REPORT

of the

International Committee of the Red Cross

on its activities

during the Second World War

(September 1, 1939 - June 30, 1947)

VOLUME I

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

VI. Special Categories of Civilians

(A). Jews

Under National Socialism, the Jews had become in truth outcasts, condemned by rigid racial legislation to suffer tyranny, persecution and systematic extermination. No kind of protection shielded them ; being neither PW nor civilian internees, they formed a separate category, without the benefit of any Convention. The supervision which the ICRC was empowered to exercise in favour of prisoners and internees did not apply to them. In most cases, they were, in fact, nationals of the State which held them in its power and which, secure in its supreme authority, allowed no intervention in their behalf. These unfortunate citizens shared the same fate as political deportees, were deprived of civil rights, were given less favoured treatment than enemy nationals, who at least had the benefit of a statute They were penned into concentration camps and ghettos, recruited for forced labour, subjected to grave brutalities and sent to death camps, without anyone being allowed to intervene in those matters which Germany and her allies considered to be exclusively within the bounds of their home policy.

It should be recalled, however, that in Italy the measures taken against the Jews were incomparably less harsh, and that in the countries under the direct influence of Germany, their situation was usually less tragic than in Germany itself.

The Committee could not dissociate themselves from these victims, on whose behalf it received the most insistent appeals, but for whom the means of action seemed especially limited, since in the absence of any basis in law, its activities depended

to a very great extent upon the good will of the belligerent States.

The Committee had in fact, through the intermediary of the German Red Cross, asked for information concerning civilian deportees " without distinction of race or religion ", which was plainly refused in the following terms : " The responsible authorities decline to give any information concerning non-Aryan deportees. " Thus, enquiries as a matter of principle concerning the Jews led to no result, and continual protests would have been resented by the authorities concerned and might have been detrimental both to the Jews themselves and to the whole field of the Committee's activities. In consequence, the Committee, while avoiding useless protest, did its utmost to help the Jews by practical means, and its delegates abroad were instructed on these lines. This policy was proved by the results obtained.

Germany. — Even when the German Wehrmacht was winning, the Committee's activities in behalf of the Jews met with almost insuperable difficulties. Towards the end of 1943, however, the German authorities allowed the Committee to send relief parcels to detainees in concentration camps, many of them Jews, whose names and addresses might be known to it. The Committee was able to collect a few dozen names, and by these slender means the system of individual and then collective relief for political detainees was started, an account of which is given elsewhere in this Report. Each receipt returned bore several names, and these were added to the list of addresses: thus the receipts often gave the first news of missing persons. By the end of the war, the Committee's card index for political detainees (Jewish and non-Jewish) contained over 105,000 names.

During the last year of the War, the Committee's delegates were able to visit the camp of Theresienstadt (Terezin), which was exclusively used for Jews, and was governed by special conditions. From information gathered by the Committee, this camp had been started as an experiment by certain leaders of the Reich, who were apparently less hostile to the Jews than those responsible for the racial policy of the German

Government. These men wished to give to Jews the means of setting up a communal life in a town under their own administration and possessing almost complete autonomy. On several occasions, the Committee's delegates were granted authority to visit Theresienstadt, but owing to difficulties raised by the local authorities, the first visit only took place in June 1944. The Jewish elder in charge informed the delegate, in the presence of a representative of the German authorities, that thirty-five thousand Jews resided in the town and that living conditions were bearable. In view of the doubt expressed by the heads of various Jewish organizations as to the accuracy of this statement, the Committee requested the German Government to allow its delegates to make a second visit. After laborious negotiations, much delayed on the German side, two delegates were able to visit the camp on April 6, 1945. They confirmed the favourable impression gained on the first visit, but ascertained that the camp strength now amounted only to 20,000 internees, including 1,100 Hungarians, 1,1050 Slovaks, 800 Dutch, 290 Danes, 8,000 Germans, 8,000 Czechs and 760 stateless persons. They were therefore anxious to know if Theresienstadt was being used as a transit camp and asked when the last departures for the East had taken place. The head of the Security Police of the Protectorate stated that the last transfers to Auschwitz had occurred six months previously, and had comprised 10,000 Jews, to be employed on camp administration and enlargement. This high official assured the delegates that no Jews would be deported from Theresienstadt in future.

