



# INSIDE THE VAULT

*Jewish American Soldiers & Jewish  
Refugees after World War II*

with Dr. Deborah Dash Moore

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024



THE  
GILDER LEHRMAN  
INSTITUTE  
of  
AMERICAN HISTORY



# How to Participate



- If you would like to ask a question, you can use the Q&A feature.
- We will be answering audience questions throughout the session.
- The views expressed here are those of the historian.

## For Security and Privacy

- Your microphone is automatically muted.
- Your camera is automatically turned off.

# Dr. Deborah Dash Moore



Deborah Dash Moore is Frederick G. L. Huetwell Professor of History and Professor of Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan. She specializes in twentieth-century urban Jewish history. Three of her monographs form a trilogy, moving from studying second-generation New York Jews to examining the lives of Jewish American soldiers in World War II, culminating in a history of migration that carried Jews to Miami and Los Angeles after the war. *GI Jews: How World War II Changed a Generation* served as the basis for a documentary. Her recent book, *Walkers in the City: Jewish Street Photographers of Mid-Century New York* (2023), winner of a National Jewish Book Award, extends her interest to photography. She serves as editor-in-chief of *The Posen Library of Jewish Culture and Civilization*, a ten-volume anthology of original sources translated into English from the biblical period to 2005.

# Melanie Meyers



Melanie Meyers is the Deputy Director and Chair of Collections and Engagement at The American Jewish Historical Society. Prior to joining AJHS in 2018, she was the Senior Manager for Reference and Outreach at The Center for Jewish History, New York City. She has served as an instructor at The Palmer School of Library and Information Science at Long Island University and has worked with rare books and special collections in a variety of settings, including private, non-profit, and academic institutions.

# Today's Documents



- Excerpts from *A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations*
- Featured items from the Cecilia Razovsky papers
- Featured items from the Klausner papers

# Dachau service



Recorded by Chaplin  
Stevens, May 1945.  
(Holocaust Museum,  
at Dachau)

# Questions to Consider



- What is a displaced person?
- Why are they displaced?
- Where are the refugee camps?
- What is going to happen to them?

*A young student tells a Dieburg Council member what he learned for the day, December 1946. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09956.15)*

# Timeline

**May 8, 1945**

Victory in Europe Day  
(V-E Day)

**September 2, 1945**

End of World War II

**November 20, 1945**

Start of Nuremberg Trials

**August 15, 1945**

Victory over Japan Day  
(V-J Day)

**September 29, 1945**

Harrison Report released





## LIBERATION IN EUROPE

The jubilation, in some circles, about the merely promising achievements of San Francisco must be contrasted with the actual news from Europe. Nazism has been wiped off, but anti-Semitism has not been eradicated. In such a situation legal prescriptions, not to speak of moral declarations, are powerless to change reality. The storm-center is in Poland and in the Balkans. Recently, Polish Jews liberated from German concentration camps and repatriated to their home towns in Poland returned to the camp stating that they prefer to be there under military supervision rather than to remain in Poland where a wave of anti-Semitic terror is raging. (*Jewish Post*, August 24, 1945). Some of the returnees reported that huge posters "We want Poland for the Poles; Go back, Jews!" greeted them at the railroad station; that those without living relatives were compelled to sleep on

benches in the parks; and that massacres have occurred in small towns and villages. Similar outbreaks are reported from Slovakia and from Hungary. Several Jews were killed by a mob in an anti-Semitic street demonstration in Presov, Slovakia; the police arrived on the scene only after the mob had done its work. (*Jewish Post*, August 17, 1945) In Hungary, underground anti-Semitic propaganda has influenced the man in the street to the point where he blames the Jew rather than the defeated fascist regime for economic insecurity and social dislocation. This trend in thought is also apparent in Western Europe especially in anti-Semitic street demonstrations in France. (*Life and Letters*, July 1945). Public opinion opposes with particular vigor the extradition of Gentile occupants of Jewish property upon return of the former owners. (*Jewish Post*, August 17, 1945)

Discrimination exists right in liberated Germany and under the eyes of Allied occupation authorities. Sometimes, what appears to be equal treatment in fact is discrimination—as for instance, in the case of the German Jews who are treated on an equal footing with the general German population. They receive punitively low food rations because they are considered plain Germans but, having subsisted on a starvation diet before, they succumb sooner than the Gentiles to such "non-discriminatory" treatment. Isabella Blum, socialist member of the Belgian parliament, reported that Jews in concentration camps receive less food now than they did under the Nazis because of the general economic breakdown in the country. A recent report from the correspondent of the independent press service in Paris asserts that 11,000 Jewish inmates of Bergen-Belzen, among them 7,000 women and 1,500 children, sent a heart-rending message to UNRRA Director Herbert Lehman, to be rescued from the camp which they described as hellish. They are still policed by German guards and the municipality





Map of Occupied Zones, circa 1940s. (Department of State, Division of Map Intelligence and Cartography. Courtesy Harry S. Truman Library & Museum.)

