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## From the Archives:

### Lucy S. Dawidowicz and the Restitution of Jewish Cultural Property

NANCY SINKOFF<sup>1</sup>

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In September of 1946, Lucy Schildkret, who later in life would earn renown under her married name, Lucy S. Dawidowicz,<sup>2</sup> as an “intentionalist” historian of the Holocaust,<sup>3</sup> sailed to Europe to work for the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the JDC, the Joint, or the AJDC) in its overseas educational department among Jewish refugees in displaced persons (DP) camps.<sup>4</sup> She later recalled that the journey had filled her with foreboding.<sup>5</sup> Schildkret was returning to a Europe

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1. I would like to thank David Fishman, Dana Herman, and the anonymous readers of *American Jewish History* for comments on earlier versions of this article.

2. I use the name Lucy Schildkret for anything she wrote prior to her marriage to Szymon Dawidowicz in January of 1948, Lucy S. Dawidowicz after her marriage, and Libe when she or her correspondents wrote in Yiddish.

3. The literature on “intentionalism” — the view that German antisemitism laid the foundation for Hitler’s early and then inexorable design to exterminate European Jewry — is enormous. See Omer Bartov, *Germany’s War and the Holocaust: Disputed Histories* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003), 80–81; Michael R. Marrus, *The Holocaust in History* (New York: New American Library, 1987), 37; David Engel, *The Holocaust: The Third Reich and the Jews* (London and New York: Longman, Pearson Education, 2000), 26–37; and Dan Michman, *Holocaust Historiography: A Jewish Perspective* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2003). Despite criticism by “functionalist” historians who claimed that even with the founding of the Third Reich in 1933, no one within the Nazi Party had a coherent plan for what to do with the Jews — something that led to conflict and competition in the various Nazi agencies’ pursuit of anti-Jewish policies — Dawidowicz maintained her “intentionalist” views throughout her life. See, for example, Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *The War Against the Jews: 1933–1945, 10th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Bantam, 1986), xxi, and idem, “The Holocaust Was Unique in Intent, Scope, and Effect,” *Center Magazine* 14:4 (July/August 1981): 56–64. The “intentionalist/functionalist” divide still shapes Holocaust historiography and has not been fully resolved. See Engel, *The Holocaust*, 32.

4. More than 250,000 Jewish displaced persons (DPs) lived in camps and urban centers in Germany, Austria, and Italy from 1945 to 1952 in facilities administered by the Allies and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA). Schildkret worked for almost a full year in the American Zone of Occupation and for almost six months in the British zone.

5. Lucy S. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 277.

then murderously emptied of what had been its largest prewar Jewish community, the Jews of Poland. She had lived among this community for a year before the outbreak of the war as a fellow of the Aspirantur, a graduate program at the Yiddish Scientific Institute (now the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research) in Vilna, fleeing only days before the Nazi invasion.<sup>6</sup> Schildkret's postwar position stationed her in Munich, the JDC's headquarters for the American Zone of Occupation. While her official responsibilities for the JDC consisted of procuring supplies, such as textbooks, dictionaries, paper, theater props, writing utensils, and curriculum materials, for the DP camps' educational institutions, which included more than sixty schools,<sup>7</sup> she soon found herself on the front lines of the haunting work of postwar Jewish cultural restoration.<sup>8</sup> By a mixture of chance, intention, and fate, Schildkret's most enduring role as an educational worker for the JDC would be restituting the remnants of YIVO's library and archives from the Offenbach Archival Depot (OAD) and ensuring their safe shipment to New York in June of 1947.<sup>9</sup> Schildkret's efforts helped to establish YIVO as a distinguished

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6. On the Aspirantur, see Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 89–100; Cecile Kuznitz, *YIVO and the Making of Modern Jewish Culture: Scholarship for the Yiddish Nation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 153–7, 163, 181, 186, 196; and Max Weinreich, “*Di untershte shure fun ershtn yor aspirantur*,” *YIVO bleter* 10, no. 1–2 (1936): 99–102 and idem, “*Undzer aspirantur un ire perspektiv*,” *YIVO bleter* 12, no. 4–5 (1937): 559–64.

7. Schildkret was particularly proud of obtaining the licenses for the Yiddish newspapers in the DP camps, including for *Fun letstn khurbn* (*From the Latest Catastrophe*), the organ of the Central Historical Commission in Munich. See Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 288 and 295. See, too, Elliot D. Sass, director, AJDC Supply Department in Paris, to the AJDC in Bad Arolsen, September 30, 1946, Leo W. Schwarz Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 294.1, folder 405, reel 34, frames 186–187.

8. The restitution of Jewish property was part of the international effort to restore plundered art, books, and religious artifacts to the countries formerly under the Nazis' grip. See Jeanette Greenfield, *The Return of Cultural Treasures* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Michael J. Kurtz, *America and the Return of Nazi Contraband: The Recovery of Europe's Cultural Treasures* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Miriam Intrator, “Books Across Borders and Between Libraries: UNESCO and the Politics of Postwar Cultural Reconstruction, 1945–1951,” unpublished doctoral dissertation (New York: Graduate Center, City University of New York, 2013); and Lynn H. Nicholas, *The Rape of Europa: The Fate of Treasures in the Third Reich and the Second World War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994).

9. On the underground efforts to protect YIVO's holdings during the war, see David E. Fishman, *Embers Plucked from the Fire: The Rescue of Jewish Cultural Treasures in Vilna* (New York: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 1996). Falling directly under military jurisdiction, printed Judaica that had been pillaged by the Nazis — as opposed to works of art — was brought immediately after the war to the Offenbach Collecting Point (renamed the Offenbach Archival Depot, or OAD, in March of 1946). Seymour Pomrenze (1915–2011), a European-born archivist and lieutenant in the U.S. Army, was

American Jewish research institution, and the New York City YIVO as a critical institutional link to the East European Jewish past.<sup>10</sup> An unsung “Monuments Woman,” Schildkret became known for her role in salvaging YIVO’s books only in 1989, when she published *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947*, which recounted her European experiences.<sup>11</sup>

This article will establish the context for Schildkret’s work in the OAD and reprint in full one of the many memos she wrote about the issues she — and others — faced in restituting Jewish cultural property after the war, a deeply contested activity whose resonances can still be felt.<sup>12</sup> Much more was at stake than merely ascertaining ownership of valuable books, religious objects, and art. Underlying the salvaging of YIVO’s library — as well as the restitution of all the other plundered property of European Jewry — was the fundamental question of who should be the authoritative voice of “the Jewish people” in the aftermath of the catastrophe.<sup>13</sup> Schildkret’s work at the OAD placed her among

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the OAD’s director from March to May of 1946. Subsequent directors of the OAD were Isaac Bencowitz (May–November of 1946), a captain in the U.S. Army and an officer in the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFA&A) program, which aimed to recover works of art stolen by the Nazis; Theodore Heinrich (November of 1946–January of 1947); Joseph A. Horne (January of 1947 to January of 1948); and James Kimball (February to April of 1949). See Dana Herman, “*Hashavat Avedab: A History of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc.*” an unpublished doctoral dissertation (Montreal, Quebec: McGill University, 2008), 156.

10. Elisabeth Gallas, “Preserving East European Jewish Culture — Lucy Dawidowicz and the Salvage of Books After the Holocaust,” *Jahrbuch Des Simon-Dubnow Instituts/ Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook* 11 (2012): 73–89 and idem, “*Das Leichenhaus der Bücher: Kulturrestitution und Jüdisches Geschichtsdenken nach 1945* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 40.

11. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 312–26.

12. “Woman in Gold,” a fictional film (2015) depicting the fate of and legal battle to reconstitute the famous “Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I” to its rightful owner, is the latest popular interpretation of Nazi cultural plunder and the international efforts of restitution. YIVO itself recently formalized an agreement with the Lithuanian government to complete the process of digitizing the components of its prewar library still in Vilnius. [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/nyregion/split-up-by-holocaust-top-collection-of-yiddish-works-will-reunite-digitally.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/03/nyregion/split-up-by-holocaust-top-collection-of-yiddish-works-will-reunite-digitally.html?_r=0)

13. The terms “the Jewish people” and “world Jewry” had no clear-cut definition and meant different things depending upon the ideological and political beliefs of those who used them. Defining the Jews as a “people” and not as a “nation,” “religion,” “ethnicity,” or “race,” or as a combination of these terms, was itself a product of modernization and the processes of political emancipation, linguistic and cultural assimilation, religious denominationalism, and nationalism. For a recent anthology on nineteenth-century writings on Jewish peoplehood, see Simon Rabinovitch, ed., *Jews and Diaspora Nationalism: Writings on Jewish Peoplehood in Europe & the United States* (Waltham, Mass.: Brandeis University Press, 2012).

the major figures of the transnational, postwar Jewish intelligentsia, including Hannah Arendt, Salo W. Baron, Hugo Bergmann, Philip Friedman, Judah Magnes, Koppel S. Pinson, Cecil Roth, Gershom G. Scholem, Marie Syrkin, Max Weinreich, and Zosa Szajkowski who were grappling with—and often competing with one another over—the fate of postwar European Jewry and its stolen cultural property.<sup>14</sup> All of them were engaged as well with the pressing issues of postwar Jewish survival and communal reconstruction, issues that directly touched upon the most essential question of modern Jewish existence that the Nazi assault had laid bare: Could Jews be secure in the European diaspora? Depending upon how that question was answered, a second, equally urgent question emerged: If Jews could not be secure in the European