Whereas other camps exclusively reserved for Jews were not open to inspections for humanitarian purposes until the end, the Committee's activities were at least effective in several concentration camps containing a minority proportion of Jews. During the final months, the Committee, in urgent circumstances, took on a task of the greatest importance by visiting and giving aid to these internees, providing food, preventing last-minute evacuations as well as summary executions, and even taking charge during the critical hours, sometimes days, which passed between the retreat of the German forces and the arrival of the Allies from the West or the East.

A more detailed account of these various activities is given in the chapters on Political Detainees in this volume and in Vol. III, as well as in special publication entitled *Documents sur l'activité du CICR en faveur des civils détenus dans les camps de concentration en Allemagne, 1939-1945*.

Less is known of the part played by the Committee in countries whose Governments were subject, in varying degrees, to German influence and where special laws concerning Jews had been enacted, similar to those under German legislation.

Through its delegates, particularly in Budapest, Bucharest, Bratislava, Zagreb and Belgrade, the Committee was able to make the best possible use of its moral authority and the well disposed attitude shown to it by a few non-German authorities, who had more or less freedom of action, but who were not so relentlessly bent on carrying out a racial policy as the German Government. In its capacity as a neutral intermediary, the Committee was in a position to transfer and distribute in the form of relief supplies over twenty million Swiss francs collected by Jewish welfare organizations throughout the world, in particular by the American Joint Distribution Committee of New York. Without the help of the ICRC, this concerted effort made by a whole community would have doubtless been vain, as no Jewish organization was allowed to act in countries under German control. A detailed account of this important relief scheme will be found in Vol. III.

The efforts of the Committee were not limited to the activities described above; as time went on, it eventually became in truth a "Protecting Power" for the Jews, by interceding with Governments in their behalf and in some cases exercising a genuine right of protection, by obtaining the benefit of extraterritoriality for hospitals, dispensaries and relief organizations, and even by acting as arbitrators in the settlement of disputes. This was its task, especially in Rumania and Hungary, for over a year during the last phase of the war in 1944 and 1945. In countries where the efforts of the Committee were less considerable, they were none the less of great benefit to the Jews. These may be described in a brief summary before reverting to the Committee's activities in Hungary and Rumania.

France. — In November 1940, the Committee obtained permission from the authorities for one of its members to visit camps in the South, where a certain number of Jews were amongst the civilian internees. The camp at Gurs, in particular, contained six thousand Jews from the Bavarian Palatinate. The visit gave a clear idea of the situation inside the camp and the urgent necessity for relief; appropriate steps were taken in the internees' behalf.

The Jews from Poland who, whilst in France, had obtained entrance-permits to the United States were held to be American citizens by the German occupying authorities, who further agreed to recognize the validity of about three thousand passports issued to Jews by the consulates of South American countries. The persons concerned were lodged in camps reserved for Americans at Vittel. In 1942, when Germany and the States in South America began negotiations for the exchange of internees, it was found that the majority of the internees at Vittel held accommodation passports and consequently were in danger of being deported. The ICRC interceded in their behalf through the Berlin Delegation and succeeded in arranging for them to remain at Vittel, only a few being deported.

Greece. — Immediately after the German occupation, the Committee was called upon to deal with the case of 55,000 Jews in Salonica, who were the victims of racial legislation. In July 1942, all men between eighteen and forty-five were registered, and the majority were enrolled in labour detachments. The delegation furnished them with medical and toilet supplies. In May 1943, these workers were sent to Germany, and the delegation in that country insisted on the right to give them food-parcels. This course led to difficulties with the German authorities, who in their resentment demanded that one of the delegates should be replaced.

Slovakia. — Many thousands of Jews had been forced to leave the country and enlist in what was called " labour service ", but which in fact seems to have led the greater number to the extermination camps. At the same time, a large proportion

of the Jewish minority had permission to stay in the country, and at certain periods Slovakia was even looked upon as a comparative haven of refuge for Jews, especially for those coming from Poland. Those who remained in Slovakia seem to have been in comparative safety until the end of August 1944, when a rising against the German forces took place. While it is true that the law of May 15, 1942, had brought about the internment of several thousand Jews, these people were held in camps were the conditions of food and lodging were tolerable, and where internees were allowed to do paid work on terms almost equal to those of the free labour market. In 1944, the Jewish community had managed to secure an almost complete suspension of forced immigration towards the territories under German control.

