

Do you want to talk first about the complexity of--

The problem that inserted itself into the very earliest consideration of how to take care of the Jewish survivors was one of, who are the Jews? Now, that's a question that has perplexed writers and authors for a long time. Are they a religion, a people, a race, a nation?

Well, that question came to the fore soon after the Jews had been liberated from the concentration camps and methods were adopted that were aimed at relieving their plight. Now, the plans, as I mentioned earlier, drawn up by American military experts and civilian government were that people of different nations were to be sent back to their native lands within 90 days after the liberation of the concentration camps. The Jews, however, as I said earlier, didn't want to go back. They couldn't go back. They wouldn't go back.

Now, when President Eisenhower-- excuse me. When General Eisenhower was asked to appoint a liaison officer who would coordinate the work of helping the Jewish survivors, he was asked to do this by the American rabbi Stephen S Wise, who was in London the first days of August for a Zionist conference, the first to take place since before World War II.

And Zionist leaders came from various free countries for the conference. Some of us, American military chaplains, got permission to go to London to attend the conference. We spoke with Rabbi Stephen S Wise, one of the most prominent American Rabbis of the 1920s, the 1930s, the 1940s, as well as with other American and other Jewish leaders about what we had seen of the Jewish survivors.

Rabbi Stephen S Wise sent a cable through the American embassy in London to army headquarters in Frankfurt, asking General Eisenhower to appoint a liaison officer to coordinate the various efforts at helping the Jewish survivors. That came to army headquarters in Frankfurt on the seventh day of August 1945.

General Eisenhower replied on August 9, two days later, saying he could not appoint a Jewish liaison officer. There were liaison officers at Eisenhower's headquarters, but they represented, each one, a different nation. There was a French liaison officer. There was a British liaison officer, a Polish liaison officer, a Czech liaison officer, but the Jews are not a nation. So he rejected Rabbi Wise's request.

The very next day, on August the 10th, he got the cable from the Secretary of War Stimpson asking him what he was going to do about the report from Dean Earl Harrison. And it's critical-- report the critical remarks about the American Army's care of the Jewish survivors.

So General Eisenhower replied that he was going to appoint an advisor on Jewish affairs, not a liaison officer, an advisor. And on August 22, he issued an order that, despite the fact that Jews had come to concentration camps with the nationality of their native lands, Polish nationality, Lithuanian nationality, whatever, that they were not to be regarded as stateless people and therefore were to be put in concentration camps by themselves with no other people with them, no non-Jews. So Eisenhower was able to bridge this gap, to answer this problem by appointing an advisor and to regard the Jews as stateless persons.

Now, General Montgomery, when he was asked by the leaders of the London Jewish community to appoint an advisor on Jewish affairs replied that he couldn't because then he would have to appoint a Catholic advisor, and a Protestant advisor, and therefore he didn't appoint a Jewish advisor. And so the problem of "who were the Jews" reared its head throughout the discussions of what to do with the Jewish survivors.

OK, we have a couple of minutes left, maybe enough time to talk about how General Eisenhower personally viewed Jews, maybe in comparison to General Patton.

General Eisenhower, when he was made to understand what the problem was as a result of the Harrison Report and as a result of his own visiting the camps afterwards-- and you'll forgive me if I say, as a result of the reports that I submitted to him of my visits to the DP camps, at once acted speedily to remedy the problem. I can say frankly and honestly that

there was not a recommendation that I made to him to improve the lot of the Jewish survivors in the DP camps that he did not address affirmatively at once by issuing an order to rectify the situation.

I call your attention particularly to the fact that hundreds, thousands of Jews were coming into the American zone of Germany from Poland in particular and from other Eastern lands. These were Jews in many cases, in most cases who, when Russia entered the war, had been uprooted from their homes and their cities and towns and trucked back of the Russian lines all the way to Asiatic Russia in order to keep them out of the battle zones.

Now they were brought back by the Russians to their former homes only to find that their homes had been taken by their neighbors as well as their businesses. They didn't want to live anyhow and those countries where their families had been destroyed, so they began moving, at first on their own, across the still-fluid borders from Poland into Czechoslovakia, from Czechoslovakia into Austria, from Austria into the American zone of Germany.

The question was what to do with them. Technically speaking, they were not defined as DPs. DPs, according to Army regulations, Army orders, rather, were Jewish survivors found in concentration camps on German soil or an Austrian soil and who were then placed in DP camps in Germany and Austria. So these Jews arriving from Poland and Baltic countries were technically not DPs.

What to do with them? They were coming across the borders, and soon questions started coming into Eisenhower's offices. We discussed the matter. I recommended that they be admitted to our DP camps, which eventually would be emptied, and they would go to other countries. And Eisenhower issued an order saying that they were to be admitted.

