in Germany since the rise of Hitler." Warburg appreciated the occasion. "The publisher of this new edition of the Talmud is the United States Government!" The Joint thought that a "presentation to the President of the first copy of the newly published Talmud will serve to dramatize to the world the enlightened role of our Army and our Government as champions of religious freedom." Niles responded quickly and directly. He wrote "Eddie" that "of course, I want to do everything I can to help publicize the Talmud printed in Germany." But there were schedules and priorities. "I will take the matter up with my Chief as soon as he returns from his vacation in Key West and try to get word to you some time next week."<sup>54</sup>

As it turned out, there was no ceremony involving Truman or Eisenhower, the chief commanders of the army whose European and ranking generals in Germany had helped the DP rabbis. Levy opposed getting into "an elaborate series of presentations here in the United States." Without explanation he suggested presentations "be done without publicity fanfare. . . ." In May 1949 General Clay received his volume. So, too, did Chaim Weizmann, the first president of Israel.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, at Carl Winter's print shop the work continued to completion. Large sheets of paper, larger than the "top of an office desk, with each containing eight separate pages in Hebraic and Aramaic characters . . ." reported Bernard Quinn to readers of a military government publication, "caught by tender hands, were carefully guided into an attached bin - one on top of the other - and smoothed with the greatest of care. . . ." Before long it became

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53 Levy to Buchman, Memo, March 3, 1949, Joint Archives.

54 Warburg to Niles, March 11, 1949, Joint Archives.

55 Levy to Buchman, March 3, 1949; Leo Jung in JDC News Release, February 1, 1951, Joint Archives.

obvious that the plans for sixteen volumes per set were insufficient. A final change was required and the army and Joint obliged. Rabbi Rose and his associates received permission to go to nineteen volumes. For the next seventeen months he read proof on 1,800 zinc plates. By mid-June of 1950 the end was in sight and on 16 November 1950 it had come: ". . . we are *Gott sei Dank* packing the Talmud," a Joint official wrote. Shipments out of Germany, he thought, would begin in two weeks. At this point the army exercised its influence over the Talmud project for the last time. Together with Rabbi Snieg its officials wanted forty, not the fifty sets the army had agreed to print, to remain in Germany. The army thought that "some of these books printed in Germany should be left . . ." in Germany.<sup>56</sup>

The Joint's Paris office directed the export traffic. On November 30, it advised New York that "45 cases of the Talmud for New York (our shipping ticket 10.048) were shipped from Munich to Antwerp yesterday." Within days New York informed that it needed fifteen more cases. Paris made the adjustment. In this first major shipment 300 cases also went to Israel, via Marseilles, twenty-two to France and Algeria, ten to Italy, five to Hungary, five to Morocco, three to Tunisia, and one case each to South Africa, Greece, Yugoslavia, Norway, and Sweden. All told, Paris thought it had 650 cases or sets for export, with most going to Israel, a large number to the United States, and the rest scattered among countries of Europe, South America, and North Africa.<sup>57</sup>

The actual distribution of each Talmud set, or Shaas, to selected individuals and institutions revealed still other priorities as post-Holocaust Jews responded with mixed emotions and attitudes toward the DP rabbis' treasure. From the start, Judah Shapiro, the senior Joint official in Paris, called for a procedure to determine who would be eligible for receiving the Talmud. In the United States, under the direction of Leo Jung at Yeshiva University, the Joint established a committee which identified two groups of recipients. Within the North American allocation many individuals and institutions would receive one volume. Relatively few would receive an entire set. The criteria were flexible but this committee and its agents abroad favored rabbis who had survived the Holocaust and those like Rabbi Herbert Friedman who, as Rabbi Bernstein's assistant, had been directly and actively involved in produc-

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56 *Information Bulletin*, 1950, 33, 35; Schwartz to Joint, March 5, 1951; Theodore D. Feder to Tarshansky, April 25, 1951; Sam Haber to Louis Barish, November 16, 1950; Shapiro to Tarshansky, November 10, 1950, Joint Archives.