At the time of the rising, the interned Jews escaped from the camps ; some returned home, and others took to the hills. The measures of repression which followed fell on the Jewish population as a whole. The German military authorities summoned the Slovak Government to make wholesale arrests for the purpose of deporting the Jews to Germany. The order dated November 16, 1944, laid down that all Jews should be mustered in the camp of Sered, and to that end, that Jews living in the capital should previously be assembled, on November 20, in the Town Hall of Bratislava. On the same day, the delegate went to the Town Hall and noted that only about fifty Jews had obeyed the summons. The rest had gone into hiding, as the Slovak authorities had foreseen, either by fleeing to the country or concealing themselves in the town in the so-called " bunkers ". In his concern over this situation, the President of the ICRC wrote to the Head of the Slovak Government asking him to put an end to the deportations. Monsignor Tiso received this letter on January 2, 1945, and answered at length on January 10. He recalled the fact that up to that time the Jews had been spared, adding however that in view of the rising, his Government had been forced to yield to the pressure which had been brought to bear upon them. He concluded by saying : " To sum up, it remains wholly true that in the solution of the Jewish question, we have endeavoured to remain

faithful to humane principles to the full extent of our powers." Official aid to the fugitives in the " bunkers " was out of the question ; the delegation in Bratislava, however, with the help of the Slovak Red Cross and, in the provinces with that of the Catholic Church, succeeded in providing them with funds, which were handed to their spokesmen, and which allowed them to support life during the last months of the war.

The Committee's representative was unable to secure permission to visit the camp of Sered. He was, however, allowed to enter the camp of Marienka, where Jews of alien nationality were interned.

Croatia. — From May 1943 to the end of 1945, the delegation gave aid to the Jewish community of Zagreb, to whom on behalf of the Joint Committee of New York, it paid out an average amount of 20,000 Swiss francs monthly. It also made available to it considerable quantities of food supplies, clothing and medical stores.

In October 1944, the German authorities, on the pattern of measures taken in the neighbouring countries, imprisoned the Jews of Zagreb, and seized their food stores. The delegation at once made representations to the Croat Government, and secured the return of these stores.

Hungary. — As in Slovakia, the Jews were relatively spared, in so far as the local government retained a certain freedom of action. But when German pressure was reasserted, from March 1944 onwards, the position of the Jews became critical. The replacement in October 1944, of Horthy's Government by one in bondage to Germany, provoked a violent crisis ; executions robberies, deportations, forced labour, imprisonments—such was the lot of the Jewish population, which suffered cruelly and lost many killed, especially in the provinces. It was at this point that the Committee, to alleviate these sufferings, took action with vigour and authority. At the same time the aid prompted by the King of Sweden, was given with considerable courage and success by the Swedish Legation in Budapest, helped by some members of the Swedish Red Cross.

Until March 1944, Jews who had the privilege of visas for Palestine were free to leave Hungary. On March 18, 1944, Hitler summoned the Regent, Admiral Horthy, to his headquarters. He expressed his indignation that "in Hungary very nearly a million Jews were able to live in freedom and without restrictions". Even before the Regent had returned to Budapest, German troops had begun the occupation of Hungary in order to prevent her from abandoning her alliance with Germany. This occupation forced upon the Head of the Hungarian State a new government that was far more dependent on German authority than the one preceding it. Emigration of the Jews was straightway suspended, and the persecutions began.

This was a matter of the gravest concern to the ICRC. The President appealed to the Regent, Admiral Horthy: "The matters brought to our knowledge seem to us", he wrote on July 5, 1944, "so utterly contrary to the chivalrous traditions of the great Hungarian people that it is difficult for us to credit even a tithe of the information we are receiving. In the name of the ICRC, I venture to beg Your Highness to give instructions enabling us to reply to these rumours and accusations." The Regent replied, on August 12: "It is unfortunately not within my power to prevent inhuman acts which no one condemns more severely than my people, whose thoughts and feelings are chivalrous. I have instructed the Hungarian Government to take up the settlement of the Jewish question in Budapest. It is to be hoped that this statement will not give rise to serious complications..."

