

## THE DEPORTATION INDEX

In tracing missing Jews in Berlin, handling approximately 75 cases daily (including personal visits and correspondence) many investigations had to be made on the spot. Interviews with neighbours, former employees and acquaintances etc. had to be conducted before any satisfactory report could be dispatched. At the same time specially assigned persons in constant contact with the writer were conducting investigations throughout German magistrate installations in the hope of finding hidden documents pertaining to the fate of deported and missing Jews. It was known that the Gestapo (nazi secret state police) kept complete lists of the Jews deported and exterminated, on the basis of which Jewish properties were confiscated and turned over to the finance section of the nazi government.

In May 1946 we discovered this long sought source of information. In the basement of the Berlin Magistrate Finance Division the writer found cards and original Gestapo documents on deported Berlin Jews. The Gestapo transport lists were sent to the Finance Division accompanied by a letter ordering the Finance Division to confiscate the properties of the listed because of their deportation on such and such a date to the one or another concentration camp. By comparing an almost complete alphabetical card index of all Jewish properties confiscated with the data in the deportation list we compiled an index of some 80 000 cards containing approximately 130 000 names. We met a very cooperative person, Mr. Schweig, who is appointed by the Allied Kommandatura as a custodian of Jewish properties confiscated by the nazi government. When approximately 60 % of these documents were checked, Mr. Levy of the Berlin AJDC and the writer of this took this very important matter up with Major C. C. Bond, Chief of the US Public Safety Section Berlin Sector. We met the kindest cooperation and in a day or two an official consent from the

American and British Public Safety Divisions for the copying and transcription of these documents was obtained.

The original cards and Gestapo lists remained in the possession of the Finance Division located in the British sector and supervised by the mentioned Mr. Schweig. Eleven additional workers were hired and a complete new index was prepared and became our Deportation Index. By comparing all documents available and checking references and cases our cards contained the following details:

Name, first name, maiden name, date of birth, place of birth, last known address, occupation, family members, date of deportation, number of transport, destination of transport and file number of his "property case", which gave us even more details.

Immediately after this new source of information was brought to our office, we took the matter up with the custodian of Jewish properties and discussed the possibility of similar documents eventually hidden in other Finance Divisions throughout Germany. At the time of this writing an index of 1400 Brandenburg Jews is being prepared for us by the German magistrate of Potsdam and will be shipped to this office. Similar requests were placed with other Finance Divisions in the Russian Zone. We, as an American relief agency, could not officially place such requests with magistrate offices in the Russian Zone. The custodian of the Jewish properties in Berlin, however, is still trying to obtain additional documents for our search and tracing purpose.

The deportation index became the only source of important information on deportees from Berlin whose fate was heretofore unknown. During the last month of 1946 and at the beginning of 1947 many cases which had been considered as closed were re-opened and compared with the information contained in the new index. Consequently the fate of persons heretofore unknown was conclusively established in that it became known on which transports they had been deported and to which camp they were eventually sent. Our information became so valuable



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that the German courts, which had begun to issue death declarations for missing persons, began to solicit our assistance for death declarations requested by relatives of the deportees. The very same index also acquires significance as a source of information on confiscated Jewish properties.



Comparing the cards of our Deportation Index with the discovered Gestapo Lists

During 1947 we noticed that the deportation index acquired more importance each day. 2776 new cases were opened in the fall of 1946 alone. The cases contain some 6000—7000 names. Until that time the Berlin Jewish Gemeinde, which also was carrying out some kind of search and tracing activity, was forwarding hundreds of original letters addressed to the Gemeinde for our action. Hundreds of letters which were kept at the Berlin Jewish Gemeinde for 12—15 months, were passed on to this office after our discovery was made public. The overwhelming number of old tracing requests in our possession and the unwillingness of the Berlin Gemeinde to cooperate or even to assist us, forced us to hire additional personnel and to work extra hours.

Our first attempts to transfer the tracing activities were made in January, February and March 1947. It was hoped that at least personal interviews and dispatch of tracing forms would be taken over by the Gemeinde. We have found, much to our disappointment, that the Berlin Jewish Gemeinde has shown lack of ability in accepting the responsibility for tracing activities and has manifested very little comprehension, as regarding the scope and extensiveness of the tracing job. They have resisted the additional work despite repeating assurances that they could assume the job. Tracing requests which we were waiting to turn over to them began to accumulate in our office. With the realization that the Gemeinde could not be depended upon, we were forced to resume work on this backlog.