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14. The biographies of all of these figures are far too complex for a short footnote. The details that follow highlight only their work with postwar Jewish survivors and cultural reconstruction. Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), a German-Jewish political and social philosopher who immigrated to the United States in 1941, where she taught at the New School for Social Research and the University of Chicago, became an active member of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. (JCR) after the war. Salo W. Baron (1895–1989), a Galician-born Jewish historian who emigrated in 1926 to the United States, where he taught Jewish history at Columbia University (1930–1963), founded the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, and later became the director of JCR, Inc. Hugo Bergmann (1883–1974), a Prague-born philosopher and author who emigrated to Palestine in 1920, became the first director of the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem. Philip Friedman (1901–1960), a Lwów-born historian educated at the Jewish Theological Seminary and University of Vienna, was appointed director of the Central Jewish Historical Commission after the war, and then became the educational director of the JDC before immigrating to the United States in 1948. Judah Magnes (1877–1948), an American-born Reform rabbi, immigrated to Palestine in 1922, where he became the first president of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Koppel S. Pinson (1904–1961), a historian born in Postawy, Russia (now in Belarus), moved to the United States in 1907, earned a doctorate in history, and taught at Queens College before becoming the JDC's director of education and culture for Jewish displaced persons in Germany and Austria. Cecil Roth (1899–1970), a London-born historian who headed the Jewish Historical Society of England, became director of the Committee on Restoration of Continental Jewish Museums, Libraries, and Archives in 1944, and later a member of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. Gershom G. Scholem (1897–1982), a Berlin-born scholar of Jewish mysticism, served as librarian of the Jewish National and University Library in Israel from 1923 to 1927. Marie Syrkin (1899–1989), a Swiss-born educator and journalist, came to the United States in 1907, where she worked as a teacher and editor; after the war, she worked in the DP camps as a representative of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations to screen survivor applicants for scholarships to American universities. Max Weinreich (1894–1969), a Latvian-born Yiddish linguist and philologist, was involved with the Yiddish Scientific Institute from its inception in 1925, and became the institute's research director in New York after immigrating to America in 1940. And Zosa Szajkowski (1911–1978, born Yehoshua Frydman), a Russian-Polish-born journalist who was an *aspirant* at the New York City YIVO, later became a historian of French Jewry.

diaspora, who should speak for the Jewish future and where should it be located — America or Palestine? There had been no consensus among European, Palestinian, and American Jews before and during the war of where, how, and with what means Jewish security could be ensured.<sup>15</sup> In the war's aftermath, intellectuals among these groups, some of whom were Holocaust survivors, now debated these questions again, but with renewed urgency.

The memo — now part of Dawidowicz's papers at the American Jewish Historical Society — was written on May 24, 1947 to Joseph A. Horne, director of the OAD, toward the end of her work at the depot.<sup>16</sup> The memo's subject line read, "Report on screening of Yiddish and Hebrew books at OAD to date." On its first page, Schildkret wrote, "Never sent." As we shall see below, although she did not send her memo to Horne, Schildkret sent a copy of it to Max Weinreich, the director of YIVO, which was then based in New York City. Like so many of the other documents that are held in Dawidowicz's papers, this memo was produced in duplicate, while some of her memos exist in triplicate. These copies are held in other archives, often in YIVO materials, such as in the papers of Max Weinreich and in two boxes of unarranged YIVO administrative files related to the restitution of its library from Vilna in the immediate postwar period.<sup>17</sup> Because of official procedure, some of these documents were duplicated contemporaneously as onion-skin copies of materials. Others were duplicated because — as in the case of the May 24, 1947 memo — the writer wanted to communicate something unofficially. Schildkret herself commented on the duplicative nature of her work in a letter to Max Weinreich: "I want to type this letter [in English rather than write it in Yiddish] so I can have some copies. I have reached the point where it is impossible to write anything in less than three copies."<sup>18</sup> Dawidowicz also xeroxed many of the documents from

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15. Ezra Mendelsohn, *On Modern Jewish Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

16. Lucy Schildkret to Mr. Joseph A. Horne, director, Offenbach Archival Depot, May 24, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Lucy S. Dawidowicz Papers, P-675, American Jewish Historical Society, New York, N.Y. and Boston, Mass. All subsequent citations from this collection will be noted as box #, folder #, Dawidowicz Papers.

17. Records of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York, RG 100, Administrative Records, Series: Files Relating to Restitution of YIVO Property (hereafter "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution") and Max Weinreich Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 584. I gratefully acknowledge the cooperation of the YIVO Archives in the publication of this article.

18. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, May 25, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

her postwar sojourn in Germany for research when writing *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947*. The endnotes of this article reflect the joint and sometimes multiple archival provenances of many of the sources.

Schildkret drafted the memo to recommend an end to the effort to ascertain personal ownership of books for restitution. From her perspective, the work of restoring books to their original owners or heirs had been accomplished. She believed that no more books should be restituted to either Poland or the Soviet Union, and that the remaining stocks of Yiddish and Hebrew belles-lettres, textbooks, and religious books — many in multiple copies — should be restituted based on genre, not on ownership, and only to those Jewish institutions that could use them. When she sent the draft memo to Weinreich on May 25, 1947, she reasserted her opinion about closing the depot and encouraged him to communicate her views in a more diplomatic fashion to Richard F. Howard, chief for cultural restitution of the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFA&A), Reparations and Restitution Branch of the Office of the Military Government in Germany, which oversaw the administration of the OAD.<sup>19</sup> She explained to Weinreich that she had never intended to send the memo to Horne lest it jeopardize the transport of YIVO's books, but that she had written it in order to clarify her views on restituting the remaining collections at the depot.<sup>20</sup>

Although her advice went unheeded,<sup>21</sup> the memo sheds light on the importance of Schildkret's work in the restitution of YIVO's property at the Offenbach Archival Depot, efforts that have been only recently

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19. In 1943, the Civil Affairs and Military Government Sections of the Allied armies established the Monuments, Fine Arts, and Archives (MFA&A) program to protect cultural property in war areas during World War II and to help restitute it afterward.

20. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, May 25, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

21. A year later, Joseph A. Horne and Gerson Epstein, YIVO's representative, signed for four additional cases of books from the depot to be sent to New York. "Receipt and Agreement for Delivery of Cultural Objects from OAD, 19 August 1948." "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution." In February of 1949, the American military government formally recognized Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc. as trustee of the remaining heirless Jewish cultural property found in the American zone in postwar Germany. In its tenure at the OAD, which closed in October of 1949, it restored cultural property — according to Hannah Arendt's list — to Israel, the United States, Great Britain, France, West Germany, Switzerland, South Africa, Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Morocco, Holland, Bolivia, and Uruguay. JCR, Inc. continued to exist until 1977, when it was transformed into a lobbying organization. Herman, "*Hashavat Avedah*," 5, 225, 294.

recognized by scholars.<sup>22</sup> At the time, her accomplishments all but disappeared from the public record, in great part because she was an unknown woman who worked behind the scenes under the authority of prominent men, such as Max Weinreich, various directors of the OAD, and the primarily male administration of the JDC. Despite Schildkret's subordinate role, she was well aware of the magnitude of the negotiations over the fate of the recovered Jewish cultural treasures, and of the unresolved and profound issues facing world Jewry in the immediate postwar period.

Schildkret's memo addresses several of these important questions. It also illustrates her proprietary feelings about YIVO's diasporic history and legacy, her pessimism about the reconstruction of Jewish life in Central and Eastern Europe, and her profound distrust of Soviet Communism. Her identity as an American and a member of the victorious Allied occupying forces only served to bolster these feelings. On a deeply personal and perhaps even subconscious, level, Schildkret's writings from the OAD also reveal how her role as one of YIVO's main representatives in scorched postwar Europe had empowered her. From being Weinreich's assistant in New York during the war — a role anticipated during her year as an *aspirant*, when he regularly relied on her English-language skills for transcriptions and letter writing<sup>23</sup> — Schildkret grew in confidence to express her own views on the fate of YIVO's cultural property. Her May 24, 1947 memo — with her other writings from the period — gives us entrée into her views and behavior regarding these issues, as well as information about some of the problematic behavior that took place at the OAD, long before she began to play a signal role in the construction of postwar American Jewish identity and its connection to the destruction of European Jewry.