In the spirit of this reply, the Hungarian authorities allowed the delegate in Budapest to affix shields on the camps and internment buildings for the Jews, conferring on them the protection of the Red Cross. If the use of these shields (hardly compatible, moreover, with the precise terms of the Geneva Convention) was not more extensive, this is due to the fact that the Jewish Senate of Budapest was of opinion that the measure would doubless lose its effectiveness if generally applied.

The Hungarian Government, furthermore, showed themselves

willing to favour a resumption of Jewish emigration. The Committee got in touch with the British and United States Governments as a matter of extreme urgency and, during August, obtained a joint statement from these two Governments declaring their desire to give support by every means to the emigration of Jews from Hungary.

To this end, the Committee was requested to transmit the following message to Budapest from the United States Government : " The United States Government has been advised by the ICRC of the Hungarian Government's willigness to permit certain categories of refugees to emigrate from Hungary... The Government of the United States, taking into account the humanitarian considerations involved as regards the Jews in Hungary, now specifically repeats its assurance that arrangements will be made by it for the care of all Jews who in the present circumstances are allowed to leave Hungary and who reach the territory of the United Nations or neutral countries, and that it will find for such people temporary havens of refuge where they may live in safety. The Governments of neutral countries have been advised of these assurances and have been requested to permit the entry into their territory of Jews from Hungary who may reach their frontiers."

On October 8, the Hungarian authorities, in conformity with the undertaking given to the Committee, announced the final suspension of deportations and made known that the Kistarcea Camp for Jewish intellectuals, doctors and engineers, had been broken up and the internees released.

The hope raised by this statement was short-lived. A few days later the full tide of the great tribulations of the Hungarian Jews was to set in. In view of the setbacks of the German Army, Admiral Horthy had decided to sever his country's connection with Germany. On October 15, he asked the Allied Powers for an armistice for Hungary. This proclamation had an immense effect amongst the Jews, who were ardent in their demonstrations against the occupying Power. Although the German Army was in retreat both in Eastern and Western Europe, it had still a firm foothold in Hungary. The Regent failed in his plan and was arrested. Hungarian supporters of

the Germans seized power and set about a repression, increasing in severity as the fighting zone came nearer, placing Budapest in a state of siege. It is alleged that shots were fired from Jewish houses on the German troops; however that may be, repression was centred on the Jews. It was immediately decided to remove them from Budapest and to confiscate their property. Sixty thousand Jews fit for work were to be sent to Germany, on foot, in parties of one thousand, by way of Vienna. Moreover, among the able-bodied, men between sixteen and sixty, and women between fourteen and forty were commandeered for forced labour in building fortifications in Hungary. The rest of the Jewish population, including the disabled and sick, was confined in four or five ghettos near Budapest. The only Jews to escape evacuation were those in possession of passports with visas for Palestine, Sweden, Switzerland, Portugal or Spain.

These measures were accompanied, at the outset, by brutalities and thefts against which the delegate immediately protested. The Ministry of the Interior, giving heed to this action, issued a decree forbidding pillage as from October 20. Meanwhile, the delegation was giving refuge to the members of the Jewish Senate of Budapest. Since their position was apparently threatened, the delegate renewed his appeals to the German authorities, as to the Hungarian Government and on October 29, the wireless announced that the ICRC buildings were granted exterritoriality, similar to that of the Legations.

His position thus strengthened, the delegate devoted himself with all the more assurance to the relief work he had courageously undertaken in behalf of the Jews. "It is hard", he wrote, "to imagine the difficulty I had in holding out against a gang in whose hands the power lay, and at a time when disorder, murder and aggression were the order of the day, to compel it still to show some restraint and to observe the respect due to the Red Cross emblem..."

The fate of children whose parents had been deported to the labour camps was especially tragic. The delegate succeeded, with the help of the "Jo Pasztor" organization, in setting up some twenty homes in which these children, accompanied in

some cases by their mothers, could be accommodated. The hospital staff consisted of trained nurses and of Jews, whose employment in these homes ensured them a certificate of protection similar to those which the delegate issued to his fellow workers.

The Committee's representatives also opened soup-kitchens, each able to provide about a hundred hot meals a day. Reception and accommodation centres were set up, as well as hospitals with children's and maternity wards, and a first aid station open to the public " without distinction of race or creed ". Furthermore, the delegate issued thirty thousand letters of protection, which although without any legal basis, were respected by the authorities and exempted their holders from compulsory labour.

