Lea Weik

“In the religious field great strides have been made” – Jewish Relief Organizations and the Supply of Religious Objects to Jewish Communities in the British Zone (1945–1950)

After the liberation by Allied troops in 1945, there were about 80,000 to 90,000 surviving Jews on German territory. The majority of them were so-called Displaced Persons (DPs) from Eastern Europe, who were housed in various DP camps.[1] In addition, it is estimated that about 28,000 German Jews had survived in interconfessional marriages, in hiding or in camps.[2] For the most part, they returned to their homes and families, if possible, or sought shelter elsewhere. In the British zone, which included the present-day German states of Schleswig-Holstein, Hamburg, Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia, the majority of Jewish DPs were housed in the Bergen-Belsen camp. The situation of the survivors in the completely overcrowded former concentration camp was catastrophic and in the first weeks after the liberation thousands died of hunger, debilitation and disease.

For all these people, the first priority was to continue to survive, i.e. to secure food, clothing and housing. However, it soon became clear that many also felt a need for religious practice. This chapter attempts to reconstruct how Jewish survivors in the British zone were enabled to practice their religion and the ways in which they obtained the religious accessories or ceremonial objects necessary for worship. The focus will be on the role of Jewish aid organizations in acquiring such objects and establishing a religious infrastructure. Essential sources are the files of the Henriques Collection in the Wiener Library London.

Shortly after the end of the war, various Jewish aid organizations became active in Germany. In the British zone, these were primarily the British Jewish Committee for Relief Abroad (JCRA) respectively its operative arm, the Jewish Relief Unit (JRU), and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JOINT).[3] Both organizations began their work in June and July 1945, and were required by the British military government to work exclusively for the DPs in the camps. The JOINT directed its

1 Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings. Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945–1950* (Detroit, 2002), 27 on.

2 Lavsky, *New Beginnings*, see note 1, 29.

3 In addition the Chief Rabbi’s Religious Emergency Council (CRREC), the Organization through Training (ORT), the Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Jewish Agency for Palestine, the Jewish Brigade and the Bricha were active in the British Zone.

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work in the British zone from Belsen until the end of 1949. The headquarters of the JRU was initially located in Celle and thus in the immediate vicinity of Bergen-Belsen.[4] In the second half of 1945, however, it was moved to Eilshausen in Westphalia, since the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Association (UNRRA) had its headquarters there.[5] The Germany Division of the JRU was headed by Rose Henriques and Leonard Cohen. From the end of 1945 they were subordinate to the Director of Germany, Henry S. Lunzer.[6]

Initially, the most important task of the Jewish relief organizations, besides providing food, clothing and housing, was to help the survivors trace relatives. However, the possibility of being able to practice their religion freely again also became a high priority for many Jews. On issues of religious rehabilitation and care for the surviving Jews, the JCRA worked closely with the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council (CRREC), also based in London. The CRREC had sent four rabbis to the British zone in June, even before the first JCRA relief workers arrived in Germany, and from the beginning was concerned to provide the survivors with religious supplies such as kippot, prayer shawls, phylacteries and prayer books. This organizationally and logistically complex undertaking was prepared even before the end of the war and demanded great commitment from those involved. In a letter dated December 7, 1944, the Secretary General of the CRREC, Henry Pels, addressed Leonard Cohen of the JCRA with the following lines:

> [W]ith regard to the item of 1.000 pairs of phylacteries which was agreed upon by your Finance Committee, I would like to mention that after consideration we find that it is not possible to distribute these Tefillin to the Jewish populations on the continent without proper bags. We've therefore tried to get some blackout material, which is available free of coupons for us and found a person who is prepared to make these 1.000 bags for us.[7]

In his reply, Cohen was convinced of the need to have bags made for the phylacteries, but since the sum of £50 seemed too high, he had the bags made free of charge by his relative, Rita Cohen, who also worked for the JCRA.[8] This episode not only demonstrates the scarcity of money in the Jewish relief organizations and the great personal commitment of their employees, but also shows the important role that was given to religious requisites. For the tefillin that were sent out would of course have fulfilled their function even without the corresponding bags. However, being able to hand them out to the survivors as a set in a bag can be understood on the one hand as a revaluation of the tefillin and on the other hand it also expresses respect for the survivors, because after years

4 Donate Stratmann, "'In the field' – Die Arbeit der internationalen jüdischen Hilfsorganisationen in der britischen Besatzungszone Deutschlands (1945–1951)," in *Deutschland - trotz alledem? Jüdische Sozialarbeit nach 1945*, ed. Helga Krohn, and Gudrun Maierhof (Frankfurt am Main, 2006), 65.