The Nazis' plan to exterminate the Jewish community in Europe included a carefully orchestrated campaign to destroy Jewish culture. Alfred Rosenberg (1893–1946), a virulent antisemite, had been autho-

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22. Gish Amit, “‘The Largest Jewish Library in the World’: The Books of Holocaust Victims and Their Redistribution Following World War II,” *Dapim* 27, no. 2 (2013): 107–28; Gallas, “Preserving East European Jewish Culture”; idem, “*Das Leichenhaus der Bücher*”; Herman, “*Hashavat Avedah*”; Intrator, “Books Across Borders and Between Libraries”; Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

23. Weinreich was not alone in making demands on Schildkret's English language skills when she was in Vilna; other staff members and students regularly asked for help with translation and general English language lessons. See box 52, folder 7, Dawidowicz Papers.



rized by Hitler to study the so-called “enemies” of Nazism. As early as 1940, he established the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (Reich Leader Rosenberg Taskforce, or ERR) in order to pillage European Judaica collections. By 1942, he had set up offices throughout Europe and proceeded to loot its cultural treasures, spreading his net to include 375 archives, 957 libraries, 531 research and educational institutes, and 402 museums in Eastern Europe alone.<sup>24</sup> At Rosenberg’s side in the plunder of Judaica was Dr. Johannes Pohl, an expert in Hebrew literature whose thievery benefitted from his studies at the Hebrew University from 1934 to 1936. Pohl, who was dedicated to the concept of *Judenforschung ohne Juden*, “Jewish Studies without Jews,” oversaw the collection and shipment of Vilna’s valuable Judaica to Rosenberg’s *Institut zur Erforschung der Judenfrage* (Institute for Research on the Jewish Question) in Frankfurt. Weinreich, while en route to a linguistics conference in Brussels, had narrowly escaped the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939, but he remained in close touch with YIVO activists in Vilna for as long as possible as the war unfolded. He was acutely concerned about protecting YIVO’s property during the Soviet and Lithuanian occupations of the city in 1939 and 1940 and the subsequent Nazi occupation in 1941.<sup>25</sup> In fact, correspondence between YIVO activists Zosa Szajkowski and Elias and Riva Tcherikower over the fate of the archive of YIVO’s Historical Section, which had been based in Paris since 1933, began as early as the 1940s.<sup>26</sup> Already, on June 10, 1942, Weinreich had written to Green H. Hackworth, a legal adviser in the U.S. State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations, in order to put on record with the U.S. government that the German occupying forces had “carried away everything from the building of the Yiddish Scientific Institute at 18 Wiwulski, Vilna,” in anticipation of a future restitution process at the war’s end.<sup>27</sup>

24. Herman, “*Hashavat Avedah*,” 9.

25. On the Vilna YIVO during the war, see Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 2013) and Kalman Weiser, “The Jewel in the Yiddish Crown: Who Will Occupy the Chair in Yiddish at Vilnius University?” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 24 (2012): 223–55.

26. Szajkowski’s life paralleled elements of Schildkret’s, including playing a central role in the transfer of European Jewish cultural property to the United States before, during, and after the war. They became friends from their shared time at the New York City YIVO, and he frequently asked about “Libe” in his correspondence to Elias and Riva Tcherikower after he returned to Europe as a soldier in the U.S. Army. Leff, *The Archive Thief*, 76–77, 125, 135, 142, 229n49.

27. Green H. Hackworth to Max Weinreich, August 27, 1942, referencing Weinreich’s June 10, 1942 letter, and Max Weinreich to Green H. Hackworth, August 3, 1944. “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution.” The August 3 letter can also be found in box 51, folder 7, Dawidowicz Papers. In fact, “everything” had not been carried away

As Weinreich's secretary, Schildkret typed many of the memos and letters related to the fate of the Tcherikowers' archive and Weinreich's efforts to secure those materials during the war. Her memoir's research notes include copies of Weinreich's extensive correspondence from that period, with "mw/l's: dictated by max weinreich, but typed by lucy schildkret" or "mw/l's" on most of the English letters' final page below Weinreich's signature and  $\Psi\text{ל:וומ}$  on the Yiddish letters' final page.<sup>28</sup> Her later efforts on behalf of YIVO's materials came as a natural extension of her prewar experiences and her wartime position at YIVO, given her long association with the institute and her personal ties to Weinreich. They had worked together closely since her year in the Aspirantur, when he had guided her thesis on the Yiddish press, shared the experience of flight from Vilna before the outbreak of the war, and suffered through the war years at the New York City YIVO.<sup>29</sup> In New York, she was privy to most of Weinreich's official efforts to restore the remnants of YIVO's library to New York.<sup>30</sup> Serving not merely as Weinreich's amanuensis, Schildkret also corresponded on her own, as in a letter to Avraham Aronowicz, who was YIVO's agent in Paris for the historical archive. She wrote, "Dr. Weinreich has not been in the office at all of late, and this means that I am writing almost all of the letters. Because I didn't want to delay the response any longer, I am writing in my own name."<sup>31</sup> In early 1946, Weinreich took a leave from YIVO to complete the monograph that was later published as *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People*.<sup>32</sup> Leibush Lehrer, chair of the YIVO's research division for psychology and pedagogy, replaced Weinreich as the institute's research director for several months, with Schildkret assisting them both.<sup>33</sup>

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from the building. The men and women of the "Paper Brigade," an underground group within the Vilna Ghetto devoted to protecting Jewish cultural treasures, hid thousands of books and documents from the Germans — including those from non-Jewish libraries — in the YIVO building. Fishman, *Embers Plucked from the Fire*, 8.

28. Box 51, folders 6 and 7, Dawidowicz Papers.

29. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 81–83, 141–42, 197–203, 207–9, 212–17.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 268.

31. Libe Schildkret to Avraham Aronowicz, August 27, 1945, and Lucy Schildkret to Samuel C. Kohs, March 22, 1946, which begins, "In Dr. Weinreich's absence." "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution."

32. Max Weinreich, *Hitler's Professors: The Part of Scholarship in Germany's Crimes Against the Jewish People* (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute — YIVO, 1946).

33. See Max Weinreich to Koppel S. Pinson, March 19, 1946, with Schildkret's initials on the bottom, explaining his absence from the office. "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution."

The first evidence that parts of YIVO's library might still exist came on June 20, 1945 in a cable from Captain Abraham Aaroni, a YIVO activist, to his wife, Celia.<sup>34</sup> A month later, General Lucius D. Clay, commander of U.S. forces in Germany, informed the U.S. War Department of the discovery of books with YIVO's *ex libris* stamp. George W. Baker, an assistant chief in the State Department's Division of Economic Security Controls, responding to letters from Weinreich from June 28 and July 6, 1945, confirmed that two repositories of YIVO's materials had been found, one in Frankfurt, the other in Hungen.<sup>35</sup> As soon as Weinreich received news of the possibility that YIVO's library might be recoverable, he set out to assert the institute's claims. Weinreich knew that the question of the restoration of Jewish cultural property would be a thorny one, compounded not only by the complex structure of the postwar German occupation and international law, but also by the competition among Jewish institutions in Europe, the United States, and Palestine to speak for the murdered Jews of Europe and to control what remained of their literary culture. Postwar Jewry could not easily claim ownership of European cultural property because it had no legal standing in international law, which was founded on the claims made by nation-states.<sup>36</sup> Polish Jewry's cultural production was particularly vulnerable because it had almost no spokesmen: More than 90 percent of prewar Polish Jewry had been murdered. YIVO's claims to its books rested on identifying them as the institute's prewar property as well as on convincing the American government that Amopteyl (Amerikaner Opteyl), the Yiddish abbreviation for the American branch of YIVO, was now the organization's only address.

Weinreich relentlessly pursued these two tactics from 1945 to 1947, enlisting everyone he knew in his effort to salvage YIVO's library and archive and to restore it to the New York City office. These included John Walker, a special adviser to the Roberts Commission; Albert E. Clattenburg, Jr., assistant chief of the State Department's Special War

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34. Abraham Aaroni to Celia Aaroni, June 20, 1945, informing her to tell Shlomo Noble, a Yiddish linguist at the YIVO, of what he has found. "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution," with a copy in box 51, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers. Aaroni's letters mention more than 1,000 boxes containing not only YIVO's collection, but also the collections of the Ecole Rabbinique in France, the Rabbinical Seminary in Amsterdam, the Jewish student organization of Königsberg University, and several modest private libraries. Aaroni followed up with Weinreich later in the summer regarding other YIVO books. Abraham Aaroni to Max Weinreich, August 8, 1945, box 51, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

35. George W. Baker to Max Weinreich, July 23, 1945. "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution," with a copy in box 51, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

36. Gallas, "Preserving East European Jewish Culture," 80.

Problems Division; Archibald MacLeish, assistant secretary of state for public and cultural affairs; John Slawson, executive vice president of the American Jewish Committee; Raymund L. Zwemer, acting chief of the State Department's Division of Cultural Cooperation; and George W. Baker, Assistant Chief, Division of Economic Security Controls, Department of State, among others. To Rabbi (Major) Judah Nadich, adviser on Jewish Affairs to General Dwight Eisenhower at Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) from August to September of 1945, Weinreich expressed his worry that many of YIVO's holdings — including works from his personal library — would be mistaken as “heirless,” because the war had interrupted the cataloguing process and many of the books lacked YIVO's stamp. Weinreich turned to Nadich, initially hopeful that he could make the trip to Frankfurt with the major's aid: “I trust that you will be able to help us in this matter with true military speed.”<sup>37</sup>

Weinreich never made the trip. Schildkret, who was the link between prewar Vilna and the New York City YIVO, ultimately acted in his stead.<sup>38</sup> She arrived at the OAD in February 1947, “appointed as the official representative of the AJDC, as the only person authorized to draw books, manuscripts or ceremonial objects from the Offenbach Archival Depot, for distribution to the Displaced Persons in Germany.”<sup>39</sup> Her first task was to identify “unidentifiable” or “heirless” books that could be used in the DP camps' schools to fulfill an original agreement signed between the Office of the Military Government of the United States (OMGUS) and the JDC in January of 1946 for the loan of 25,000 books. Five thousand books still needed to be selected. Horne's February monthly report from the OAD stated, “During the last few weeks Miss Schildkret

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37. Max Weinreich to Judah Nadich, August 1, 1945, “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution” and box 51, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

38. Although their relationship was not without strain, Weinreich understood that Schildkret's history with YIVO ensured her professionalism and devotion to the library. He had written of her bonds to the institute in the comprehensive bibliography of YIVO publications from 1925 to 1941 that they had worked on in New York: “The fact that a young coworker from YIVO did the work *here and there* underscores the continuity of YIVO's entire project for us.” (Emphasis is mine.) Max Weinreich, ed., *YIVO bibliografye: a reshime fun di bikher, zhurnaln, broshurn, artiklen, retsenzies, vos der yidisher visnshaftleker institut hot publikirt in di yorn 1925–1941* (New York: YIVO, 1943): first page.