In November, one hundred thousand Jews poured into Budapest from the provinces. The Government decided to shut them up in a ghetto, and with them the Jews who had remained in Budapest, in particular the children sheltered in the Red Cross homes. " I considered that my main task ", wrote the delegate, " lay in ensuring that this ghetto life was at least as bearable as possible. I had incredible difficulty in obtaining from the Hungarian Nazis, in the course of daily bargaining, conditions and concession which would ensure to some degree the means to exist for those in the ghetto. Continual interviews took place with the Jewish Senate on the one hand, and with the town administration on the other, to ensure at least minimum food supplies for the ghetto at a time when all traffic had stopped, owing to the constant bombing, and provisioning was becoming more and more difficult." The delegate secured that the Jews' rations should be fixed at 920 calories, i.e. two thirds of the minimum Hungarian prison fare. Later on it was possible to make a slight increase of this figure, thanks to the issue of relief supplies.

In spite of the delegate's efforts, the children transferred to the ghetto had been put sixty in a room in premises which it had been impossible either to clean or to disinfect. Pleading the danger of epidemics, he succeeded in getting the children

inspected by a committee who had authority to make some decision on their situation. This health inspection allowed 500 of the 800 children examined to be sent back to the homes from which they had been removed, and for 300 to be placed in hospitals. The other children did not leave the ghetto, but were taken care of there by relatives or friends. Furthermore, the Delegation sent into the ghetto, with permission of the Government, five persons instructed to furnish regular and detailed reports on each child's need of food and clothing. Finally, on the initiative of the delegate, one thousand orphans selected " without distinction of race or religion " were assembled in the Abbey of Panonalma, a Benedictine monastery placed at the delegate's disposal by the Bishop of Györ. This refuge, under the protection of the Red Cross, was respected by the German and Hungarian troops in retreat, and also by the Soviet Army.

The devotion and generosity of the Bishop of Györ were a fruitful help to the delegate in the relief work he had undertaken. His task was to improve the food and shelter of the convoys of Jews who were being deported to labour camps in Germany and compelled to do stages of twenty-five to thirty kilometres a day on foot. The Bishop organized a relief centre en route, which he financed and which was administered by representatives of the Committee. It gave shelter from bad weather, for a few hours at least, to thousands of Jews during their terrible exodus. The " transport groups " of the delegation issued food to them on the road, paid the peasants to carry the weakest, fifteen to twenty at a time, in their carts, gave medical attention to the sick and dispensed medical supplies.

On November 12, a new threat hung over the hospitals protected by the Red Cross emblem, which the police had searched with an order to turn out the Jews. The delegate, on the strength of the authority he had been granted, protested to the Government. As a result, the police authorities were instructed not to proceed with the evictions from the hospitals.

It must be apparent what difficulties and dangers were encountered at every turn by the Committee's representatives in a town subject to the most violent bombardments. They were supported in their courageous work by the untiring devotion

to duty of the members of the Jewish Senate, and by the equally generous activity of the representatives of the two main protecting Powers, Switzerland and Sweden.

As soon as Budapest was liberated, the delegate and the local Jewish organizations established, with the funds of the New York Joint Committee stocks of foodstuffs and of the most necessary medical supplies. The Russian military authorities had ordered all foreigners to leave Budapest. When our delegate had to go, a Hungarian minister paid him the tribute of stating that he had, in a time of historic crisis, succeeded in making the capital a "protectorate of Geneva".

Rumania. — The delegate's part was a very important one, owing to the opportunities there were in that country for the purchase of foodstuffs. Financial aid and relief in kind could be sent from Bucharest to Poland and neighbouring countries. The Committee came to an agreement concerning relief in Rumania itself with the National Red Cross there, to whom our delegate handed funds for the purchase of goods. It should be emphazised that wealthy Rumanian Jews contributed in large measure towards assisting their co-religionists in need. From 1943, the Committee's work in Rumania was made easier by the fact that the delegate had been able to inspire the Rumanian Government with trust.

During the period in September 1940, when the "Iron Guard", supported by the Gestapo and the German SS, had seized power, the Jews had been subjected to persecution and deportation to death camps. Later, under the dictatorship of Marshal Antonescu, they met with less severity. Special understanding was shown by the Vice-president of the Council, Mr. Mihai Antonescu, who was entrusted with the settlement of the Jewish question. "The Rumanian Government", he wrote to the delegate in Bucharest, "repudiates any material solution contrary to civilized custom and in defiance of the Christian spirit which dominates the conscience of the Rumanian people."