5 Stratmann, "'In the field,'" see note 4, 72.

6 Stratmann, "'In the field,'" see note 4, 73.

7 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA14-2 (Post-war religious Reconstruction), fol. 81.

8 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, see note 7, fol. 88.

of persecution in which they had been denied their humanity by the National Socialists, they were now once again seen as individuals and respected as believers. Thus, the relief workers also made sure, as far as possible, to listen to the concerns and needs of the survivors in personal one-on-one conversations, and relief goods were also individually packaged and handed over to the respective recipient. That this approach was intentional becomes clear from a report by Rose Henriques from September 1945, in which she writes: "This is a deliberate policy destined to re-awaken individualism in each of the DP's, and helping them to forget the 'mass existence' which has been their unfortunate lot lately."[9] That relief workers were concerned about the mental state of survivors is also clear from a letter from Rabbi Solomon Schoenfeld to Leonard Cohen from January 1945, in which he writes: "Our people on the continent seem to go in for talesim, and although they are not, from the point of view of our religious law, as important as tefillin and other requisites, they seem to possess a strong psychological appeal, which is, after all, also one of our main considerations."[10]

Supplying the survivors with religious accessories was a challenge for the aid organizations not only in view of the large quantities required, but also because procuring the ritual items was not easy in itself. After all, the manufacture of tefillin and mesusot is subject to strict religious specifications – the leather and parchment used must be kosher and can only be inscribed by a trained sofer. The high demand for these products led to an enormous increase in prices within a short period of time and the relief organizations, financed purely by donations, looked for possible alternatives to ordering them in Palestine. In a document dated September 13, 1945, Leonard Cohen wrote with regard to the mesusot needed, that "[p]archement can be obtained in London at various artists sundrymen shops. I shall enquire whilst I am in Germany whether it may be used and whether there are people amongst the DPs who could write them."[11] Indications as to whether this plan was pursued or even implemented could not be found. However, Judith Baumel points out, that employees of the JOINT in the US zone faced the same problems and therefore arranged that tefillin were produced in the DP camps Weilheim and Plattling from mid-1947.[12]

Another way for the CRREC to obtain religious supplies was through collections of such items in British Jewish communities. For example, the North London Relief Co-ordination Committee, in cooperation with CRREC, organized a relief drive in September 1946 in which prayer books were collected as well as

9 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA6A-4/1 (Further report on the work at Celle), fol 55a.

10 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA14-3 (Post-War Religious Reconstruction 1945 Jan.–June), fol. 13.

11 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA14-3 (Post-War Religious Reconstruction 1945 July–December), fol. 195.

12 Judith Tydor Baumel, "The Politics of Spiritual Rehabilitation in the DP Camps," *Simon Wiesenthal Center Annual* 6 (1989): n.p.

religious requisites.[13] Details of the success of such collections are not available, but in a letter to Rose Henriques in September 1947, her colleague E.G. Lowenthal complained about the books provided:

> I sometimes feel that people are clearing out their lofts where they apparently find the oldest stuff for transmission on to the Jews in Germany, instead of letting us have books not only in good condition but up to the date literature suitable for Jews in towns over here. What I mean is this: We obtain [...] old Hebrew-English prayer books, partly in a rotten state, which for the majority of people, are unsuitable [...].[14]

The books collected in London received a stamp before being sent to Germany, which identified them as a gift from the JCRA or the CRREC and thus makes them identifiable to this day. For example, it was possible to locate several prayer books in the Gelsenkirchen Jewish Community that bear a stamp of the CRREC (Fig. 1).

Identifying other objects from these donations today is much more difficult or impossible. Although dedication sheets were often placed in the parcels, the objects themselves were usually not marked.

These examples give a rough idea of how enormous the survivors' need for religious objects was and the difficulties relief organizations faced. The difficult situation was aggravated by the fact that from the beginning the British military government had only allowed the Jewish relief organizations to take care of the Jewish DPs in the camps but not of the, mostly German Jews, who lived outside the camps.[15] The justification for this directive was the British decision not to recognize Jews as a separate victim group. In the DP camps, too, all survivors had been grouped according to their respective countries of origin and, unlike in the US zone, no separate camp was set up for Jewish survivors. Although this practice was changed soon after massive protests by the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, for German Jews outside the camps the regulation still meant that they were treated equally to non-Jewish Germans and received only the subsistence level of food rations.