39. Theodore D. Feder, director of the AJDC, for Leo W. Schwarz, director of the AJDC in the American zone, to Joseph A. Horne, February 17, 1947, and Theodore A. Heinrich, chief, MFA&A, to Theodore D. Feder, February 24, 1947. Records of the U.S. Occupation Headquarters, World War II, RG 260, Records Concerning the Central Collecting Points (“Ardelia Hall Collection”): Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946–1951, M 1942, Roll 1.

has been engaged in examining the unidentifiable Jewish materials at the Depot with a view to determining how much material suitable for loan to AJDC still remains.”<sup>40</sup> Yet, encouraged both by Weinreich and her own commitment to YIVO’s holdings, Schildkret began to catalogue both stamped and unstamped books that she recognized as belonging to YIVO to ensure that they would not be considered “unidentified” or “heirless.” This included books that she may have used when she was an *aspirant*. She wrote to Weinreich that she had found books with “inscriptions in Yiddish or Hebrew, a great many inscribed to Zalman Reisen and I assume that he gave them to Yivo.”<sup>41</sup> Reisen (1887–1940), a Yiddish literary critic, editor, and expert on the Yiddish press, had been one of Schildkret’s mentors in the Aspirantur.<sup>42</sup> She also found books with Weinreich’s name and handwriting, including a second edition of his *Der veg tsu undzer yugnt* (*The Way of Our Youth*, 1940).<sup>43</sup>

On February 14, she cabled Weinreich: “AIRMAIL RUSH COPIES ALL PAPERS RELIBRARY [*sic*] BETTER MORE THAN LESS STOP CHANCES FAIRLY GOOD TO GET ALSO STRASHUN WILL WRITE DETAILS LUCY SCHILDKRET.”<sup>44</sup> To which he cabled back: “MANY THANKS FOR TELEGRAM DURING RECENT WEEKS WE HAVE BEEN VERY ACTIVE IN ASCERTAINING YIVO RIGHTS AND ARE HOPEFUL OF SUCCESS DETAILED LETTER FOLLOWS BEST REGARDS.”<sup>45</sup> Schildkret’s reference to “Strashun” was to the famous Strashun Library, which housed the vast Judaica collection of Rabbi Shmuel Strashun (1793–1872) and his son Mattityahu (1817–1885). They bequeathed their extraordinary library, which was comprised of thousands of Hebrew texts and manuscripts, including religious writings, fiction, poetry, scientific works, Jewish and Karaite historical works, and more, to the Jewish community of Vilna. Scholars and the public made use of both institutions’ collections. That same day, Weinreich wrote to Seymour Pomrenze, former director of the OAD who was then employed

40. Box 52, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers.

41. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, February 16, 1947, box 55, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers.

42. Reisen remained in Vilna (called Vilnius in Lithuanian) in the chaotic period after the outbreak of the war. He was arrested in September of 1939, and executed by the Soviets some time in 1940. Weiser, “The Jewel in the Yiddish Crown,” 224, 240, 244.

43. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, February 16, 1947, box 55, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers.

44. Cable from Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, February 14, 1947, box 52, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

45. Cable from Max Weinreich to Lucy Schildkret, February 14, 1947, box 52, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

at the Library of Congress and actively involved with the fate of YIVO's library, asserting that YIVO should be considered the proper owner of the Strashun collection.<sup>46</sup> He reiterated this claim to Schildkret: "The [Strashun Library] is connected to the Historic-Ethnographic Society to which we were closely tied in a variety of other, smaller collections. Last year in Vilna, a central Jewish library was in the process of being created and it was clear to everyone that YIVO was the natural center. The Strashun Library's books were already in the YIVO building, on 18 Wiwulski Street, when the Germans began to remove them."<sup>47</sup> Weinreich had earlier written to Marcus Cohn, the Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee, seeking advice regarding "libraries [that] rightfully belong to this Institute [(YIVO)]," which included the collections of the Jewish Teachers Institute of Vilna, the S. An-sky Jewish Historic-Ethnographic Society of Vilna, and the Strashun Library. Also mentioned were the library and archives of Simon Dubnow and the personal papers of a number of figures associated with the YIVO, including Zalmen Reisen, Shlomo Bastomski, Judah Leib Cahan, Moshe Lerer, Zelig Kalmanowicz, Alfred Landau, Pinchas Kon, and Weinreich himself, which Mark Uveeler, YIVO's executive director, and Weinreich claimed "as belonging to YIVO."<sup>48</sup> On February 15, Weinreich wrote to Schildkret, emphasizing the urgency of their task, in part because the Commission on European Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (later called Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., or JCR, Inc.), Salo W. Baron's organization, was getting in the way. In Weinreich's words, "Generally, and this will be difficult for you to understand, they *wanted* to create obstacles for us."<sup>49</sup>

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46. Max Weinreich to Sholom (Seymour) Pomrenze, February 14, 1947, box 52, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers.

47. Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, February 26, 1947, box 52, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers.

48. Max Weinreich to Marcus Cohn, July 2, 1946, and Max Weinreich to Isaac Bencowitz, July 9, 1946. Originals in "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution," with copies in box 51, folder 9, Dawidowicz Papers. See Gallas, "Preserving East European Jewish Culture," 82. On the strained relations between YIVO and the An-sky Historic-Ethnographic Society, see Cecile E. Kuznitz, "An-Sky's Legacy: The Vilna Historic-Ethnographic Society and the Shaping of Modern Jewish Culture," in *The Worlds of S. An-Sky: A Russian Jewish Intellectual at the Turn of the Century*, eds. Gabriella Safran and Steven J. Zipperstein (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 329–35.

49. Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, February 15, 1947, box 52, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers. Weinreich, however, supported the creation of JCR, Inc. in 1949 as the international Jewish trustee for heirless and unidentifiable Jewish cultural property in the American zone. Herman, "*Hashavat Avedah*," 63 and 71.

Weinreich had become increasingly frustrated that assurances made to YIVO about treating its claims separately from “Baron’s Commission” and the general claims of cultural restitution were false. He decided to press forward on his own. He and Uveeler negotiated with the State Department directly to assert YIVO’s ownership, and they appealed to Seymour Pomrenze for help. Weinreich now awaited more details from Schildkret to see what would be the most efficient and cost-effective way to ensure the cataloguing and transport of the books to New York. Schildkret, meanwhile, had to negotiate with her superiors at the JDC to give her leave time or to consider her work at the OAD part of her JDC responsibilities.

Schildkret won the confidence of Theodore Feder, deputy director of the JDC in the American zone, that accurate cataloguing would be done to ensure that any books claimed by YIVO were actually part of the original Vilna collection and that no books would disappear. The earlier loan of 20,000 books to the JDC — under Koppel S. Pinson’s watch — had been a disaster. In November of 1945, Pinson, the JDC’s educational director and a YIVO associate, had requested from Leibush Lehrer permission to draw books from those belonging to YIVO at the OAD for the displaced persons camps. With reluctance, Weinreich and Lehrer had authorized Pinson to be YIVO’s official representative at the depot in a cable of December 4, 1945 — a cable that Pinson said he never received.<sup>50</sup> Urgent cables flew back and forth the next year, with a final cable from Pinson to Weinreich in July of 1946 requesting authorization. Pinson, meanwhile, had been appointed the official JDC representative at the OAD under pressure from Judge Simon H. Rifkind, the civilian adviser to Eisenhower on Jewish affairs. In this capacity, he had overseen the selection of 20,000 books from the depot. Pinson left Europe in August of 1946, and Isaac Bencowitz, Pomrenze’s successor at the OAD, soon discovered inconsistencies with the initial loans to the JDC.<sup>51</sup>

The disappearance of so many of those books created enormous problems for Schildkret’s efforts, both as an employee of the JDC and

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50. Cable to Koppel S. Pinson from Max Weinreich and Leibush Lehrer, December 4, 1945, “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution.”

51. Herbert Katzki, director, AJDC German Operations, to S. T. Pomrenze, March 12, 1947, box 51, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers. See, too, Koppel S. Pinson’s letter to Joseph Schwartz, marked as “strictly confidential,” regarding the transportation of books and manuscripts from Germany to Paris. JDC Archives, records of the Jerusalem office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Geneva II, Germany, box 321A, file 73, letter from Koppel S. Pinson to Joseph Schwartz, 07/29/1947. Herman, “*Hashavat Avedah*,” 166–71 and Gallas, “*Das Leichenhaus der Bücher*,” 40.

in her work on behalf of YIVO's library. On February 16, 1947, she wrote a long, confidential letter to Weinreich — sending a copy to her future husband, Szymon Dawidowicz — detailing the primary obstacles to her work. The main difficulty, she wrote, is that what “are considered the most important Hebrew and Yiddish manuscripts have disappeared from Offenbach. This is strictly confidential and was told to me in great confidence by Mr. Joseph A. Horne, Director of the OAD.” She named various suspects, including Chaplain Herbert Friedman and Gershom G. Scholem, professor of mysticism at the Hebrew University:

In any case, apart from the missing material about which OMGUS (Office of Military Government, United States) is aware, there is no question in my mind that large quantities of the 20,000 [books] never got to the [DP] camps. Too much has disappeared on the way for the loss to be accidental. There is a lot of talk about Pinson's having collected a private library for himself. If Yivo never received anything through him, then there is little question in my mind that he did.<sup>52</sup>

Horne affirmed Schildkret's frustrations with the missing books that now obstructed her work at the OAD: “It is clear that she is distressed by the mess which her predecessor made of the whole affair, and it is believed that she sincerely desires to clear up whatever irregularities can be cleared up. She has little sympathy with the motives which impel so many of her persuasion, for example she is not a Zionist, and she does not believe in grabbing everything which is not bolted down.”<sup>53</sup> Gershom G. Scholem, Koppel S. Pinson, and Chaplain Herbert Friedman were all implicated in the disappearance of five other boxes from the OAD in December of 1946, which included 1,100 manuscripts that ultimately arrived at the Hebrew University, where they are still held. When the boxes' disappearance was discovered, the military launched an investigation, interviewing such figures as Rabbi Philip S. Bernstein, adviser on Jewish Affairs to the U.S. military command from June 1946 to August 1947; Friedman; Isaac Bencowitz, a captain in the U.S. Army's MFA&A branch; Schildkret; and Sadie Sender, JDC regional director

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52. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, February 16, 1947. I have seen two copies of the letter, one in “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution” and one in box 55, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers. Atop the letter in the YIVO boxes, Schildkret typed this to Weinreich: “Am having this letter mailed in Paris to rush it and avoid any possibility of censorship.” Atop the copy of the letter she sent to Szymon Dawidowicz, she wrote this in hand: “Darling Szymon: Thought you might be interested. Besides I want you to keep this for me. I don't dare keep it in Germany. All my love — Darling, די ייד ביזדע.” This letter attesting to the love affair between Schildkret and Dawidowicz is rare.

