

## EXPANSION OF THE TRACING OFFICE

With the entry of Mr. Eli Rock and Mr. Henry Levy as director and associate director, respectively into the Berlin AJDC office in February 1946 the need for an organized Tracing Office was recognized. The Search and Tracing Department was moved from a tiny room it occupied on the second floor into a more spacious one. Additional workers were hired and office equipment and furniture was requisitioned. The staff consisted of the writer, 5 German Jewish people and one voluntary worker. Approximately 40 requests were received daily from people residing in Berlin and additional inquiries arrived by mail and cable from all over the world. By the 1st of July 1946 25 000 individual cases had been handled and no decrease in activities was apparent. Flowing into the department were requests from other AJDC offices as well as from other organizations scattered across the globe. The Central Tracing Bureau of UNRRA sent hundreds of old requests for information and investigation to the Berlin AJDC office. Similarly, requests made by members of the Berlin Jewish Gemeinde and by displaced Jews in search of relatives in other parts of the world were channeled through this section.

The main tracing object remained, however, to determine the fate of thousands of Berlin Jews unknown heretofore. With a constant pressure for current information this office achieved not only a 100% complete list of surviving Berlin Jews, but through cooperation with the German police and German registration offices, has even learned of some the Berlin Jewish residents not listed as Gemeinde members (Jews living outside of camps and not members of the community as well as half-Jews of protestant faith are registered in our index for an eventual tracing request).

An excellent relationship was established with the Public Safety Branch of the US Office of Military Government for Berlin, through which intensive searches were worked out with the German police in all four sectors of the city. Thanks to Mr. Max Helvarg, one of the Berlin AJDC Directors, close contact was established with the Jewish Gemeindes in the Russian Zone. Lists were compiled from records of various concentration camps in this area (Saxony, Mecklenburg, Brandenburg, Thuringia). As there were no UNRRA teams or welfare agencies within the Russian Zone of Germany, the Berlin AJDC Tracing Office actually provided a bridge between the outside world and the Soviet occupied territory. Lists of survivors sent by various Jewish Gemeindes in the Russian Zone to this office provided us with current information on Jews residing in that area. Contacts were made with Leipzig, Dresden, Chemnitz, Erfurt, Schwerin, Magdeburg and Halle. In this way information which otherwise would not be available was put into constant use and with surprisingly good results.

Since the area in which our office was to operate was not clearly defined, we attempted to communicate with territories occupied by the Polish Army in Breslau, Gleiwitz and other cities in Pomerania and Upper Silesia. The remnants of former large Jewish communities there now had no way of communicating with the world. Contacts were made by this office with the Polish Military Mission in Berlin in an attempt to obtain channels for search in these formerly German, now Polish-occupied territories. Activities in the Polish-occupied part of Germany were unpleasant until we began to correspond and communicate with the Polish police through the Polish Mission. Our correspondence was carried on only in the Polish language. We were offered every cooperation, but since the areas concerned were in a very peculiar state, this last arrangement and the whole activity in these Polish territories was not fully reliable. It served its purpose in some degree at the time when thousands of Polish Jews fled their home country for the US Zone and the city of Berlin. It was also helpful

to us during the time we handled 29 tracing applications for people of the Kielce town four days after the pogrom. When our Warsaw AJDC office in cooperation with the Jewish Communities throughout Poland also took control of these Pomeranian and Silesian territories, all tracing requests for the mentioned areas were forwarded to the AJDC in Warsaw.