From the beginning, however, both JOINT and JRU circumvent the prohibition to operate outside the DP camps, arguing that they also had to take care of those DPs who had settled outside the camps.[16] In this way, JRU staff soon extended their work to the newly founded Jewish communities in the British zone, which numbered 37 by the end of 1947.[17] As the emigration of the vast majority of Jewish DPs proceeded, JRU and CRREC focused more and more on supporting the communities.

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13 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA2-6/5 (Correspondence, 1946. JCRA Organisation: Supplies), fol. 75/R.

14 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA16-1/13 (Collections in the UK, Jewish libraries and books,1946–1947), fol. 5/B.

15 Stratmann, "'In the field,'" see note 4, 72.

16 Lavsky, *New Beginnings*, see note 1, 53.

17 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA22-1/2 (Mrs Henriques Confidential, 1946–1949. Miscellaneous: Journals, Photographs, etc.).

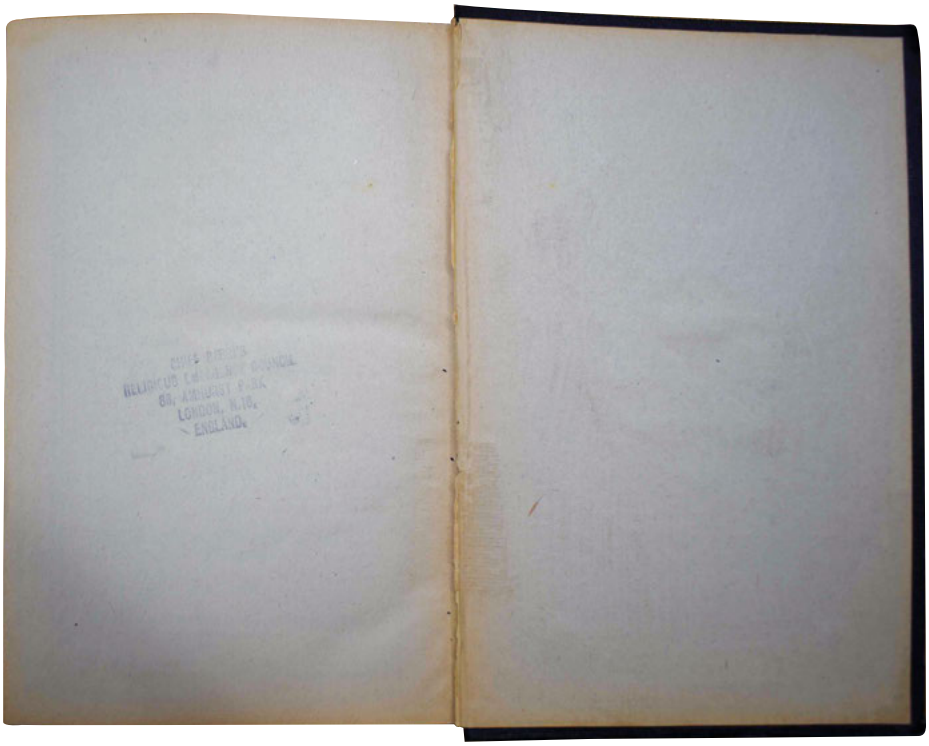

Fig. 1: Stamp of the Chief Rabbi's Religious Emergency Council London (CRREC) in a Prayer book for the Jewish High holidays found in the Jewish Community of Gelsenkirchen (Photograph: Lea Weik, Braunschweigisches Landesmuseum, 2021).

Rose Henriques (1889–1972), who had come to Celle with the second group of relief workers immediately after the liberation, headed the German department of JRU and was especially committed to the Jewish survivors. Since she and her work for the JRU are almost unknown today, her role will be examined in more detail below. In the East End of her hometown London Henriques, together with her husband Basil, ran the Bernhard Baron Settlement for Jewish people of all ages. The couple offered various services for children, young people and their parents, as well as support for the elderly. Medical assistance and free legal counseling for low-income people were also provided. In the settlement's own synagogue, religious classes took place as well as activities for adults. Her social commitment played an essential role in Rose Henriques' life and so it was probably a logical conclusion for her to become actively involved in the JCRA from 1943 onwards.