57 *Ibid.*, June 21, 1950, November 10, 1950, December 5, 1950, Joint Archives.

ing the Survivors' Talmud in Germany. Besides them, in the United States and Canada, a number of religious and secular institutions received a complete set of the Talmud.<sup>58</sup>

There were disagreements. A number of individuals strained to have their way. Rabbi Michael Munk had been the rabbi for the Berlin *Gemeinde* and claimed that between April 1947 and March 1948 he had been involved with the effort to print the Talmud. "I was quite instrumental and helpful in the development of this project and quite often had to participate in negotiations in Frankfurt and Munich." He thought he was entitled to an entire set, not just one volume. Besides, he wrote to the Joint Committee on Cultural and Religious Affairs, he had escaped from Germany and had been promised a set in Munich when he left for the United States. The committee checked its files. S. Tarshansky wrote to Sam Haber, the Joint's man in Munich: "When we engaged him for the Berlin *Gemeinde* we made it very clear that he was to serve as rabbi to the *Gemeinde* solely, and was not to be involved in the general JDC program in behalf of the DPs." For his part Sam Haber in Munich had no patience for these claims. "Let it clearly be stated, once and for all, that I personally never promised a Shaas (or for that matter anything else) to any one, and so anyone who makes such a claim can be told outright that they are talking through their yarmalki. . . ." Rabbi Snieg had made up his lists and had excluded those whom he considered unworthy. "Stick to the original list and say there are none left."<sup>59</sup>

For some, the Survivors' Talmud as a set, or one of its volumes, served as a device for fund raising. Joseph H. Lookstein recalled in 1951 that he had talked about the project with "Rabbi Snieg in 1945 when the task was first begun . . . it served," wrote Lookstein, "as one of the successful themes in UJA appeals." More revealing about fund raisers and Joint officials was an exchange of notes between Henrietta Buchman and the Allied Jewish Appeal of Philadelphia. She had sent one volume and expressed the hope that it would "serve as a stimulus to the congregations and synagogues in your city in strengthening their efforts and increasing their measure of financial help so as to enable us to continue the work of rebuilding the spirit of our people in the overseas countries." "How would you," responded David J. Galter of the Philadelphia Campaign, "like to receive volume four of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* just as

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58 Shapiro to Tarshansky, December 7, 1950; Friedman to Joint, May 21, 1951, Joint Archives.

59 Munk to Joint, May 25, 1951; Tarshansky to Haber, April 16, 1951; Haber to Tarshansky, May 3, 1951, Joint Archives.

a memento?" The campaign's Special Events Committee unanimously decided that one volume could not stimulate fund raisers. "The opinion was . . . that the presentation of one volume such as you recommend was meaningless." The campaign organizers knew precisely what they wanted and why. We feel "that if a set of the Talmud was presented by the Joint . . . to the Jews of Philadelphia through the Allied Jewish Appeal we could stage an event that would prove most stimulating spiritually, and at the same time most profitable. Frankly," wrote Albert H. Lieberman, a realtor, "our people feel that as the third largest Jewish community in America, the JDC should give us a set. You do that," predicted the fund raiser, "and see what will happen. It looks as if we will be 300,000 short. . . . we will need a special for a closing dinner and the Talmud may be the impetus. . . ."60

But there were also the devoted, those who were simply grateful for the Survivors' Talmud and who appreciated its significance. Rabbi William F. Rosenblum thanked the Joint for one volume. He had been in Germany in the summer of 1946 on behalf of the Synagogue Council. "There I learned of the plans to print the Babylonian Talmud and of the splendid cooperation that was given to the project by the American Military in Germany. . . ." Rabbi de Sola Pool captured some of the intent of the project. "The whole undertaking is one of rare dramatic character," he wrote. "I am sure you do not object if I make some needy refugee rabbi the beneficiary of this volume." Rabbi Robert Gordis took the long view: ". . . the historical circumstance surrounding the publication of this great treasure-house of the Jewish spirit," he told Leo Jung, "make the volume precious." Leo Jung himself expressed the sentiment of those who started the project in the first place. This Talmud ". . . represents in part the resurrection of Jewish life overseas since the war." Rabbi Menachem M. Schneersohn, whose father-in-law was pulled out of occupied Poland with the help of the Joint in 1940, caught the meaning of the entire project. "The Babylonian Talmud, our oral law, which goes hand in hand with our written law (the Bible) represents our greatest and most sacred spiritual heritage, the very soul of our people and the life of our exile." This was the unqualified language of the Talmudic Jew Rabbis Snieg and Rose in Munich would have understood and endorsed.