And I don't know exactly how many were saved in this fashion, but I think it must have been about 80,000 Jews. On the other hand, Montgomery turned back such Jews as they tried to enter the British zone of Germany and issued orders that they were to be turned back by force. So you see the contrast between Eisenhower and Montgomery.

A slate, a slate, clap stick, but it has timecode on it. It's amazing what they-- Patton and Eisenhower--

General Patton commanded the Third Army, which had the supervision of most of the DP camps. The Third Army was in charge of all of Bavaria, and one of the first complaints given to me by the Jews in the DP camps in Bavaria, particularly in Feldafing but also elsewhere, was that they were not allowed to leave the camp as they would like. But only a small percentage would be permitted to leave each day with a pass system.

And they objected to that because, despite the fact that they now were liberated, they still didn't enjoy freedom to come and go. They could look outside of the DP camp and see the Germans, the former enemies of the Americans, walking freely, but they, the victims of the Germans whom the Americans had liberated, were not free to come and go as they pleased.

And of course, they objected vehemently to the barbed wire around the DP camp. It reminded them of the barbed wire around the German concentration camps. And one of their first requests to me was to try to do something to have the barbed wire removed and the pass system abolished. That was incorporated in my report to General Eisenhower through General Smith, and orders were issued to have the pass system abolished and the barbed wire removed.

For next, I went from Frankfurt to Bavaria to visit the DP camps, Feldafing in particular, as well as Landsberg and the other camps. The barbed wire was still there, and the pass system was still in existence. I came back to Frankfurt, and I reported in due course to General Walter Bedell Smith, General Eisenhower's chief of staff.

I visited him, I reported to him most of the time because General Eisenhower was often on field visits to the troops, and general Smith would then report to Eisenhower when he returned. I was told afterwards by General Smith that orders were issued to General Patton to come and report the very next morning at 8:00 to General Eisenhower at his headquarters in Frankfurt. That meant an overnight trip, virtually, driving from Munich to Frankfurt.

And the next morning, at 8:00-- and I didn't know of this at the time-- I walked into the anteroom that led into General Eisenhower's office, and there I saw General Patton sitting with his shiny helmet on, his ivory-handled pistols, one on

each side, and his highly-polished belt and strap's. And I quickly beat a retreat. He glared at me, and I knew what was healthy for me. I got out of there.

Afterwards, General Smith told me that General Eisenhower asked General Patton-- George, why aren't you doing something for those Jews? And Patton, thinking that he was talking to his old West Point buddy said in a half-laughter, why the hell should I? And Eisenhower replied with anger, well, God damn it, if for no other reason then because I have ordered you to help those Jews.

Not long afterwards, General Patton was removed from command of the Third Army, and he was ordered to command the 15th Army which consisted only of a headquarters without troops. The headquarters was at Bad Nauheim in Germany. I know that books about Patton and the movie about Patton showed that he was ordered out of the Third Army because, supposedly, he slapped a soldier in a military hospital in Sicily for malingering.

But to my mind, there's always been a question. Why was Patton punished a couple of years later for something he had done in Sicily? My own thought is that he was punished because he had transgressed, he had violated a direct order from a superior officer, which is something that an American army soldier knows he must not do.

This is a little question. We have just a couple of minutes left. Did you conduct any religious services in DP camps that are particularly memorable to you? I mean in 1945, no-- no. And what about marriages or anything like that?

No. See, I no longer was acting as a chaplain once I was assigned to the post of advisor to Eisenhower, and there were American army chaplains assigned to divisions, and units, and headquarters in different parts of Germany. The marriages I officiated at in Europe were in England and in France.

In the time that you were there, just in that window, in 1945, did you begin to see order coming out of the chaos that had been there?

Yes, I did. I did. . By the time I left Germany, which was toward the end of November, the third week of November 1945, the conditions were much better in the DP camps. The orders of General Eisenhower had taken a long time, but eventually, they filter down to all the lower levels. And they were being carried out.

The Jewish DPs were in separate camps now. They were getting more food, better housing, clothing, shoes. They even got soccer balls, and musical instruments, and even Yiddish newspapers from the United States, and books in Yiddish, and in German, and in French that they could read and understand.

In addition, they had organized themselves, the Jewish survivors. They were, many of them, very capable people. They had been leaders of communities in their hometowns before the war had started. There was this excellent organization, the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, in Munich, and in every camp there was a committee of Jewish DP leaders.

And by the time I went home, the situation was far improved over what had seen just two and a half months earlier. So the efforts of the army had good results.

OK. Thank you. I think we should cut. I --while we record the sound of the room, and you have to be especially quiet because the mic is above you.