Shortly after her arrival in Germany, Henriques expressed her concern for Jewish survivors outside the DP camps:

> The German Jews need the support of the authorities as do the DPs; and those of them who struggle to re-establish their congregations and re-dedicate their synagogues should have the advice of persons versed both in German law and German congregational history, so that when the British Authorities are approached, they receive properly prepared and technically correct information for their consideration.[18]

From the beginning, Henriques regularly visited the newly emerging communities and met with their representatives to get a picture of their situation and needs. Her numerous reports from the first five years after the war provide a profound insight into the situation of the communities and at the same time are a powerful testimony to Henriques' tireless commitment to the concerns of the survivors. Her regular visits in the field meant that she was able to evaluate the situation of the Jewish communities comparatively realistically:

> [...] and although we have to face the fact that, to all intents and poses, the history of the Jews in Germany rests in the past rather than in the future. One cannot, in common humanity, say to these brave, struggling middle-aged and elderly men and women – "You are only there to die off: it's waste of time for you to try to live a full life again" – which, in effect, is what we should be doing if we withdraw, or even lessen our moral and practical support. Both by the leaders of the Central Jewish Committee and by their own Gemeinde representatives are they constantly being urged in forceful language – "Get out of Germany whilst there is still time. German Jewish life must not be re-established in Germany." The majority cannot emigrate, it is cruel to seek to cast a still deeper gloom over their last few years and to minimise their brave efforts.[19]

With this view, Henriques, consciously or unconsciously, opposed the World Jewish Congress' call to Jews, shared by much of the world Jewish community, to "never again settle on blood-soaked German soil."[20]

In the following two years, until the final withdrawal of the JRU from Germany, Henriques and her colleagues did their utmost to strengthen and support the communities: "Wherever there is a German Jewish Community in the British Zone, be it ever so small, the JRU workers make periodical visits and attend to the queries put to them by the committees and representatives of communal affairs."[21]

The establishment of a religious infrastructure in the communities included not only the supply of individual believers with religious accessories, but also the establishment of synagogues and prayer halls and to equip them with ceremonial objects.[22] Almost all synagogues and community centers were destroyed. Ceremonial objects had also often been destroyed or looted during the November pogroms and were

18 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA6A-4/1 (Mrs Henriques reports 1945. Jews in Germany), fol. 38. (HA6A-4/1/38).

19 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA6A-4/4 (Mrs. Henriques reports 1948), fol. 20/a.

20 Michael Brenner, *Nach dem Holocaust. Juden in Deutschland 1945–1950* (München, 1995), 99.

21 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA6A-4/4 (Mrs. Henriques reports 1948), fol. 8.

22 A main aim was also to send out rabbis and offer the possibility of celebrating the Jewish holidays appropriately as well as offering circumcisions, bar mitzvahs and weddings according to tradition.

considered lost at the end of the war. Some of these objects had been incorporated into the collections of German museums and archives and had survived the war there. In the British zone, such cases are documented from Hamburg and Lübeck, among others.[23] In Hamburg, survivors had come together immediately after the end of the war to found a new congregation. They used the small house synagogue in the former Oppenheimer Stift in Kielortallee as a prayer room, which had been misused and damaged during the war, but which could be reconstructed as a provisional building within a short time.[24] Shortly before the planned grand opening of the synagogue, the congregation turned to the Hamburg Senator for Culture on August 21, 1945, with the request that for the upcoming High Holidays "some cultic equipment such as Torah crown, shields, pointers, etc., which at the time had been taken into custody by Dr. Spierling [sic!][25] director of the Altona Museum and subsequently housed in the bunker Heiligengeistfeld, could be obtained, even if only on loan, subject to clarification of the legal situation."[26] On August 31, G.F. Wilimot of the Monuments, Fine Arts & Archives Branch approved this loan, but stipulated that the objects would remain property of the Altona Museum "pending a decision by a higher authority."[27] That the transfer of the objects actually took place becomes clear from a "List of the ceremonial objects from the possession of the former Jewish Religious Association e.V. Hamburg, which were given on loan for use by the Altona Museum to the Jewish Religious Commission Hamburg Rothenbaumchaussee 38 on September 5, 1945," which was signed by the Jewish Religious Commission on September 18.[28] This inventory includes a total of 84 ceremonial objects. Where these museum objects originally came from has not yet been conclusively clarified. As Karin Walter points out in her article on the Jewish cult-room in the Altona Museum, some objects might have been part of the synagogue silver confiscated by the German Reich in 1939.[29] In Hamburg, an exemption was granted for all objects made of silver, gold or platinum confiscated by Reich decree in February 1939. In contrast to the usual practice, such objects were not melted down or given to public purchasing agencies, but cultural institutions such as museums, were enabled to secure objects of "scientific value that

23 The Monuments, Fine Arts & Archives Branch also discovered Torah scrolls and clothing in the Suermondt Museum Aachen and approximately 1,000 volumes of Hebraica in the Hanover Municipal Library.