53. Cited in Herman, “*Hashavat Avedah*,” 169.



for the Frankfurt region.<sup>54</sup> The inability to account for the destination of so many books from the JDC's first loan further compromised its position at the depot and with OMGUS. Schildkret made this report to Weinreich: "Because of the thefts, OMGUS in Berlin is getting very wary. I have inherited a lovely headache."<sup>55</sup> Horne and his superior, Major Lester K. Born, were reluctant to let any books leave the depot whose provenance could not be determined. They were aware, however, that they lacked the expertise to assign ownership of the Hebrew and Yiddish books. Schildkret assured Weinreich that she had convinced Horne of the legitimacy of YIVO's case because he trusted her view of Weinreich's indispensable knowledge of prewar Jewish libraries. She also apprised Weinreich of the fact that the Soviet Union, which now controlled Vilnius (formerly Vilna), had made no claims on the materials. Furthermore, she related that in conversations with Horne, she had "helped him maintain the opinion he already had, that there is no hope for renewed Jewish cultural life in Poland. There may be a Jewish community there, but he feels that no one will ever make use of the material. He is opposed to sending anything to Palestine on grounds of security."<sup>56</sup> Horne's "opinions" affirmed those of both Schildkret and Weinreich: The books of Polish Jewry belonged in New York. Schildkret was emboldened by this affirmation: "Thus, what we want now is fast action."<sup>57</sup>

On March 17, 1947, Schildkret drafted a "secret" memo to Theodore Feder and Charles E. Israel, administrative director of the JDC in Munich, based on the "highly confidential" (*"streng konfidentsiyel"*) information she had received from Weinreich on February 17, for the purpose of negotiating a leave from her normal JDC responsibilities in order to work at the OAD.<sup>58</sup> She informed Feder and Israel that she would be

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54. Herman, "Hashavat Avedah," 58–62, 175–82. On the work of Gershom G. Scholem and Hugo Bergmann at the OAD, see Amit, "The Largest Jewish Library in the World." Cecil Roth, head of the Jewish Historical Society of England, and Judah Magnes also believed that the Hebrew University should be the primary trustee of the heirless Jewish cultural material. To Koppel S. Pinson, Magnes disingenuously claimed that it would be "disgraceful if there were any competition between Jewish organization [*sic*] for the receipt of books, manuscripts and other collections." Judah Magnes to Koppel S. Pinson, May 3, 1946, Leo W. Schwarz Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 294.1, folder 414, Reel 34, frame 967.

55. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, February 16, 1947, box 55, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers.

56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

58. Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, February 15, 1947. "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution" and Lucy Schildkret to Theodor Feder and Charles E. Israel, March 17, 1947, Dawidowicz Papers, box 55, folder 3, with a copy in box 52, folder 1.



Figure 1. Lucy Schildkret in the Offenbach Archival Depot, March 1947. Courtesy of Laurie Sapakoff Cohen

able to complete the accurate cataloguing and distribution of the 5,000 remaining books for the JDC *and* work on identifying YIVO's books. She assured them that when she found YIVO's books in the process of sorting potential educational materials for the JDC, she had put them aside, fully cognizant of the improprieties of former OAD directors. She urged Feder and Israel to allow her to work on YIVO's books because of her familiarity with the collection: "We are faced with a situation where the identification of a further part of the Yivo library is possible only if the AJDC assigns me to this work. If not, it means the loss to Yivo of possibly several thousand volumes."<sup>59</sup> Schildkret also drafted a memo to Israel, copying JDC employees Philip Friedman, Hyman J. Wachtel, and Ben Kaplan, in which she reasserted her authority to oversee the distribution of the books:

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59. Lucy Schildkret to Theodor Feder and Charles E. Israel, March 17, 1947, box 52, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers.

As the authorized agent to act for AJDC at the Depot, I am responsible for the fate of these books, their distribution, disposition, and ultimate return. In view of this situation, to protect myself and the AJDC from possible misuse of these books and the terms of the loan, I shall insist upon making the entire allocation and distribution of these books from Offenbach through the final destination. . . . I cannot risk the watering down of this responsibility through too many channels and must myself keep a check on these books which were granted as a loan through a special decision made on the highest level of military government policy.<sup>60</sup>

Feder apparently did her a personal favor by allowing her to work on YIVO's materials while still on the JDC's payroll. In a long, "semi-official" letter she wrote to Henrietta Buchman, a secretary at the JDC, with "a large glass of good Offenbacher beer" on her desk, Schildkret detailed the problems associated with the initial loan of books, the implications for the JDC, and the efforts to convince the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), which oversaw the OAD, to allow the loan of the additional books to the DP camps. The release of the first books, she wrote, which "was done with an AJDC receipt and carted away with AJDC transportation," had sullied the military authorities' opinion of the organization, although it was finally clear "that the Joint had nothing to do with it."<sup>61</sup> Schildkret was motivated, she told Buchman, not only because of her personal ties to YIVO and the historic significance of recovering the remains of its library, but also because she wanted to clear the JDC's image — and that of Jews generally:

I feel that I don't have to explain or motivate this assignment to you. Neither do I want to urge you to do anything, in the sense of making suggestions or whearases [*sic*]. I would just like you to do whatever you see fit: discuss it or not, advise Paris or Munich or not. Because, you see, as far as the work is concerned, it's all the same to me. I'm very stubborn when I think that something important is concerned. I don't think many things important, but this I do, as you can see by my readiness to stick to it even if I have to live on cigarettes. Of one thing at least you can be assured: that my presence in the Depot will not cast one iota of suspicion on [the] Joint or Jews for dishonesty or thievery or irresponsibility. My relations with the MFA&A are excellent and I intend that they remain that way.<sup>62</sup>

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60. Lucy Schildkret to Charles E. Israel, March 17, 1947, Philip Friedman Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 1258, folder 394.

61. Lucy Schildkret to Henrietta K. Buchman, May 12, 1947, box 52, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers, and in "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution."

62. *Ibid.*

On May 13, 1947, Schildkret drafted another memo to Feder, detailing what she had accomplished despite the obstacles to her work. Under a section titled “Difficulties encountered,” she revealed the distrust that OMGUS had for the JDC’s work in the OAD:

The AJDC representative arrived at a rather crucial time when previous activities at the Archival Depot were being subjected to close investigations by various official bodies. OMGUS was inclined to be unwilling about releasing the remaining 5,000 books unless certain guarantees and reports were presented. OMGUS desired to be informed of the exact distribution of the books previously lent. OMGUS expressed dissatisfaction that some of the books had been sent into the British and French Zones and indicated a desire for the return of these books to the U.S. Zone. A conference in Berlin with the Restitution Branch was required to demonstrate AJDC’s goodwill and interest in the fair disposition of this property. A trip to Belsen was required in order to report to Berlin the situation of the books lent there. OMGUS verbally promised release of the five thousand books at the Berlin interview and following the report on Belsen.<sup>63</sup>

Ultimately, OMGUS granted Schildkret the authority to distribute the books, which she had meticulously catalogued. So, too, OMGUS empowered Schildkret, as the JDC representative “who was also interested in the return of Yivo property [and who could] sort out Yivo books from the unidentifiables,” to continue preparing YIVO’s books for restitution.<sup>64</sup> She had successfully made the case for her work on behalf of YIVO while salaried by the JDC.