The reprinting of this vast treasure would have been an occasion for rejoicing at all times. In our present day, after the Hitlerite hordes have destroyed a great many of our living Talmud together with other holy

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60 Lookstein to Buchman, April 16, 1951; Buchman to Galter, May 2, 1951; Galter to Buchman, May 3, 1951; Lieberman to Buchman, May 9, 1951, Joint Archives.

## Survivors Talmud and the U.S. Army

books and the famous European presses, the reprinting of the Talmud is not only a fitting monument to our great tragedy, but it fills an urgent need.

This rabbi wrote with inspiration: "That it was printed in the very country which had set out to spread a blanket of darkness over the whole world, has a touch of Divine Justice." In contrast, Israel's Prime Minister Ben Gurion's office was matter-of-fact. Ruth Havicho, for him, acknowledged receipt of the new edition of the Vilna Talmud "brought to print by the J.D.C. Thank you."<sup>61</sup>

Among those who knew how to treasure the Survivor's Talmud on terms shared by the initiators, two rabbis had been especially involved with the events that had made the project necessary. They expressed their passion poignantly. Herbert A. Friedman had been Bernstein's assistant. "Secretly, I have cherished the hope for a long time that I would be able to have one. I hesitated to ask but by coincidence," he wrote a friend at the Joint on 13 February 1951, he mentioned to a mutual friend "two weekends ago, that I really had always wanted a set - both for the sentimental memories it evokes, and because of the fact that I do not possess a complete Shaas. . . ."<sup>62</sup>

In Israel there came a different response from a man who had lost his wife and children in Hungary and had recently been appointed rabbi to a small settlement outside of Jerusalem. Here is the dedication he had inscribed in private on the title page of Volume One:

May it be Thy will that I be privileged to dwell quietly in the land; to study the holy Torah amid contentment of mind, peace, and security for the rest of my days; that I may learn, teach, heed, do and fulfill in love all the words of Thy Love. May I yet be remembered for salvation for the sake of my parents who sanctified Thy name when living and when led to their martyr's death. May their blood be avenged! May I merit to witness soon the final redemption of Israel. Amen.<sup>63</sup>

Yet even among these pious devotees, material requirements could affect the uses of the project. As had the army or the fund raisers, so, too, did Rabbi Snieg have other agendas. In the days before the establishment of the State of Israel the publication of the Talmud appeared to Rabbi Snieg as a major event in Jewish history.

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61 Rosenblum to Leavitt, May 16, 1961; de Sola Pool to Leavitt, May 14, 1951; Leo Jung in JDC News Release, February 1, 1951; Schneersohn to Leavitt, April 18, 1951; Havicho to JDC, January 22, 1951; Robert Gordis to Leo Jung, April 17, 1951, Joint Archives.

62 Friedman to Leavitt, February 13, 1951, Joint Archives.

63 Rabbi Goldman to Shapiro, December 25, 1951, Joint Archives.

## American Jewish History

He and Rabbi Rose said so in the dedication printed in the first volume.

In 1946 we turned to the American Army Commander to assist us in the publication of the Talmud. In all the years of exile it has often happened that various governments and forces have burned Jewish books. Never did any publish them for us. This is the first time in Jewish history that a government has helped in the publication of the Talmud, which is the source of our being and the length of our days. The Army of the United States saved us from death, protects us in this land, and through their aid does the Talmud appear again in Germany. . . .

However, survivor Snieg also had to worry about his later years and so he turned to the project for securing or helping to secure the days of his retirement. Although it is not clear just when he started to give retirement problems serious thought, by November 1950 the Joint had started to take account of the possibility that the Talmud project could also be used for personal gain.

