

CHAPTER XXIII

JEWS

A. PRE-1939

1. During the inter-war years, anti-semitism or discriminatory practices appeared sporadically in East and South East Europe. From 1933 onwards these tendencies were very clearly defined in Germany and within three months of Hitler's accession to power, anti-semitic legislation had been introduced. This proceeded at a gradually increasing tempo until the outbreak of war, and restricted Jewish activities of almost every character. Economic and professional discrimination was legalised, citizenship under certain conditions was withdrawn, marriage with Jewish persons was forbidden and Jewish civil servants were dismissed. Finally, areas were defined into which it was forbidden for any Jew to penetrate.

2. In 1935 these practices were extended to the Saar, in 1938 to Austria and in 1939 to the Czechoslovakian Protectorate.

3. Emigration from Germany and German-controlled territory was encouraged, usually after property had been confiscated and all possibility of making a livelihood in Germany withdrawn. Even before the outbreak of war, however, there were already examples of the expulsion of Jews as, for example, 400 families expelled from Burgenland after the annexation of Austria and in November, 1938, 15-16,000 Polish Jews living in Germany who were taken to the Polish border and there left to their own devices.

B. 1939-1945

4. After the outbreak of the war, anti-semitism spread to the areas which came under the influence of the Germans and, with slight variations, the programme of plundering, uprooting, exploiting and exterminating which was practised in Germany was applied throughout occupied Europe.

5. From 1939 to 1941, the general trend of the German anti-semitic policy was to subject Jews to recurrent removals by deportations, transfers, purges and concentrations into one area, preventing them from settling or acquiring roots anywhere. But certain distinct lines of population transfers may be noted.

6. The general move was towards the east and when, in 1939, Germany occupied Western Poland, large numbers of Jews were expelled from that area along with Poles and transferred to the territory known as the *Gouvernement Général*. The areas in which they were to be resettled were special regions as, for example, the Lublin reserve which received deportees from Germany, Austria and Moravia who were transferred with a small amount of luggage and very little money. It is estimated that from 1939/40 over 300,000 Jews from Western Poland (*i.e.* half the total Jewish population of that area) were deported to the *Gouvernement Général*. A further quarter million from this area escaped at this time to Eastern Europe including Rumania, Hungary and the Baltic States.

7. It is noteworthy, however, that deportations from the industrial Warthegau and Upper Silesia were less frequent, since manpower was required in those areas for the German war machine.

8. In 1942 mass deportations to Eastern Europe took place from France and the Low Countries but there was also a move in the opposite direction of Jews from Albania and South Western Germany who were transported to the French frontier and there abandoned.

9. Although Nazi policy demanded the expulsion from professional and productive work of all Jews, there is evidence that from 1941 onwards, deportations were to a certain degree halted and Jews were used for bolstering German manpower, especially in unskilled jobs, although some were, in fact put into higher grade work (Reichsarbeitsblatt of 25 February, 1941).

10. The age limit for deportations from Germany and Western Poland was fixed in 1942 at 65 years and from France at 60 years.

11. Jews in the Bohemia Moravia Protectorate were generally not sent abroad but gathered together in the Teresin concentration camp. Similarly those who stayed in Rumania when that country joined the German invasion of the U.S.S.R. in 1941 were concentrated into large ghettos in Rumania with the intention of being transferred to the east at a later date.

12. In Hungary, where in 1941 the Jewish population was estimated at 743,000, laws were passed curtailing employment possibilities and expropriating the property of Jews. From the eligibility point of view, moreover, it is noteworthy that no Jews were accepted as volunteers for the Hungarian Army unless their immediate relatives had distinguished themselves in some sphere of Hungarian public service.

13. Further east the tendency was for all persons of Jewish origin to flee before advancing German armies to Soviet occupied territory. After September 1939 it is estimated that 200,000 Jews from Eastern Poland left for Russia and large numbers likewise left Rumania in 1941.

14. It is estimated that the total number of Jews deported by the Germans either to countries outside their country of nationality or transferred within their own country exceeds one million, while the number who may be described as evacuees, fugitives and emigrants during the war years is estimated at considerably over two million.

15. The treatment of these uprooted masses falls mostly into three categories *i.e.* transfer to ghettos, conscription for forced labour or internment in concentration camp.

16. Ghettos were set up chiefly in Rumania and Poland where the first known ghetto was established in Lodz 1939/40. Others were later set up in the Warthegau and Gouvernement Général. In 1941, it was stated that in the Gouvernement Général area alone 11 ghettos holding a population of 1,300,000 persons existed and in the following year Warsaw, probably the largest of them all, was estimated to have a population of half a million. In that same year, it was stated that the Gouvernement Général included 13 ghettos and 42 Jewish towns in which all Jews must live unless their employment in war industry or in closed labour camps necessitated their absence.