In December 1943 Mr. Mihai Antonescu had an interview with this delegate which led to making later activities of the Com-

mittee in behalf of Jews far easier. This talk bore mainly on the case of Jews deported beyond the Dniester to the Ukraine, who were natives of Bessarabia and the Bukovina. These provinces had been returned to Rumania after the first World War, and came again under Soviet power by the terms of the Soviet-German treaty at the beginning of the Second War. After the reshuffle in 1941, Rumania, who had become Germany's ally against the USSR, reoccupied these two provinces. The Jews, whom the Rumanians considered guilty of having welcomed too easily a return to Russian allegiance, were then deported. The Rumanian Government's plan, drawn up in agreement with Germany, seems to have been to settle these Jews on lands in the region of the Sea of Azov. This could not be carried out, however, unless the USSR were defeated. In the light of the Russian victories, the Rumanian Government decided, towards the close of 1943, to repatriate the survivors of this deplorable migration, the numbers of which had fallen from 200,000 to 78,000. Mr. Mihai Antonescu welcomed the opportunity of the approaches made by the delegate in Bucharest, to entrust him with a mission of enquiry into the means of carrying out this repatriation, and authorized him to tour Transnistria to distribute clothing and relief to these unfortunate people. Furthermore, the delegate succeeded in getting an assurance that the Czernowitz Jews, the only ones still compelled to wear the yellow star, should be exempted, as this badge exposed them to the brutality of German troops passing through. Finally, it was agreed that Red Cross purchases might be freely made at the official rates.

When the delegate saw the Vice-president of the Council again on his return, he drew his attention specially to the plight of the children who had lost their parents and were left abandoned in Transnistria. Mr. Mihai Antonescu promised to allow 150 children to leave each week for Palestine or elsewhere, if the Committee could arrange their journey. Three months later, the Rumanian Government offered two recently-built first-class steamers, the *Transilvania* and the *Bessarabia*, then held in Turkish waters, and suggested the Committee should buy them, reserving to Rumania the option of repurchase,

for use as transports for emigrants under the Swiss flag. Switzerland, as the protecting Power for British interests, could in fact be considered as the protecting Power for Jews bound for Palestine, since these Jews were to become on arrival assimilated to British nationals.

Up to that time, the remedy of emigration had been no more than a meagre palliative for the sufferings of the Jews. Bulgaria had shut her frontiers to emigrants travelling on a collective passport, and only Jews under eighteen years of age or over forty-five had been able to reach Turkey, under individual permits. Transport by sea from Rumanian ports would have afforded the best means of emigration. But besides the difficulties met with by the Jews in leaving, account had to be taken of the political problem raised for the British authorities by an influx of Jews, considered as intruders by the majority of the local population of a territory under British mandate. The the first vessel, the *Struma*, which left Constanza for Palestine independently of any action by the Committee, at the beginning of 1942, had been detained at Istanbul owing to engine trouble, and was subsequently obliged to sail again for Rumania, as it was impossible to obtain the necessary permits to continue on its route. It was wrecked, and 750 emigrants were drowned. This pioneer expedition, ending so disastrously, was a lesson in the need of prudence.

The Committee was asked to grant the protection of the Red Cross emblem to emigrant transports and would have consented to this, on the basis of a very liberal interpretation of the provisions of the Tenth Hague Convention of 1907, which govern the use of hospital ships, whilst reckoning too that cargo-boats sailing under their control and carrying relief supplies for PW or civilian internees were covered by the Red Cross emblem. However, it would have wished to do this in agreement with all the Powers concerned. Therefore, the Committee made its consent conditional on the following terms. The transport organizations should charter neutral vessels which would be accompanied by the Committee's representative, and would be used exclusively for the transport of emigrants. The ships were not to sail before obtaining safe-conducts from all the

belligerents concerned, as well as their agreement as to the route to be followed.

These conditions were unfortunately never obtained. The *Bellacita*, however, was authorized by Rumania to carry out a daily service for the transport of Jewish children from Constanza or Mangalia to Istambul, and sailed under the protection of the Rumanian Red Cross, the Committee having notified all belligerents of these voyages.