Just before the first large shipments left Antwerp and Marseilles, Shapiro arranged to give Rabbis Snieg and Rose the plates from which the copies of the Talmud had been printed, and for Haber in Munich to draw up an agreement between himself, as agent of the Joint, and Rabbis Snieg and Rose. "For the moment, there are no immediate plans for the printing of the Talmud," Shapiro wrote New York, "but because there is a shortage of this item in the world, and because of the further possibility that the Rabbis may wish to engage in some venture which may result in some income for them . . ." he thought it best that a contract between the Joint and the rabbis ought to rest in New York's files. The value of the plates was obvious. The making of them had been the army's important and expensive contribution; one estimate placed it at a value of \$50,000 and the Joint's portion at a value of \$35,000. The Joint turned the plates over to the rabbis and both parties to the contract agreed to the following stipulations: in the future, the plates could not be used for printing the Talmud in Germany. Ultimately the plates belonged in Israel. "We further agree," the document concluded, "that prior to the use of the photo-offset at any time . . . AJDC will be notified and concurrence of this organization in writing must be obtained prior to their use." Rabbi Snieg signed as Chief Rabbi of Germany, Rabbi Rose as a member of the Rabbinate of the U.S. Zone belonging to the Central Committee of Liberated Jews. On 29 November 1950 Shapiro instructed New York to file the contract "carefully for recall."<sup>64</sup>

Three years later it was recalled. By then illness and suffering had

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64 Shapiro to M. W. Beckelman, November 29, 1950, Joint Archives.

taken its toll. Rabbi Snieg, reported Haber, "is a very sick man, practically blind. . . ." He and Rabbi Rose had been living in freed Germany since their liberation. After Israel was founded, both had hopes of settling there. Snieg's frail health affected those hopes. In 1953 Haber wrote: "I believe that if Snieg wanted to go to Israel today I would - in all honesty - be impelled to advise him against such a move. . . ." He nevertheless thought of Israel as a future home even as he remained in Germany and travelled to Switzerland for medical treatments. Clearly, it would become harder for Rabbi Snieg to support himself as he grew older and more frail: "all in all a very pathetic person," said Haber.<sup>65</sup>

In July 1953 a Joint official became suspicious about Rabbi Snieg's intentions. Buchman had heard about a fund raising drive among Orthodox rabbis eager to publish sets of the Survivors' Talmud. "I wonder if Snieg has made any deals with them," she asked Haber in Munich. Haber wrote that there was no deal yet. But he did report a complicated scheme in which Snieg wanted to become involved. Snieg appreciated the Joint's opposition to "repeating the performance in Germany." Instead he wanted to participate in a scheme which used a "dummy" company to hide the involvement of rabbis and of a Düsseldorf firm that intended to print Talmud sets made from the army plates. The arrangement called for the bills, resulting from printing and shipment costs, to go to the Düsseldorf firm without in any way involving the dummy company, the rabbis or the Joint. "In other words," explained Haber, "the JDC as such would have absolutely nothing to do with the project, but it would involve our acquiescence in their use of the plates in Germany." Snieg's scheme would also use tax-exempt funds and individuals who, Shapiro said, wanted "to make an easy mark." Haber in turn justified Snieg's reasoning: he simply wants to earn some money to sustain him in his last years while helping to provide more German-printed Talmud sets to fill the still existing need. Haber and Shapiro remained sympathetic to Snieg's efforts but this scheme went nowhere. Considering his poor health, and assuming the Joint could stay "completely clear of the project . . ." Haber "would not be too strongly opposed to letting Rabbi Snieg go ahead if as a result . . . [he] could earn some money. . . ." But both Haber and Shapiro realized that the Joint could not stay clear of the machinations involved in the Düsseldorf scheme. It came to naught.<sup>66</sup>

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65 Haber to Shapiro, July 29, 1953; Haber to Buchman, July 8, 1953. Joint Archives.