Despite its importance, the work itself was tedious, as Schildkret related in a letter home: “I have the goddamnedest job. Sometimes I think I’m crazy to have undertaken it, but I guess it was the chance of a lifetime — for Yivo and not for me.”<sup>65</sup> She described in detail the drudgery of what she was doing, which included going through hundreds of cases filled with books, Talmuds, brochures, pamphlets, and other printed materials. The boxes were marked “*Hebräisch [sic]* O.B. (*ohne Besitz* [(‘heirless’)]) or JIWO (YIVO, using the Polish spelling).” The work was dreary. She said she would get “sort of green around the

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63. Lucy Schildkret to Theodore D. Feder, May 13, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers, and in “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution.” See, too, the memo of Lucy Schildkret, AJDC representative, “Report of Activities at Offenbach Archival Depot,” May 13, 1947, box 52, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

64. Lucy Schildkret to Theodore D. Feder, May 13, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

65. Unsigned. *Not for general circulation. Conference of the Central Historical Commission*, Offenbach, May 16, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

lips when I see these [publishers' runs of periodicals] coming up" and "expect[ed] to develop a permanent squint when [she saw] a [book] stamp or a signature." Schildkret quipped that she expected to get "asthma, TB, and any number of respiratory diseases from the dust," and she also made it clear that she did not like working with the German personnel.<sup>66</sup> At the same time, she made good use of her connections to the black market — as well as of the solicitousness of some of the German staff — to buy handbags, suitcases, or anything else she and her Munich friends wanted.<sup>67</sup>

Schildkret's original estimate of six-to-eight weeks to complete the work proved too optimistic. It had taken three months, in which time she catalogued 162,683 Yiddish and Hebrew volumes, identifying 32,894 of them. Of these, 75 percent belonged to YIVO, including the books from the Strashun Library.<sup>68</sup> Once she had secured the cataloguing of YIVO's library, Schildkret felt that her work at the OAD was done. In her view, there was no longer any point in restoring books to insubstantial surviving European Jewish communities or to the institutions in countries now bereft of their former vital Jewish populations.

On May 24, 1947, she composed what we now know was merely a draft memo to Horne, expressing her views on the relationship of the books at the OAD and the future of European Jewry. She wrote the memo with characteristic bluntness. For Schildkret, any effort to continue trying to locate the original owners of books now held at the OAD was, at best, a complete waste of time and resources and, at worst, a willful denial of the Nazis' successful destruction of European Jewry, its leadership, its institutions, and its communities. The view that European Jewry could not recover was shared by many other intellectuals and activists in the immediate postwar years. In May of 1946, legal scholar Jerome Michael, who headed the Jewish Restitution Commission's (JRC) legal group and who would later work with Salo W. Baron and Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., had articulated the same opinion to Dr. Luther H. Evans, the Librarian of Congress. The books and other cultural items should be removed from Europe, he wrote, because, with the "annihilation of millions of European Jews, including most of their religious leaders, scholars and teachers, and [with] the dispersion of the

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66. *Ibid.*, p. 2. Dawidowicz's hatred for Germany and Germans was a leitmotif in her memoir. Gallas, 'Das Leichenhaus der Bücher,' 42.

67. Unsigned. *Not for general circulation. Conference of the Central Historical Commission*, written in Offenbach, May 16, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

68. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 324.

survivors, Europe is no longer, and it is very unlikely that it can again become, a center of Jewish spiritual and cultural activity.”<sup>69</sup>

Schildkret continued to justify her view that the OAD should be closed because it lacked a staff knowledgeable in Jewish languages and the history of the Jews during the war. She illustrated this latter point by drawing attention to books marked as belonging to various *Judenräte*, the Jewish councils established by the Nazis to control Jewish life in the ghettos, which could not be simply returned.<sup>70</sup> The books, she explained, had belonged originally to persecuted Jews who, together with the ghetto leaders, were in all likelihood dead. Endeavoring to find the property’s original owners was futile. Of the possibility of Jewish life being revived in the Soviet Union or Communist Poland, she was equally dismissive. In “both countries,” she wrote, “the Jewish population was largely decimated and . . . the revival of Jewish cultural institutions and the flourishing of Jewish culture are problematic. It is the opinion of the undersigned that the effort for further possible identification of property belonging to either country now is completely out of proportion to the ultimate use to which these books may be put, if returned.”<sup>71</sup> Schildkret remained unwavering in her negative assessment of the possibility of any form of independent or autonomous Jewish existence under communism throughout her life.<sup>72</sup>

Postwar Germany was likewise no place for Jewish books, she believed, and she expressed her opinion in moral terms: “It is the conviction of the undersigned that no German institution as, for example, the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek at Frankfurt has any moral or practical right to any Judaica, even though such books may bear the stamp of German institutions.”<sup>73</sup> The day before, she had made the same point to Dr. Werner

69. Cited in Robert G. Waite, “Returning the Jewish Cultural Property: The Handling of Books Looted by the Nazis in the American Zone of Occupation, 1945 to 1952,” *Libraries and Culture* 37, no. 3 (2002): 219. Gershom G. Scholem, too, considered the revitalization of German Jewry’s great culture impossible. See his letter to E[rnest] Frischer, June 13, 1946, cited in Herman, “*Hashavat Avedah*,” 173n70.

70. Historian Dan Michman has suggested that the term “headship” be used as an alternative to “Jewish council.” A “headship” is defined as a group that derives its power from those who appointed it (in this case, the Nazis) rather than from the group over which it has power (the Jewish community). See Michman, *Holocaust Historiography*, 161.

71. Lucy Schildkret to Joseph A. Horne, May 24, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

72. Nancy Sinkoff, “The Polishness of Lucy S. Dawidowicz’s Postwar Jewish Cold War,” in *The Jewish Feminine Mystique? Jewish Women in Postwar America*, eds. Hasia Diner, Shira Kohn, and Rachel Kranson (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 31–47.

73. Lucy Schildkret to Joseph A. Horne, May 24, 1947, Dawidowicz Papers, box 55, folder 4.

Peiser in the JDC's Restitution Department: "The German institutions have no right to Jewish books, it seems to me, on two counts: they have forfeited the moral right to their ownership and they cannot show either competent personnel to care for these books or readers and/or scholars to make use of the books."<sup>74</sup> Acknowledging that there were Jews living in German lands, she maintained that none of them could make "proper use" of valuable books. Any postwar German Jewish communities would be better served, she concluded, by receiving books of less value or those not written in Jewish languages. In essence, Schildkret rejected any possibility of the renewal in the near future of Jewish communal life in postwar Germany.<sup>75</sup> With her departure, Schildkret knew that the OAD would lack staff members knowledgeable in Hebrew or Yiddish, and she therefore recommended that the cataloguing work cease, and that the remaining "heirless" books be restored to one central place, where they could be used by what she regarded as a viable Jewish community. To Weinreich, she wrote this: "It seems to me that *once the Yivo library is out of the Depot* the problem is not who will identify what and what categories to make and what catalogues to make etc. etc., but to get all the books shipped out on the basis of a principle to be established by the State Department together with competent Jewish representation."<sup>76</sup> Having catalogued the books known to be part of YIVO's prewar collection, inclusive of the libraries claimed by YIVO as part of its institutional mission, she felt that her work was done.

Schildkret remained at the OAD until mid-June, when Seymour Pomrenze returned as part of a Library of Congress mission to oversee the shipment of YIVO's library. On June 17, 1947, the day that YIVO's books were loaded onto the freight trains destined first for Bremen and then for New York City, she made a report to Weinreich, asking his forbearance regarding the fact that she had written in English:

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74. Lucy Schildkret to Dr. [Werner] Peiser, May 23, 1947, box 52, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers.

75. Tantalizingly, although Weinreich had consistently advocated for the removal of Jewish cultural property from postwar Germany, he admitted the possibility of the restoration of Jewish life there: "Should Jewish life in Germany be restituted at some future date to the degree of warranting the return of any part of these treasures to German territory, the American trusteeship established for the administration of this property would act accordingly." Max Weinreich to Archibald MacLeish, April 4, 1945. "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution," with a copy in box 51, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers. On the efforts of survivors to remake their lives in postwar Germany, see Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

76. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, May 25, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers.

The big day has come. Everything worked out beautifully . . . The Depot iz gegangen oif redlekh (“going like gangbusters”).<sup>77</sup> There hasn’t been anything like this for a long time here. 420 cases were loaded. [Joseph A.] Horne says we had 414 and they just took six more to fill the three freight cars. Could be. The only thing left out is about 49 mss. which will go with a second shipment at end of July. I am leaving for Munich in a couple of days to clear up my assignment with Joint for the future. In any case, I imagine I’ll come back to the Depot if only to get a few more cases for you.<sup>78</sup> By now I have on paper words of praise and gratitude from all the MFA&A people. . . . This is excellent for Joint.<sup>79</sup>

Pomrenze also wrote to Weinreich and Uveeler, affirming the mission’s success and informing them of the anticipated date — July 1, 1947 — of the books’ arrival in New York.

Once the books had landed safely in New York, Weinreich wrote to Schildkret, acknowledging her efforts, yet urging discretion in publicizing the transfer of the property. He still harbored hopes that Pomrenze would be able to secure the restitution of YIVO’s press archives that had been found in Czechoslovakia,<sup>80</sup> and he also wanted to conduct a fundraising event using the restitution of the books as part of its appeal:

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77. Schildkret’s transliteration choices predate YIVO’s standard form for Yiddish transliteration, adopted informally by the 1940s and first fully articulated in Uriel Weinreich’s English-Yiddish, Yiddish-English Dictionary in 1968. I am grateful to Alec Eliezer (Leyzer) Burko’s knowledge of this topic.

78. Weinreich later turned to Schildkret with a personal request to recover a copy of his dissertation, “*Studien zur Geschichte und dialektischen Gliederung der jiddischen Sprache*” (“Studies in the History and Dialect Distribution of the Yiddish Language,” Marburg, 1923). Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, July 3, 1947. “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution” and box 52, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers. See, too, Libe Schildkret to Max Weinreich, September 30, 1947, Max Weinreich Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 584, folder 592. The dissertation appeared as a book only in 1993. Max Weinreich, *Geschichte der Jiddischen Sprachforschung*, ed. Jerold Frakes (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1993).

79. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, June 17, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers. See, too, Library of Congress Mission, Receipt, June 17, 1947, “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution” and box 51, folder 1, Dawidowicz Papers.