The delegate in Bucharest was faced with a very grave decision when the question arose of embarking Jews for Palestine on two Bulgarian vessels, the *Milka* and the *Maritza*, both chartered by Zionist organizations. There was reason to fear the same fate for them as for those who sailed in the *Struma*. Moreover, the heads of Jewish organizations did not agree as to the names for the list of emigrants, and the Rumanian authorities applied to the Committee to arbitrate. The delegate confined himself to a check of the emigration permits and thus aided their departure. They arrived safety in Istambul a few days later. In August 1944, the Committee finally agreed that vessels carrying emigrants might display the Red Cross emblem, even in the absence of certain of the conditions which had been laid down.

On August 23, the King of Rumania took advantage of the retreat of the German troops to put an end to the dictatorship of Marshal Antonescu, and to enter into armistice negotiations with the Allies. The racial laws were thereupon abolished in Rumania.

The Committee continued their relief work in behalf of Jews, however, until the close of hostilities.

In its report of December 1944, the delegation in Bucharest stated that, thanks to consignments from the Joint Committee of New York and to collections made on the spot, it had been able to come to the help of 183,000 Rumanian Jews, comprising : 17,000 deportees repatriated from Transnistria ; 30,000 men liberated from forced labour with their families (90,000 persons) ; 20,000 evacuees from small towns and villages ; 10,000 evacuees from the war zone ; 20,000 homeless persons, as a result of bombardments ; 20,000 workmen and officials dismissed from

their employment ; and 6,000 Hungarians who had succeeded in escaping deportation and were found in Northern Transylvania.

Tribute was paid to this humanitarian work by the President of the American Union of Rumanian Jews. He wrote, in March 1945, to the Committee's delegate in Washington as follows :

" The work of the International Red Cross in helping the Jewish population in Rumania, and the Jews transported to Transnistria has been appreciated at its true worth not only by Dr. Safran, the Chief Rabbi in Rumania and the Jewish Community of Rumania, but also by the many thousands of members of our Union whose own relatives benefited by that help. The International Red Cross Committee has rendered truly invaluable service to our people in Rumania."

Mr. Joseph C. Hyman, Vice-President of the American Joint Distribution Committee of New York, had already made public the debt of gratitude due to the International Red Cross. In an article published in the journal " News " on February 16, 1945, under the title " The Joint Distribution Committee lauds International Red Cross Co-operation ", he is quoted as follows : " Thousands of Jews in newly liberated lands and in German concentration camps owe their lives to the sanctuary and the help given them by the International Red Cross... In those parts of the world where J.D.C., major American agency for the rescue and relief of distressed Jews overseas, cannot itself work directly, we know we can count on the International Red Cross... to act for us in bringing aid to suffering Jewry."

(B). Civilian Workers

The welfare of civilian workers who were conscripted by Germany in the occupied countries and taken to German territory, raised some very difficult problems. These persons were not protected by any treaty stipulations and had no status in international law. They were alleged to be " free " : they were in reality subjected to coercive measures which gave cause for great anxiety. The ICRC was not able to take any effective action in their favour until the beginning of 1944.

A Factual Appraisal of the 'Holocaust' by the Red Cross

The Jews and the Concentration Camps:
No Evidence of Genocide

There is one survey of the Jewish question in Europe during World War Two and the conditions of Germany's concentration camps which is almost unique in its honesty and objectivity, the three-volume **Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its Activities during the Second World War**, Geneva, 1948.

This comprehensive account from an entirely neutral source incorporated and expanded the findings of two previous works: **Documents sur l'activité du CICR en faveur des civils détenus dans les camps de concentration en Allemagne 1939-1945** (Geneva, 1946), and **Inter Arma Caritas: the Work of the ICRC during the Second World War** (Geneva, 1947). The team of authors, headed by Frédéric Siordet, explained in the opening pages of the Report that their object, in the tradition of the Red Cross, had been strict political neutrality, and herein lies its great value.

The ICRC successfully applied the 1929 Geneva military convention in order to gain access to civilian internees held in Central and Western Europe by the Germany authorities. By contrast, the ICRC was unable to gain any access to the Soviet Union, which had failed to ratify the Convention. The millions of civilian and military internees held in the USSR, whose conditions were known to be by far the worst, were completely cut off from any international contact or supervision.