# Kibbutz Buchenwald Displaced Persons Camp



*Gebringshof, 1946. (Gilder  
Lehrman Institute,  
GLC09956.02)*

# Jewish refugees at Ziegenhain Camp



*Jewish refugees at Ziegenhain Camp, September 1946. (Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09956.06)*

# Babenhausen Displaced Persons Camp



*Babenhausen Displaced Persons  
Camp, 1946. (Gilder Lehrman  
Institute, GLC09956.05)*

# Today's Documents



- Excerpts from *A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations*
- Featured items from the Cecilia Razovsky papers
- Featured items from the Klausner papers

A  
MONTHLY SUMMARY  
OF  
EVENTS AND TRENDS  
IN  
RACE RELATIONS

---

---

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 1945

ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

---

---

VOLUME 3

NUMBERS 1 & 2

## IMMIGRATION

It seems probable that the refugees now detained at Fort Ontario (Oswego, New York) will soon be released and permitted to reside in any part of the United States, perhaps under a quota system. The Congressional Committee on Immigration and Naturalization has already acted on these cases, but the decision has not yet been published. (*The Observer*, July 20, 1945)

As to normal immigration procedure, pre-war conditions have been restored. Sole responsibility for the issuance of immigration visas to the United States rests again with the American Consuls abroad. An innovation is, however, that the aspirant has to procure documents which show that he has the permission of his home government to leave the country. Considering the attitude of the Soviet Union and of the Soviet-influenced countries in Eastern Europe which do not want their citizens to emigrate, this means that applications from inhabitants of those countries where most European Jews live are practically excluded from consideration. New restrictions on Jewish emigration have recently been reported from the Carpatho-Ukraina.

*A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends in Race Relations, August-September 1945.*

Published by the Social Science Institute, Fisk University.

(Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09640.263)

# Cecilia Razovsky



Cecilia Razovsky Collection  
(American Jewish Historical Society)

Copy of Editorial in THE KANSAS CITY STAR, Kansas City 17, Missouri, of Saturday,  
March 6, 1948

## ACTION ON THE REFUGEES

Addressing the biennial convention of the National Travelers Aid association here yesterday, Mrs. Cecilia Davidson correctly described American policy toward the problem of Europe's displaced persons as involving "a great deal of talk but little action." Because it entails a temporary change in our present restrictions on immigration, the decision to admit some of these displaced persons to the United States rests with Congress, and until the other day Congress had shown no disposition to act. At last, however, the legislators seem about to do something, if not much.