80. In June of 1947, Pomrenze traveled to Prague after he had supervised the shipment of YIVO’s books to New York to investigate the possibility of restituting YIVO’s press archive. But the fate of the materials under postwar Soviet authority was even more contested than that of the cultural treasures in the American zone. His trip was unsuccessful. See “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution” and Sholom (Seymour) Pomrenze to Max Weinreich and Mark Uveeler, July 13, 1947. Copies are in box 52, folder 1 and box 55, folder 5, Dawidowicz Papers. Schildkret made a reconnaissance trip to Czechoslovakia in March of 1947. See Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, March 29, 1947 and a memo dated April 2, 1947, box 55, folder 5, Dawidowicz Papers.



Thank you very much for your collaboration with the whole matter. . . . If you wish, and with good reason, to grab a drink in honor of the occasion, you can imagine that we would like to be able to shout about this from every rooftop. Regrettably, we must restrain ourselves at present. . . . We need to be quiet and see to it that as few people as possible know about this fact.<sup>81</sup> It is not merely a YIVO affair, but a great general Jewish symbol. Anyway, sooner or later, the world will be made aware of this. You should be satisfied that you had a part (earlier here [in New York] and afterwards there [in Germany]) in creating that symbol.<sup>82</sup>

Weinreich closed the letter with an oblique reference to Schildkret's role in the recovery of YIVO's library: "Let us once more devote a *mazel tov* to the great thing that we have achieved. In connection with it we have mentioned your name many times. . . ." But he said no more.<sup>83</sup>

Weinreich's hesitation to publicize the transfer of YIVO's library was due not only to the reasons mentioned specifically in his July 3 letter, but also to the fact that materials from Vilna not originally part of YIVO's original holdings — including "six more [boxes] to fill the three freight cars" — were included in the cargo shipped to New York. A year earlier, he had written specifically to Pomrenze about the uncatalogued, unstamped materials from European Judaica collections that should be included in YIVO's claim.<sup>84</sup> The full story of the transfer of non-YIVO Vilna materials to the New York City YIVO has not yet been told. But it is clear that both Schildkret and Weinreich shared the conviction that valuable European Judaica — particularly Polish-Jewish materials — belonged in the American Jewish diaspora, whether or not its provenance could be strictly linked to YIVO. On her last day at the OAD, she urged this of Weinreich:

REMEMBER you can have only such people whom you trust implicitly to look the stuff over. This is extremely important for everyone concerned. Another thing: something in the receipt stipulates that Yivo might have to submit a list of all materials [so] if you start unpacking anything before Pom. [Pomrenze] gets back, know what your'e [*sic*] doing. Also get a couple of stamps made and start stamping. Enclosed copies of Yivo *ex libris* (italics added) which Bencowitz had made up during his time.<sup>85</sup>

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81. In general, all of those involved with the transfer of YIVO's property were eager to keep the mission under wraps. See U.S. State Department official Noel Hemmendinger to Max Weinreich, August 13, 1947, box 52, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

82. Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, July 3, 1947, box 52, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers.

83. *Ibid.*

84. Max Weinreich to Captain S. J. Pomrenze, March 19, 1946, "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution." See Gallas, "Preserving East European Jewish Culture," 82.

85. Lucy Schildkret to Max Weinreich, June 17, 1947, box 55, folder 4, Dawidowicz Papers, and "Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution."

Schildkret's May 24, 1947 memo articulated her intensely felt private views on the Offenbach Archival Depot and on her work on behalf of the restitution of Jewish cultural property. Mourning the destruction of Ashkenazic Jewish civilization and despairing of any future for Central and East European Jewry, Schildkret averred that the depot should be closed in the late spring of 1947, once YIVO's property was en route to the United States. Historian Elisabeth Gallas has rightly argued that Schildkret's encounter with the remains of YIVO's books and her role in securing their new life in New York informed her future work as a historian of East European Jewish civilization and its destruction.<sup>86</sup> The experience also shaped her psychically as a woman trying to make her mark in a man's world and as an individual struggling for self-definition. In Schildkret's case, this meant coming to terms with the meaning of her long affiliation with YIVO institutionally and with Weinreich personally, once YIVO's books had left German soil.

With time, Weinreich did tell the story of the salvaging of YIVO's property from the OAD — known colloquially as “Operation Offenbach” —, but neither he nor Seymour Pomrenze — nor anyone else — openly remarked upon Schildkret's indispensable work. Weinreich wrote personal letters to all of the individuals who had helped to recover “part of YIVO's library” on August 8, 1947, with no reference to Schildkret's efforts.<sup>87</sup> Pomrenze made no mention of Schildkret in his Yiddish article, “‘Operation Offenbach’: Saving Jewish Cultural Treasures in Germany.” Nor did Leslie I. Poste, an American MFA&A librarian who worked for fifty months in the American zone, or Philip Friedman in his 1957 article, “The Fate of the Jewish Book During the Nazi Era.” Not only did Friedman fail to mention Schildkret's role in cataloguing and salvaging YIVO's collection at the OAD in 1947, he also chose to reference the cultural restoration work of Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, Inc., which took over only after 1949.<sup>88</sup> On April 24, 1960, *The Eternal Light*, the

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86. I would add that Schildkret's diaspora nationalist education, her prewar year at the Vilna YIVO, and her subsequent marriage to Szymon Dawidowicz — whose first family included a beloved daughter who had fought with the Warsaw ŻOB (Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, Jewish Fighting Organization) and who had been murdered by the Nazis — were equally significant components that shaped her identity and historiography. Nancy Sinkoff, “*Yidishkayt* and the Making of Lucy S. Dawidowicz,” in *From That Place and Time: A Memoir, 1938–1947*, Lucy S. Dawidowicz (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2008), xiii–xxxix.

87. “Records of the YIVO, Files Relating to Restitution.”

88. Seymour Pomrenze [Shalom Pomerants], “‘Operation Offenbach’: Saving Jewish Cultural Treasures in Germany,” *YIVO Bleter* 29, no. 2 (Summer 1947): 282–85; Leslie I. Poste, “Books Go Home From the Wars,” *Library Journal*, 1 December 1948, 1699–1704; Philip Friedman, “The Fate of the Jewish Book During the Nazi Era,” *Jewish Book Annual* 15 (1957–58): 2–13.

radio broadcast produced by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, aired “The Golden Chain,” a program about the recovery of YIVO’s archive. Weinreich oversaw the script’s accuracy and insisted that Zalman Reisen’s name be deleted from the script — because his death had already been confirmed by 1945 — and that Seymour Pomrenze’s name be inserted in the drama. Lucy Schildkret’s role remained unmentioned.<sup>89</sup>

A combination of factors, including Schildkret’s strong personality, her knowledge of the disappearance of the initial loan of books to the JDC from the OAD, and her gender, undoubtedly played a role in the omission of any reference to her efforts. There had been no love lost between her and Philip Friedman, who had replaced Koppel S. Pinson as educational director of the JDC in the American zone. Friedman felt that Schildkret obstructed his authority regarding the loan of the additional 5,000 books to the JDC; she considered him incompetent.<sup>90</sup> In close touch with Pinson in New York in the early part of 1947, Friedman bemoaned Schildkret’s behavior in arrogating the responsibility for the final loan of books to the JDC. He found a sympathetic ear in Pinson, who may have blamed some of his later problems on Schildkret’s unwillingness to cover for his role in the missing books. Pinson wrote to Friedman in May of 1947 that he had lately had “a great deal of trouble and worries during the past months and they are not over yet. They are not my own troubles but those of other people in whom I took interest[,] and that has been absorbing all my spare time and energy.” He mentioned Schildkret specifically.<sup>91</sup> A month earlier, she had written to the regional directors of the JDC regarding the oversight required for the organization to receive the additional books. Despite Pinson’s official request for lists, there were few traces of the books distributed under his tenure:

In order to obtain these books, we are required to present an accounting of those books already distributed. May I count on your cooperation in helping me prepare a report to OMGUS[?] Professor Koppel S. Pinson had requested

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89. Max Weinreich to Lois C. Schwartz, April 3, 1960, Max Weinreich Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 584, folder 627. On *The Eternal Light*, see Jeffrey Shandler and Elihu Katz, “Broadcasting American Judaism: The Radio and Television Department of JTS,” in *Tradition Renewed: A History of JTS*, ed. Jack Wertheimer, vol. 2 (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1997), 363–401.

90. Philip Friedman to Libe Schildkret, May 2, 1947, and Philip Friedman to Samuel S. Haber, deputy director of the AJDC, June 23, 1947, Philip Friedman Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 1258, folder 394. “Letter from Europe,” November 19, 1946 and Lucy Schildkret to Henrietta K. Buchman, May 12, 1947, box 55, folder 3, Dawidowicz Papers.

91. Koppel S. Pinson to Philip Friedman, May 29, 1947, Philip Friedman Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 1258, folder 182.

the submission of such lists after distribution for the books in question. The only ones that can be traced are from [the DP camps] Pocking and Neu Freiman[n]. It is of extreme importance that we complete our records for OMGUS. I trust that we can rely on your help.<sup>92</sup>

We cannot know for certain, but part of Pinson and Friedman's dislike of Schildkret may have been because of their expectation that she, as a subordinate woman, would not challenge their authority.