24 Heinz Goldstein, "Harry Goldsteins Bericht über den Wiederbeginn jüdischen Lebens in Hamburg 1945–1948 aufgezeichnet von seinem Sohn Heinz Goldstein," in *„Schließlich ist es meine Heimat …" Harry Goldstein und die Jüdische Gemeinde in Hamburg in persönlichen Dokumenten und Fotos*, ed. Uwe Lohalm (Hamburg, 2002), 19.

25 This refers to Hubert Stierling (1882–1950), who was director of the Altona Museum from 1932 to 1949.

26 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 522–2_1237 (Kultus 1945–51), fol. unnumbered; translated by LW.

27 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 522–2_1237 (Kultus 1945–51), fol. unnumbered; translated by LW.

28 Staatsarchiv Hamburg, 522–2_1237 (Kultus 1945–51), fol. unnumbered; translated by LW.

29 Karin Walter, "Der jüdische Kultraum im Altonaer Museum (1914–1933). Eine Spurensuche," in *Schatten. Jüdische Kultur in Altona und Hamburg*, ed. Gerhard Kaufmann (Hamburg, 1998), 25.

should be preserved".[30] Director Stierling of the Altona Museum had ordered some Judaica objects for his institution from the responsible administration for art and cultural affairs in April 1940 and also received them. Although it is not yet reconstructed exactly how many objects Stierling had received from the confiscated silver at that time, it was in any case considerably less than the 84 objects that the Hamburg Jewish Community received from him in 1945.[31]

The fact that the objects were initially given to the community only on loan had two reasons: on the one hand, questions of restitution had not yet been regulated by law at that early point in time.[32] On the other hand, no one could know then how long the Jewish communities would exist at all for many thought of them rather as "Liquidationsgemeinden" than as "Aufbaugemeinden." With this large number of properties, the Jewish Community of Hamburg was a rare exception so soon after the end of the war. Most other congregations lacked the ritual objects necessary for worship.

As it became more and more apparent that Jews settled in numerous places and would not leave Germany, Rose Henriques saw the need to provide the congregations with ceremonial objects for worship in synagogues and prayer halls. But this was no easy task, especially since the vast majority of the Judaica objects discovered after the end of the war were located in the US zone.[33] At the end of March 1949, she wrote to the editor of the *Jewish Chronicle* in London:

> I am most anxious that before we finish our work in Germany, we shall know that every Gemeinde however small and however primitive their premises for Divine worship may be, they will all have the minimum of Religious Requisites at their disposal. There is, as you probably know, a large store of these in the US Zone, and that is why our JRU workers are making special note of the needs of the small groups of German/Jewish residents.[34]

The "large store" to which Henriques refers, is the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD), which served as a collecting point for looted books and Jewish ceremonial objects since March 1946 (Fig. 2–4). In the little more than three years of its existence, more than 3.5 million books and manuscripts as well as several thousand Torah scrolls and other ritual objects passed through the sorting and distribution procedure of

30 Quoted in Walter, "Der jüdische Kultraum im Altonaer Museum (1914–1933)," see note 29, 25; translated by LW.

31 According to Karin Walter, Stierling had ordered fifteen Judaica objects, although it is not clear whether he received them. The museum received nineteen objects. Whether these came into the museum instead of the ordered fifteen objects or in addition to them remains unclear. See Walter, "Der jüdische Kultraum im Altonaer Museum (1914–1933)," see note 29, 25.

32 In the British zone, the Military Government Act No. 59 on the "Restitution of Identifiable Property" to Victims of National Socialist Suppression did not come into effect until May 1949.

33 The vast majority of Judaica looted by the National Socialists and hidden during the war were located in tunnels, bunkers, castles or chateaus in the area that became part of the US zone after the war ended.