17. Forced labour camps were established wherever there was need of supplementary manpower and in Germany, for example, men from the ages of 18-65 and women from 20-55 were subject to forced labour. Conditions of these workers were more severe in Poland and treatment more harsh. In 1941, it was estimated that there existed 85 camps of this nature for Jewish workers only.

18. The Teresin camp previously referred to was capable of holding up to 60,000 persons and was a combined labour and concentration camp.

19. Amongst the concentration camps, the most notorious were Oswiecim (Auschwitz), Treblinka, Chelmno, Belzec and Sobibor in Poland, Jasenovad in Yugoslavia, Bergen Bejsen, Ravensbrück and Dachau in Germany and others in which thousands were exterminated. The camps were used by the Germans to house unwanted elements of all descriptions. Some of the prisoners were selected to keep "discipline and order"

and frequently they committed more atrocities than the S. S. Guards in the camp. The commonest type of disciplinary office holders in the camps were the professional criminals, the "Berufsverbrecher" or "Schwerverbrecher" known in the language of the concentration camps as the "BV" or "SV" or the "green ones" because the distinguishing badge on their garments was a green triangle in contrast to that worn by the Häftlinge or political prisoners, a red triangle. (Racial prisoners wore a red badge and sexual prisoners a violet one). The hierarchy of disciplinary office holders in these camps was as follows: In each camp there was a camp senior or Lagerälteste (or Capo) responsible to the S.S. for the discipline of the camp. There was also a deputy or Stellvertreter. Each block or hut was in general charge of a Block Senior or Block Älteste, with a deputy, and within the huts were minor functionaries called Studendienst, each of whom was responsible for fifty people.

C. POST-WAR

20. After the cessation of hostilities, certain trends in the movement of the displaced Jewish populations have been quite clearly defined. The majority of evacuees, who sought asylum in Russian-occupied territory immediately after the outbreak of war, have in general been repatriated, especially to Eastern European countries and together with those who remained in Central and Western Europe they have participated in large-scale movements southwards through Austria and Italy towards Palestine or individually, where facilities existed, to resettlement countries in the West.

21. During 1945-46, small groups of concentration camp victims were received by Sweden and Switzerland, for periods of recuperation, by agreement between the Governments of those countries and various voluntary and official agencies.

22. Two years after the war, however, it was estimated that approximately 440,000 Jewish refugees and displaced persons still remained in Europe and the U.S.S.R.

23. The figures of Jewish refugees receiving IRO assistance show that 74,000 approximately were in receipt of care and maintenance and a further 14,000 receiving other forms of assistance through the Organisation on 30 March, 1949. The majority of these refugees are from Poland and are located at present in the U.S. Zone of Austria and Germany, which together account for a total of approximately 52,000 persons.

D. ELIGIBILITY STATUS OF ABOVE GROUPS

24. The status of war victims and pre-war Jewish refugees has been discussed under Sub-Section A para. 1 (a) and para. 3 of the Manual and no further details are considered necessary in this section.

25. The status of members of post-war movements is a little more difficult and will be dealt with herein. As stated in various correspondence on the subject, there are a number of factors which must be kept in mind when interviewing Jewish refugees:

(a) A Jewish refugee as any other must produce some evidence that he is a *bona fide* refugee within the mandate of IRO.

(b) While this evidence may differ in degree because of the knowledge that there is anti-Jewish feeling in some countries, the applicant must make it plausible why he does not wish to return, even though the Organisation may not require him to produce evidence of the exact persecution which he as an individual fears. The mere desire to go to Palestine or elsewhere is not considered acceptable as a valid objection.

(c) It should also be remembered that the communist politics to which persons may have valid objections cover economics as well, and therefore though economic objections in the sense merely of inability to earn a living or because of a dislike of facing the economic rigours of reconstruction are not normally valid, they may be evidence of a well-founded political objection that may be regarded as valid.

(d) It should again be mentioned that in addition to persecution, fear of persecution and political objections to returning to a given country, compelling family reasons may be invoked by persons who fall under Sub-Section A para. 1 (a), of the IRO Constitution.

(e) On the other hand when persons have left their country of nationality or former habitual residence with all plans made, such as passports, visas, travel arrangements and after settlement of business affairs, a presumption arises which implies that the individuals should be regarded as emigrants rather than *bona fide* refugees and displaced persons as defined by the Constitution. However, such a presumption may be rebutted by an expression of valid objections. These objections cannot normally be considered as valid if or insofar as they are on political grounds because a political dissident would not normally be acting consistently if he in fact availed himself of the protection of this government; they can normally only be valid if they are based on fear of religious or racial persecution or compelling family reasons based on previous persecution.