Correspondence between Max Weinreich and Leibush Lehrer also indicated that Schildkret's forceful personality created tensions with her coworkers at YIVO during the war, and those tensions may have been part of her motivation for leaving YIVO and going to work for the JDC.<sup>93</sup> Weinreich averred that Schildkret over-identified with YIVO: "[Because] she grew up with the institute, she often conducted herself according to the rule, 'the institute is me,' not taking into account the ambitions of other coworkers."<sup>94</sup> Acknowledging the difficulties that may have prompted Schildkret's departure from YIVO in the summer of 1946, and his concern about her work relationships, including those with him, Weinreich nonetheless asked her to return to work for the institute in August of 1947.<sup>95</sup> Although it is possible that Schildkret considered employment at YIVO once back in New York, she moved on personally and institutionally. She married Szymon Dawidowicz, as noted above, in January of 1948, and she soon began translating Yiddish materials for the novelist John Hersey, who was writing a book on the Warsaw

92. Lucy Schildkret to AJDC regional directors, April 7, 1947, Philip Friedman Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 1258, folder 394. See, too, her memo that began, "Here we go again" as she narrated the "affair" of the missing booklists for which she and Sadie Sender had looked "high and low": "In any case, Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Munich were thoroughly searched . . . yet only one receipt and one booklist were found . . . obviously submitted after Pinson's departure." Lucy Schildkret to Mr. Charles Haber, October 8, 1947, box 52, folder 6, Dawidowicz Papers. It is quite possible that Schildkret erred when typing Haber's first name, conflating it with Charles E. Israel's. The memo was likely sent to Samuel S. Haber, deputy director of the AJDC, who was cognizant of the problems associated with the missing books. Herman, "*Hashavat Avedah*," 170.

93. Leibush Lehrer to Max Weinreich, July 18, 1946, Max Weinreich Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 584, folder 592. Max Weinreich to Leibush Lehrer, July 20, 1946, Leibush Lehrer Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 30, box 3, folder 30.

94. Max Weinreich to Leibush Lehrer, July 20, 1946. Leibush Lehrer Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 30, box 3, folder 30.

95. Max Weinreich to Libe Schildkret, August 10, 1947 and Leibush Lehrer to Max Weinreich, January 22, 1948, discussing the benefits and potential problems of her return to YIVO. Max Weinreich Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 584, folder 592.



Figure 2. The Frankfurt staff of the AJDC, June 1947. Courtesy of Laurie Sapakoff Cohen

Ghetto uprising.<sup>96</sup> In January of 1949, she began work as a researcher at the American Jewish Committee (AJC).<sup>97</sup>

There were many other female employees of the JDC, such as Rae Blitstein, Lillian Cantor, Edna Goldman, Anna Kalmanowitz, Vida Kaufman, Rose Shepatin, Ruth Stein, and Celia Weinberg, whose work in the postwar years has been little noticed. Historian Laura Jockusch has noted likewise that although dozens of women were active in the postwar historical commissions, their efforts have also gone largely unrecorded.<sup>98</sup>

96. Nancy Sinkoff, "Fiction's Archive: Authenticity, Ethnography, and Philosemitism in John Hersey's *The Wall*," *Jewish Social Studies* 17, no. 2 (Winter 2011): 48–79.

97. It bears noting that an AJDC official who had worked with Schildkret in Europe, M. Jacob Joslow, recommended her for the AJC position, commenting that she was "[a] person of exceptional ability, [who] possesses a keen and analytical mind, and [is] most loyal to the organization and to the people with whom she worked, that is, DP's [*sic*] . . . In fact, we can say that her outstanding quality is her ability to get along with people. Perhaps the best evaluation can be given by the fact that if Mrs. Dawidowicz would have been willing to come back to Europe, we would have renewed her contract." JDC Archives, records of the New York office of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, AR 44/65, File 2149, letter of M. Jacob Joslow to Lillian L. Smirlock, personal assistant at the American Jewish Committee, 01/12/1949.

98. Jockusch, *Collect and Record!* 92, 130, 190–1.

Only recently has Hannah Arendt's crucial role with JCR, Inc. in the postwar years been highlighted. As significant, and as overlooked, is the indispensable part played by women, including cultural affairs officer Ardelia Ripley Hall, French art historian Rose Valland, art historian Anne Olivier Popham Bell, and American museum curator Edith Standen, in salvaging European art during and after the war.<sup>99</sup> This lack of public recognition must have created ambivalent feelings for Schildkret, who had invested so much in YIVO institutionally, personally, and psychologically — a fact evidenced years later in her memoir, which she ended with the story of the salvaging of the books in the depot. Their restitution, she wrote, was a form of expiation for her guilt at abandoning her Vilna friends in 1939.<sup>100</sup> Despite the boredom of the cataloguing, Schildkret's work in the OAD had empowered her, personally and professionally. In a long letter written from her next JDC post in the British Zone of Occupation to Leo W. Schwarz, former director of the JDC in the American zone, Schildkret added a postscript that affirmed her view that the books' "home" — in the sense of where they belonged in the postwar years — was in New York City. She also expressed pride in her role in having made that a reality: "Incidentally, I spent a couple of months in Offenbach identifying the Yivo library, which we already shipped back to its home in New York. A wonderful operation and much more satisfying than anything else I have done here."<sup>101</sup>

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99. See Victoria Reed, "Ardelia Hall: From Museum of Fine Arts to Monuments Woman," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 21, no. 1 (February of 2014): 79–93, and [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/arts/design/not-all-monuments-men-were-men.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/02/arts/design/not-all-monuments-men-were-men.html?_r=0).

100. Dawidowicz, *From That Place and Time*, 318 and 326, and Gallas, "Preserving East European Jewish Culture," 85.

101. Lucy Schildkret to Ruth and Leo W. Schwarz, undated, but written after June of 1947, when Schildkret moved to work in the British Zone of Occupation. Leo W. Schwarz Papers, YIVO Archives, RG 294.1, folder 116, reel 13, frame 1392.

## APPENDIX.

American Joint Distribution Committee

24 May 1947

To: Mr. Joseph A. Horne, Director, Offenbach Archival Depot

Subject: Report on screening of Yiddish and Hebrew books at OAD to date

After working about one month on the Yiddish and Hebrew books without ascertainable ownership, the undersigned can make the following recommendations:

1. At the present time, after most of the identifiable property has already been withdrawn, too much effort expended on identification of personal property seems unwarranted; in such cases where readily identifiable ex libris or signatures or stamps are present, there is no appreciable waste of time or effort, but where books have several signatures or illegible signatures, there does not seem to be much justification to establish ownership.

We assume that the OAD was established ~~as~~ for the restitution of this property and not as ~~an~~ a permanent institution to cull over old library markings. We know that six million Jews were murdered by the Germans; we know that the Germans carried out a determined policy of wiping out intellectuals first. We know that most Jewish institutions in Central and Eastern Europe were completely wiped out. Therefore, it must be acknowledged that the establishment of individual ownership of books, especially from Eastern Europe, is, roughly speaking, 90 per cent wasted effort.

2. Large quantities of books have already been restituted to Poland and the Soviet Union, both countries where the Jewish population was largely decimated and where the revival of Jewish cultural institutions and the flourishing of Jewish culture are problematic. It is the opinion of the undersigned that the effort expended for further possible identification of property belonging to either country now is completely out of proportion to the ultimate use to which these books may be put, if returned.
3. The identification of property belonging to Germany presents other problems. It is the conviction of the undersigned that no German institution as, for example, the Stadt- und Universitätsbibliothek at Frankfurt has any moral or practical right to any Judaica, even though such books may bear the stamp of German institutions. On the other hand, books identifiable as belonging to German-Jewish institutions present other problems. German-Jewish institutions, if reconstituted as Gemeindes, for example, no longer have the same composition or serve the same number of constituents. Because of the systematic

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extermination of Jewish professionals, we do not believe that there are at present among the Jews living within the German economy such persons as can make proper use of valuable books. German-Jewish institutions now in existence should, it is believed, be recompensed for their library losses, but the quality of the books should be different from the actual ownership markings.

4. It is evident from the foregoing that the undersigned feels that emphasis in further screening of the Yiddish and Hebrew books at the Depot should rather be on the basis of kind of book than on non-actual ownership.

Among the Yiddish and Hebrew books there are vast quantities of publishers' and bookdealers' stocks, as evidenced from the countless numbers of duplicates of recent books. These include: Yiddish and Hebrew belles-lettres, some textbooks, and some religious books. Such stocks, none of which bears any identifying mark at all, could be used for recompense of German-Jewish institutions in such cases where only a very small part of their property has been found and where their property is of great value (cf. # 3).

5. Any sensible screening of the Judaica at the Depot (including also other languages besides Yiddish and Hebrew) should be based on some clear-cut restitution ~~xxxxxx~~ policy that takes into consideration the previously mentioned factors. It is possible to screen these books in any number of ways, depending upon the ultimate purpose for which this screening is made.

o. It is highly desirable to have at the Depot at least one responsible person with a knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew and of Jewish institutions. This is, of course, self-evident, but there is one particular instance to illustrate this point. A number of books at the Depot bore the stamp "Sekretariat der Aeltestenrat." These books were all kept together as if restitutable to that particular institution. It required a lengthy explanation on the part of the undersigned to the German staff that this institution was established in the ghettos by the Germans for the so-called "self-government" within the ghetto and is obviously no body to which property (which was only "lent" to them by the Germans from their loot) can be restituted. Another instance is that of regarding signatures in books with ghetto or concentration camp addresses ~~xxx~~ (Block number for a street) as representing ownership.

Naturally, following the departure of the undersigned, no further screening or sorting of the Yiddish and Hebrew books will be possible. Unless the policy will be to ship all the books to one place, it can ~~xxx~~ be assumed by the undersigned that the Restitution Branch merely expects to perpetuate its existence.

Lucy Schildkret  
Education Officer, AJDC