34 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA7/4-16 (Hannover 1 Reports 1947–49), fol. 59/A.

the depot. The primary goal was, of course, to return the objects to their former owners or their rightful heirs, but this was only achieved in very few cases. The majority of the Jewish ceremonial objects and books stored in the OAD were categorized as "heirless cultural Jewish property." In order to prevent cultural property from falling into the hands of the German state, various international Jewish organizations in the United States founded the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO).[35] From June 1948, it acted as a trust organization for heirless Jewish assets and subsequently endeavored to ensure their restitution.[36] In February 1949, the Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR) was finally authorized as a sub-organization of the JRSO to search for heirless Jewish cultural assets and to forward them to Jewish institutions, primarily in Israel and the USA.

Fig. 2: Books and other archival material as they arrived at the Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946 (Yad Vashem Photo Archive, ID 73_2_18).

35 The JRSO consisted of the following organizations: Agudas Israel World Organization, American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Anglo-Jewish Association, Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Süddeutschen Landesverbände Jüdischer Gemeinden, Board of Deputies of British Jews, The Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France, The Council of Jews from Germany, The Jewish Agency for Israel, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction Corporation and World Jewish Congress.

36 Ayaka Takei, "The 'Gemeinde-Problem' The Jewish Restitution Successor Organization and the Postwar Jewish Communities in Germany 1947–1954," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 16.2 (2002): 271.

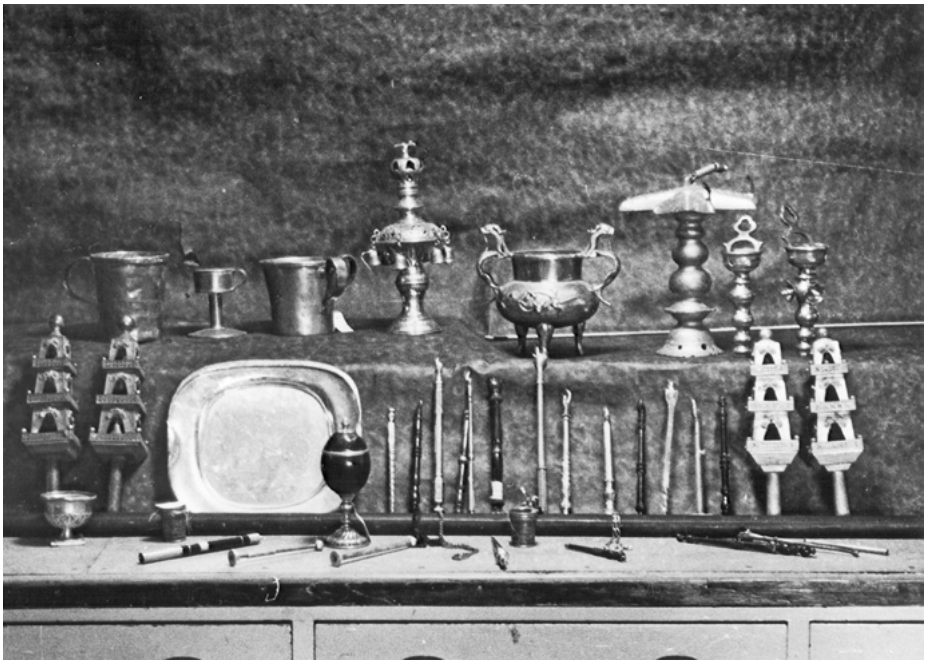

Fig. 3: Offenbach depot, display of confiscated silver Torah crowns, Torah pointers and other ritual objects looted from European synagogues, ca. 1945–1947 (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of S. J. Pomrenze, Photograph Number: 48726).

Between July 1949 and January 1952, the JCR distributed a total of 1,024 Torah scrolls and 7,867 ceremonial objects to museums and synagogues worldwide.[37] Israel and the US each received about forty percent of the objects, and the remaining twenty percent went to other Western countries, primarily France and Great Britain. Only 89 ceremonial objects were distributed to synagogues in Germany, because the representatives of the JCR were quite reluctant to give them to Jewish communities in Germany. They were of the opinion that the history of Judaism in Europe, and in particular the continued presence of Jews in Germany, had been terminated by the Shoah. In addition, the JCR feared that the newly established communities, out of financial necessity, might sell the heirless property given to them or that the property might be lost forever if the communities were dissolved.[38] Rose Henriques apparently did not share this view to the same extent. Even after her return to London she continued to advocate that the communities in the British Zone were provided with ceremonial objects.