66 Buchman to Haber, July 2, October 20, 1953; Haber to Buchman, July 8, 29,



According to Henrietta Buchman, who had dealt with the Philadelphia fund raisers, that urge to use the Talmud as a money maker was also inherent in the activities of Rabbi Kalmanowitz and other Orthodox Jews associated with the international Orthodox Jewish rescue committee and other sections of the Vaad Harabanim. She wrote Shapiro in Paris that the "VH is using the Talmud . . . project purely as a fund raising device."<sup>67</sup> While Shapiro and others in the Joint did not invariably suspect Orthodox Jewish activities, Buchman was suspicious. "I would be very much surprised if any part of the money they collect actually goes to supplying . . . Yeshivoth in Israel." She knew that the Joint had contributed \$5,000 to the VH in Israel so that it could arrange for the printing and distribution of 25,000 copies of selected portions of the Talmud. "I assure you that even if we shouted that fact from the rooftops, the VH would still tell the public that they need money for additional Gemoroth, or as they claim, sets of the Talmud for the Yeshivoth in Israel." She was certain that contemporary Jewish history was on her side: even in the early days of the project the Joint had not worked with the VH. Now with Israel a state, the anti-clerical Jews triumphant, and assimilation in America in high gear, there was no doubt in her mind. To be sure, she did not list all those circumstances. Instead, she said the VH "is slowly dying a natural death anyway."<sup>68</sup>

In the beginning of 1954, Israel's Ministry of Religion activated Snieg's personal agenda. Z. Warhaftig, in 1954 Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs, had discussed the plates from the Talmud project with M. W. Beckelman, then the director of the Joint's office in Paris. "I would like to ask you," he now wrote the Joint, "to be kind enough to see to it that the plates of the large Shaas which the Joint printed sometime ago in Germany be sent to the Religious Department of the State of Israel . . ." Warhaftig's purpose was clear enough. With the plates in Tel Aviv, the Ministry could print the Shaas "in Israel and distribute it mainly among the Yeshivoth,

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1953; Haber to Shapiro, July 29, 1953; Shapiro to Goldschmidt, August 18, 1953, Joint Archives.

67 See, for example, Shapiro's response to Rabbi J. Goldman, January 17, 1951, Joint Archives, who in Jerusalem tried to "avoid headaches" by not giving the Talmud to Israeli Yeshivot on the grounds that they did not receive "regular allocations" from the Joint. Shapiro's criterion was the quality of education at the Yeshivah. For headaches he was prepared to "supply sufficient quantity of aspirin." On tensions between Orthodox rabbis and the Joint early in the war see Efraim Zuroff, "Rescue Priority and Fund Raising as Issues During the Holocaust: A Case Study of the Relation Between the Vaad Ha-Hatzala and the Joint, 1933-1941," *American Jewish History*, LXVIII (March, 1979), 305-326.

68 Buchman to Shapiro, October 30, 1952, Joint Archives.

rabbis, and scholars who cannot afford the Shassim if ordered from abroad." Once again the contract with Snieg and Rose was pulled from the files. On November 13, 1950 the DP rabbis had agreed that the plates "eventually" would be shipped to Israel. Warhaftig was referred to Rabbi Snieg. This time the Joint's man Beckelman wrote: "The JDC would naturally approve any arrangement that you would reach with Rabbi Snieg." There was reason for optimism. There was something special about these contacts between Snieg and Warhaftig. "I believe this will be the simplest way of facilitating the arrangement you are seeking, particularly since," recalled Beckelman, "if my memory serves me correctly, you and Rabbi Snieg are acquainted from as far back as our days in Lithuania together in 1939 and 1940."<sup>69</sup> All from Kovno!