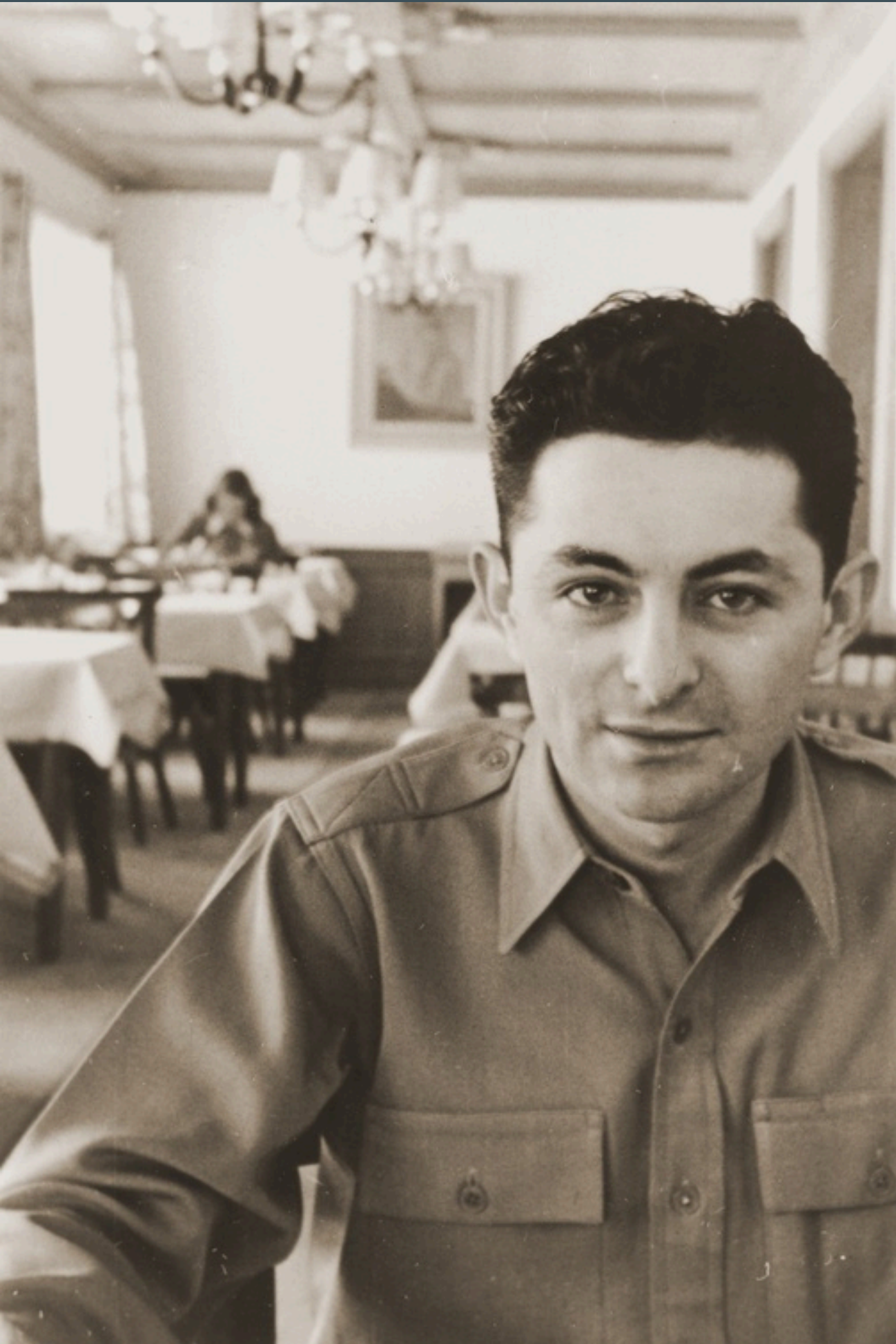
As Mrs. Davidson, a consultant for the Citizens Committee on Displaced Persons, mentioned, the Senate judiciary committee has just approved a bill, designed to allow 100,000 carefully-screened European refugees to enter this country during the next two years. To set such a measure in perspective, it should be remembered that there are currently about 1½ million displaced persons living in camps throughout Europe who cannot, for one reason or another, be returned to their pre-war homes. They constitute the "hard core" of the refugee problem.

Some of them are Jews, the victims of Hitlerism or of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. Some of them are Balts, refugees from Communist tyranny in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Some of them are political liberals who have escaped from probable death at the hands of the secret police in Poland, Yugoslavia and other countries under Russian domination. Many of them were successful as professional men, businessmen or farmers in their native lands. Approximately half of them are under American care at the moment--and so a charge upon the American taxpayer. Western Europe, already densely populated and in economic difficulties, can use very few of them.

When the magnitude of the problem became evident, considerable popular support developed in the United States to admit a substantial number of displaced persons of proven moral character and ability. But the existing immigration law, with its



# B. Konichesky to Abraham Klausner



Abraham Klausner (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Herbert Friedman)

B Konichesky to Abraham Klausner, December 18, 1945. (American Jewish Historical Society)

## CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF LIBERATED JEWS IN BAVARIA

B. Konichsky Eng.

MUNICH, GERMANY, 18 Dec. 1945  
Siebertstraße 3

Chaplain Abraham J. Klausner  
78th Division  
APO 78, c/o Postmaster N.Y.

My dear Chaplain Klausner:

At your parting treat I promised you that I would write a few valedictory words. You know, I am an engineer by profession, all my life long I was occupied with iron and steel, with boilers and machines but little with words. Therefore it is hard for me to make speeches, but nevertheless here I come, however late, with my farewell-greetings.

Towards the end of July of this year I was as a delegate at a meeting in St. Ottilien, in which you, too, took part. There I saw you for the first time. At that same meeting there appeared also a guest from Palestine, but although he found warm words for us ex-prisoners I felt the existence of a wall between us who have gone through the most terrible experiences, and the one who stood outside - an abyss which is hardly to be bridged. I also heard your speech, and I knew at once: There is a contact, that is one - of us, as you entitled your article in "Unzer Weg" later on.

After my recovery I used to come to the Committee for weeks and weeks asking for work. After a long time of waiting I finally got a task. It is ridiculous if you come to think of it nowadays: I came as co-worker into a department which was not yet in existence at all...

And I remember that on one of the first days of my work we were summoned to you and you held a speech saying that everyone should work. I was much upset about that, but after a short while I found out how right you were, and I became your faithful follower. And I noticed that not everybody liked to work with me, some being discontent because I also said: either - or...