37 Georg Heuberger, "Zur Rolle der Jewish Cultural Reconstruction nach 1945," in *Was übrig blieb. Das Museum Jüdischer Altertümer in Frankfurt 1922–1938*, ed. Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek (Frankfurt am Main, 1988), 101a.

38 Takei, "The 'Gemeinde-Problem,'" see note 36, 276.

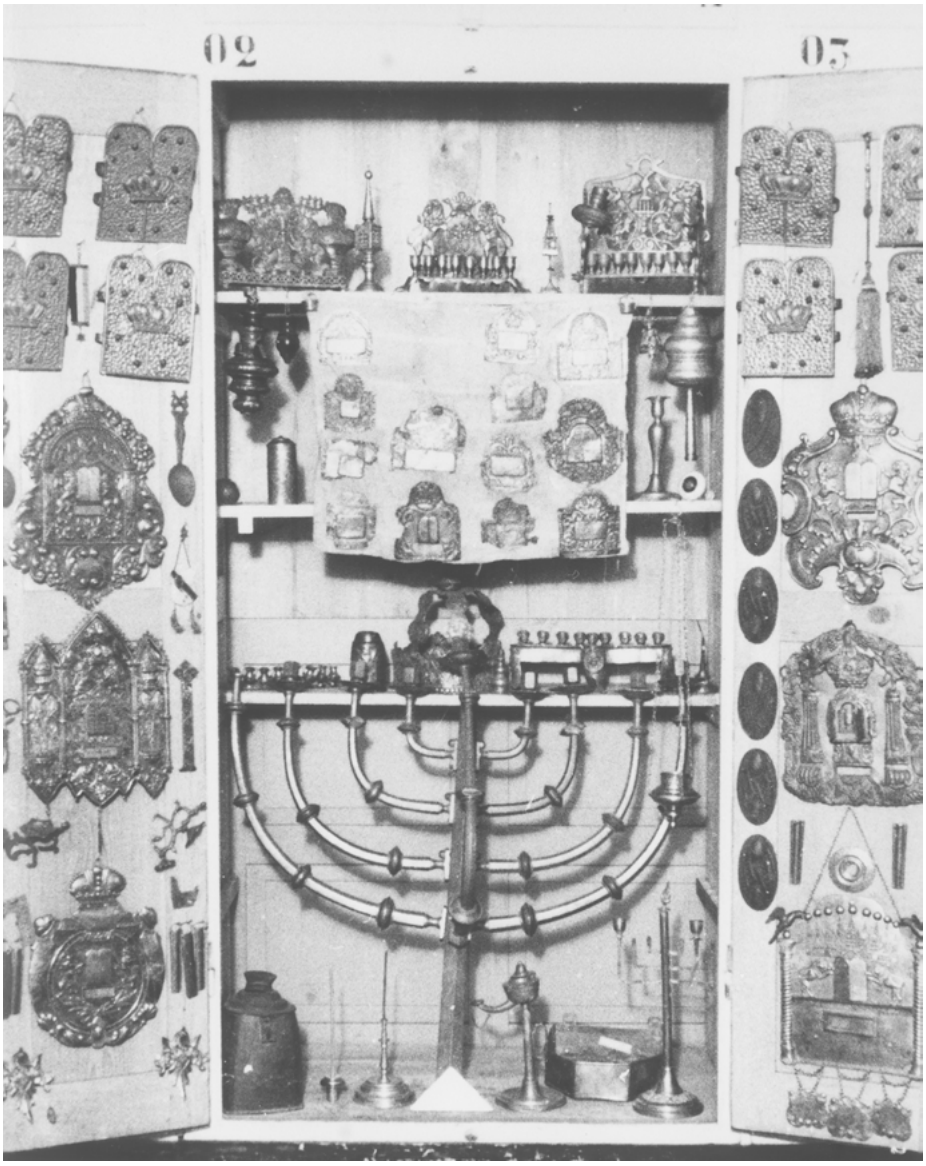

Fig. 4: Offenbach depot, display of silver Hanukkah menorahs, Torah breast plates and other ritual objects confiscated by the Nazis (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of S. J. Pomrenze, Photograph Number: 48734).