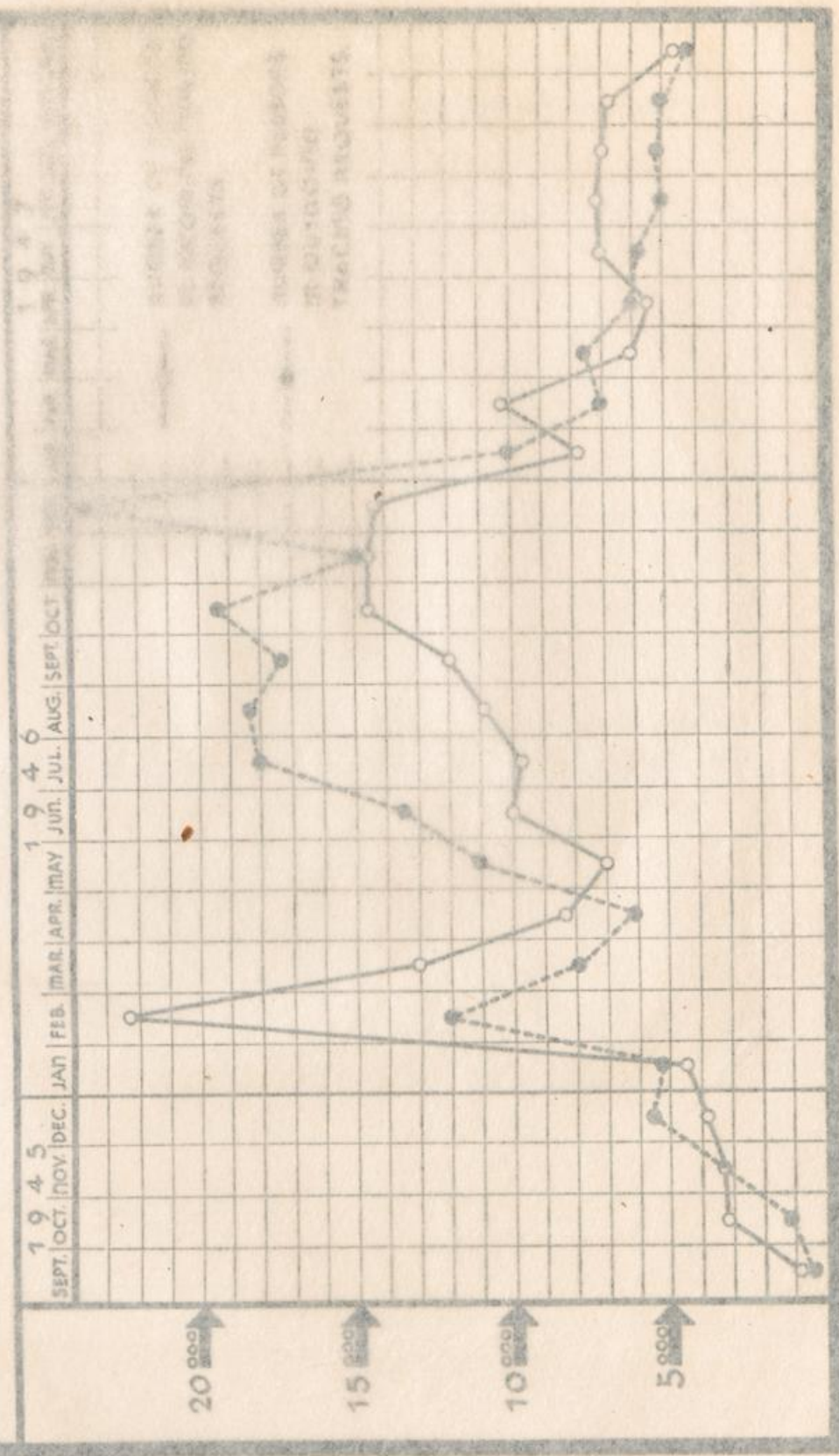
Immediately after the deportation index was actually placed in our office, press releases were made and articles carrying its story appeared in the press throughout the world.\* The information obtained from this deportation index was the only clue to thousands of unsolved cases. Among our inquirers as of the date of that discovery were organizations and agencies of practically every country in the world. The War Department in Washington, members of Congress, the Army, the Allied Property Sections and individuals throughout the world tried to find a clue to the fate of relatives through our office.

The number of tracing requests handled during the first few months after November 1946 reached 22 000 — 25 000 names per month. The fate of 5442 persons was established in December 1946 alone and accordingly information was passed on to the inquirers. By the end of 1946 13 680 persons were found and the fate of 28 269 reported to inquirers. Letters as to the deportation data of Berlin Jews began to be accepted as basic documents for death declarations by the German courts, and it was of great importance that such letters be given only to Jews and people representing Jewish interests. Death declarations were and are the

\* See Appendix IV.

# MONTHLY EXCHANGE OF CORRESPONDENCE

SEPTEMBER 1945 - SEPTEMBER 1947



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Immediately after the deportation index was actually placed in our office, press releases were made and articles carrying the story appeared in the press throughout the world.\* The information reported from this deportation index was the only clue to thousands of resolved cases. Among our inquirers as of the date of that discovery were organizations and agencies of practically every country in the world. The War Department in Washington, members of Congress, the Army, the Allied Property Sections and individuals throughout the world tried to find a clue to the fate of relatives through our office.

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