Neither Warhaftig, nor Beckelman for the Joint, worried especially about Rabbis Snieg or Rose. Israel was calling. Tel Aviv had contacted them through its Purchasing Mission in Cologne expecting full cooperation from the liberated Kovnoites who had been a part of the pro-Israel Central Committee. Cooperation was forthcoming, but the rabbis would not relinquish Snieg's personal agenda. Warhaftig, Snieg and Rabbi Rose agreed to print 200 sets in Germany. Since by this time Israel and Germany had worked out a reparations agreement, the Mission contacted the German government for "the release of funds to cover this expense. . . ." For their part Snieg and Rose were prepared to help the Israelis, free of charge, but they still refused to give up the plates. "They were the initiators of the project, they were the moving spirit behind the whole idea." The Military Government, they said, "would have given the plates to them, but because they were private individuals they could not be given the plates directly. . . ." According to the rabbis, in the transfer of the plates the Joint had served as a technical convenience. To the Joint's man in Tel Aviv all this seemed strange. Beckelman "who was anxious to help the Israeli government . . . felt that these plates rightly belonged to Israel for the use of Yeshivoth." So he was prepared to buy out Snieg and Rose "to transfer the plates to Israel. . . ."<sup>70</sup>

The fact was that Rabbi Snieg still had political and financial plans of his own. He did not respond to the State of Israel in quite the same way as Warhaftig or Beckelman. For Snieg, established rabbinic authorities, not the Jewish State's government officials, constituted the critical reference group. He did not want to give the

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69 Warhaftig to Beckelman, January 2, 1954; Beckelman to Warhaftig, March 5, 1954, Joint Archives.

70 Stanley Abramovitch to Charles Passman, December 15, 1955.

plates to the Ministry because that would indeed have given them to the one religious party which had joined the government coalition ruling Israel. That party, not his party, carried the portfolio of the Ministry of Religion. Snieg wanted to consult the Belzer Rabbi, and other leading religious personalities outside of the government.<sup>71</sup> He seemed to have in mind some sort of religious public body which would properly accept the plates in the name of Europe's surviving Orthodox Jewry.

Rabbi Sneig was also trying to protect his personal future. Stanley Abramovitch, who spoke to him on behalf of the Joint, reported that the rabbi still had hopes to emigrate to Israel; he plans to visit there at "the end of this winter." Even though he realized that the Talmud plates were worn down he assumed that in his hands they would assure him of a basic income that would secure his future livelihood. His reasoning was direct. In Israel he did not wish to accept a position as a rabbi of a small town or village. He also did not expect to receive a position in a larger town.<sup>72</sup> Instead he looked to the plates of the Talmud, to the project he had started when no one could have been certain that a Jewish state would come into being within two years. These plates would protect him.

In the end they did not, they could not. Like the rest of European Talmudic Jewry, his Talmud plates were all but finished. Perhaps that sense about European Jewry had been the fundamental meaning of Sam Haber's note to New York in February of 1951: ". . . emigration has fortunately stepped up so that in the next four or five months our problems should really be with the hardcore and maladjusted. The schlemiels, I am afraid, will be on our necks for some time to come."<sup>73</sup> The Joint remained bound to the agreements in its files, that is the final word left with Rabbis Snieg and Rose. It was willing to cooperate but it could not provide the Minister with any financial assistance. "After all," wrote Henrietta Buchman on January 25, 1956, "this is a project which the Ministry of Religion was willing to finance in the first instance if we secured the plates from Rabbi Snieg."<sup>74</sup>

The Survivors' Talmud project had come to an end. Judah Shapiro, involved in the Joint's side of the project from the beginning, explained that no more than 200 sets could actually be printed from the plates; the original zinc plates had been worn down and could not produce more than 200 sets and the additional 25

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71 *Loc. cit.*

72 *Loc. cit.*

73 Haber to Leavitt, February 12, 1951, Joint Archives.

74 Buchman to Jordan, January 25, 1956, Joint Archives.

that are usually printed to protect against damaged pages. Under such circumstances Shapiro had suggested that new plates could be made more economically in Israel or in Holland from Survivors' Talmud sets available. Rabbi Snieg had lost the plates' protection. His Talmud on zinc could no longer be reproduced in Europe. "In any event," wrote Buchman of the American Joint, "these are questions which can best be determined in Israel."<sup>75</sup> Clearly, the new State had even started to penetrate clerkdoms of Jewish Euro-American pasts. Eight years after that special historical moment, when despair had competed with religious tenacity and passions of national "revival," a new Jewish future had begun to form.

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<sup>75</sup> *Loc. cit.*