In March 1950, after nearly five years, the JCRA ended its work in Germany and withdrew its Relief Units. Henriques, believing this withdrawal to be premature, sent a circular from London to the Jewish communities in the British zone in May 1950. It stated:

> During my recent visit to Germany, I was informed by several of the communities that their Synagogues or Betstuben had insufficient silver ornaments and covers for the scrolls and the reading desks. In order to try and obtain these from accumulated stores in Germany for the use of German Jewish places of worship I should require a complete list of what is still necessary to complete the essential equipment of Synagogues and Betstuben.[39]

Probably to avoid raising expectations too high, Henriques added: "You will realise, I feel sure, that this is in no way a firm promise to produce the articles required [...]."[40] Nevertheless, the response was great and within the next few weeks Henriques received feedback from nineteen communities, in which they announced their needs.[41] Based on these responses, an extensive list was compiled that summarized the communities' total needs to nearly 180 ceremonial objects.[42] At the end of November 1950, Henriques then sent the list to the head of the JCR, Salo Baron, in New York, with the request to send ceremonial objects from the Offenbach Archival Depot to the communities:

> [F]rom my own frequent visits to Germany ever since 1945 to this date, I have become convinced that the most urgent desire of the few thousand remaining German Jews is to set up whatever "Betstube" or little Synagogue now taking the place of the former edifices with as perfect an outfit as possible. Their craving for spiritual rehabilitation and their earnest efforts to achieve this are most moving an awe-inspiring to the beholder and should receive every help and encouragement it is possible for their co-religionists outside Germany to offer them.[43]

Despite the above-mentioned skepticism of the JCR towards the establishment of Jewish communities in Germany, and although the OAD had already been dissolved by that time, Henriques received the hoped-for commitment as early as December 11. In a short letter, Hannah Arendt, then executive director of the JCR, confirmed to her: "we have instructed Dr. Lowenthal to let you have the ceremonial objects which you need for the communities in the British zone and your request will be filled as far as possible."[44]

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39 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA18-3/15 (Religious Requisites Purchases, 1947–52), fol. 3.

40 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA18-3/15, fol. 3.

41 Only the Jewish communities in Bielefeld, Braunschweig, Koblenz, Lippstadt/Soest wrote that they did not need any supplies. Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA6E-6 (Requisitions, 1950), fols. 1–22.

42 The Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA18-3/14 (Religious Requisites Loot, 1946–1951), fols. 16–18.

43 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, see note 42, fol. 23a.

44 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, see note 42, fol. 25.

Fig. 5: Stamp of the Offenbach Archival Depot in a prayer book for the Jewish high holidays found in the Jewish Community of Gelsenkirchen (Photograph: Lea Weik, Braunschweigisches Landesmuseum, 2021).

Whether and to what extent the objects promised by the JCRA actually went to the communities remains unclear in the end. At the beginning of September 1951, nine months after receiving Arendt's confirmation, Henriques addressed the following inquiry to Norbert Wollheim, chairman of the Association of Jewish Communities in Northwest Germany since 1946: "I should be very much obliged, if you would let me know as soon as ever possible, whether the Communities have yet received the ceremonial objects from the American sources."[45] Unfortunately no response from Wollheim could be found in the files of the Henriques Collection.[46]

As in the above-mentioned case of objects sent from the CRREC, the objects sent from the OAD prayer books are the most likely to be identifiable today. Thus at least two prayer books can still be found in the holdings of the Gelsenkirchen Jewish community that bear a stamp of the OAD (Fig. 5).

45 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, see note 42, fol. 33.

46 It is also possible that the request no longer reached Wollheim, as he emigrated to the USA with his family in September 1951.

In the course of the withdrawal of the JRU from the British zone and the closure of the Bergen-Belsen DP camp in July 1950, the Jewish communities entered a new phase. Although they continued to receive support from Jewish aid organizations in the years that followed, they were more or less on their own. At the same time, the founding of the *Zentralrat der Juden* in Deutschland in July 1950 marked a clear signal, both internally and externally, to build a longer-term infrastructure. The foundation for this had been laid by the numerous employees of the various Jewish aid organizations, one of whom was Rose Henriques, who, shortly before her departure from Germany, drew the following conclusion:

> In the religious field great strides have been made. Every Gemeinde has some sort of a place of worship, ranging from a tiny room in an old age home, which has also to be used as a quiet room by the residents; through all degrees of "Betstube", which are usually rooms in a communal building, which have been redecorated and furnished with makeshift equipment. Then the standard rises, to a few newly built synagogues which will remain as permanent synagogues, sufficient for the decimated population.[47]

47 Wiener Library London, Henriques Collection, HA7/4-16 (Mrs. Henriques reports, 1950), fols. 5/b–6/a.