Yes, you are right, I created our Searching Department. I devoted myself fully to this work giving everything I had to give. During these four months of my work I have seen many tears. With pride I took part in the joy of the young girl from Warsaw, who had come to me after she had crossed the border illegally and whose Tateschi I found in

# Morris Sandhaus to Miss Lever

*Liberators of Europe*  
*Jewry*  
April 27, 1945

Dear Miss Lever:

I have received two shipments from you with plenty of Shaving cream and books, some clothing and other odd items. I find that the soldiers have no need for all that stuff. I should like to be honest with you. They get all they need from the PX. With your consent I should like to distribute some of it to the civilians. I advertised the fact that I had received these things in the DB and the response was nil. A few boys have come in but I am sure that they use it for civilians also. Now if you are willing, and all the stuff you sent me is tremendously valuable, some children haven't forgotten the taste of those salamis. I should like to concentrate on civilian needs. You have no idea how great the suffering is, and I should like to do what I can to help them. I am first a Chaplain and I seek to serve the needs of the soldiers first, but I find that all you send me they can easily get in their rations here. Food and clothing are my great needs. I know that your Serve-a-Chaplain is strictly for the military and I would not want to budge from that as the military always comes first regardless of civilian needs. But if you can see your way clear to help me in the other matter I think the good done will far outweigh any computations you might have in diverting some of your energies to this cause. My first bit of Nachas was seeing a home opened for girls age 15-16; 60 girls most of whom have come out of convents. You can readily understand my interest as the future of European Jewry is dependent upon keeping them strong and healthy after what they've been through. All have seen their Parents deported by the Nazis and the percent coming back is very small. I have spoken with a few from Oszviciem and what you read is an understatement. I hope you will give this consideration. Really I am as proud of Worcester as I am of my community who have sent me tremendous parcels. I should like to remain the adopted son and Chaplain of Worcester both for the happy memories and for what you have done and are doing. Had a letter from Abbee Talamo. I know you can also bank on him to help.

Sincerely and kind regards,

(signed) Morris A. Sandhaus

Chaplain Morris A. Sandhaus  
O-480570, Hq. Channel Base Section  
Com. Z., APO 228 - c/o Postmaster  
New York, N.Y.

Morris Sandhaus to Miss Lever, April 27, 1945.  
(American Jewish Historical Society)

# Leo Srole to Folks

43 ✓

7 December 1945.

Dear Darling and Folks:

With Stars and Stripes, the daily newspaper for American soldiers, giving almost a full column to my letter of resignation from UNRRA, and even the Frankfurt and Munich radio stations reading the full text of my letter, I still can't be sure how the American press will treat it. But here is the whole story about it.

At the time I wrote you my last Journal chapter, the population in the Center here was a little under 5000, and as I indicated then, we were already badly overcrowded. About a month ago, Jews escaping from Polish pogroms began to pour in. There was absolutely no place for them elsewhere. So they came to us, especially as we are now known all over Europe as the best Center for Jews. Of course, we could not turn them out into the highways, so we told them to squeeze in wherever they could find space. First they doubled up in single beds (the only kind we've got). Then we put them into our Convalescent Home, which is supposed to be only for people discharged from our hospital. Then, against all our wishes, we put them into empty rooms in the hospital, into terrible wooden barracks. At that point, we said "not one more can come in", but they came in regardless, and slept in corridors and cellars. Right at the beginning of this influx, when I heard the stories of what was occurring in Poland I knew that more Jews were to follow, and we started to ~~holler-murder~~ to our UNRRA superiors, telling them that they had to give us more housing in Landsberg and that they must get together with the Army to start opening new centers, elsewhere. Not a thing happened. The situation reached a point of desperation, so Cook Glassgold, our Center Director (my UNRRA "boss" here), and I decided we had to take drastic action. We got together the UNRRA teams from three other Jewish Centers in this area, and we went to UNRRA Munich HQ., and to the Chief of this Region, Glassgold and I, as spokesmen, warned him of the dangers and that we would not be responsible for the consequences. He told us of plans on foot to correct the situation and made promises he would help us on other demands we made. Still nothing happened. In the meantime, the food situation for us had greatly worsened when the Army ordered us to discontinue getting fresh meats, butter, vegetables and milk from the Germans, and to use, instead, canned American supplies, and in smaller quantities. Also, winter had arrived and the warm clothing we had been begging for from the Army (we must get all food, clothing and housing from or thru the Army) had not arrived except in inadequate quantities.

Leo Srole to Folks, December 7, 1945.

(American Jewish Historical Society)



# Upcoming Programs

## INSIDE THE VAULT:

- June 5, 2024: 1925 study guide for Eighth Grade graduation with Dr. Adam Laats (SUNY Binghamton)
- July 11, 2024: New York's response to the Declaration of Independence, 1776

## BOOK BREAKS: May 5 at 2 p.m. ET (11 a.m. PT)

- Dr. Anastasia C. Curwood will discuss her book *Shirley Chisholm: Champion of Black Feminist Power Politics*