The Red Cross Report is of value in that it first clarifies the legitimate circumstances under which Jews were detained in concentration camps, i.e. as enemy aliens. In describing the two categories of civilian internees, the Report distinguishes the second type as "Civilians deported on administrative grounds (in German, "Schutzhäftlinge"), who were arrested for political or racial motives because their presence was considered a danger to the State or the occupation forces" (*Vol. III, p. 73*). These persons, it continues, "were placed on the same footing as persons arrested or imprisoned under common law for security reasons." (*Vol. III, p. 74*).

The Report admits that the Germans were at first reluctant to permit supervision by the Red Cross of people detained on grounds relating to security, but by the latter part of 1942, the ICRC obtained important concessions from Germany. They were permitted to distribute food parcels to major concentration camps in Germany from August 1942, and "from February 1943 onwards this concession was extended to all other camps and prisons" (*Vol. III, p. 78*). The ICRC soon established contact with camp commandants and launched a food relief programme which continued to function until the last months of 1945, letters of thanks for which came pouring in from Jewish internees.

Red Cross Recipients Were Jews

The Report states that "As many as 9,000 parcels were packed daily. >From the autumn of 1943 until May 1945, about 1,112,000 parcels with a total weight of 4,500 tons were sent off to the concentration camps" (*Vol. III, p. 80*). In addition to food, these contained clothing and pharmaceutical supplies. "Parcels were sent to Dachau, Buchenwald, Sangerhausen, Sachsenhausen, Oranienburg, Flossenburg, Landsberg-am-Lech, Flöha, Ravensbrück, Hamburg-Neuengamme, Mauthausen, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, Bergen-

Belsen, to camps near Vienna and in Central and Southern Germany. The principal recipients were Belgians, Dutch, French, Greeks, Italians, Norwegians, Poles and stateless Jews" (*Vol. III, p. 83*).

In the course of the war, "The Committee was in a position to transfer and distribute in the form of relief supplies over twenty million Swiss francs collected by Jewish welfare organizations throughout the world, in particular by the American Joint Distribution Committee of New York" (*Vol. I, p. 644*). This latter organization was permitted by the German Government to maintain offices in Berlin until the American entry into the war. The ICRC complained that obstruction of their vast relief operation for Jewish internees came not from the Germans but from the tight Allied blockade of Europe. Most of their purchases of relief food were made in Rumania, Hungary and Slovakia.

The ICRC had special praise for the liberal conditions which prevailed at Theresienstadt up to the time of their last visits there in April 1945. This camp, "where there were about 40,000 Jews deported from various countries was a relatively privileged ghetto" (*Vol. III, p. 75*). According to the Report, "'The Committee's delegates were able to visit the camp at Theresienstadt (Terezin) which was used exclusively for Jews and was governed by special conditions. From information gathered by the Committee, this camp had been started as an experiment by certain leaders of the Reich ... These men wished to give the Jews the means of setting up a communal life in a town under their own administration and possessing almost complete autonomy. . . two delegates were able to visit the camp on April 6th, 1945. They confirmed the favourable impression gained on the first visit" (*Vol. I, p. 642*).

The ICRC also had praise for the regime of Ion Antonescu of Fascist Rumania where the Committee was able to extend special relief to 183,000 Rumanian Jews until the time of the Soviet occupation. The aid then ceased, and the ICRC complained bitterly that it never succeeded "in sending anything whatsoever to Russia" (*Vol. II, p. 62*). The same situation applied to many of the German camps after their "liberation" by the Russians. The ICRC received a voluminous flow of mail from Auschwitz until the period of the Soviet occupation, when many of the internees were evacuated westward. But the efforts of the Red Cross to send relief to internees remaining at Auschwitz under Soviet control were futile. However, food parcels continued to be sent to former Auschwitz inmates transferred west to such camps as Buchenwald and Oranienburg.

No Evidence Of Genocide

One of the most important aspects of the Red Cross Report is that it clarifies the true cause of those deaths that undoubtedly occurred in the camps toward the end of the war. Says the Report: "In the chaotic condition of Germany after the invasion during the final months of the war, the camps received no food supplies at all and starvation claimed an increasing number of victims. Itself alarmed by this situation, the German Government at last informed the ICRC on February 1st, 1945 ... In March 1945, discussions between the President of the ICRC and General of the S.S. Kaltenbrunner gave even more decisive results. Relief could henceforth be distributed by the ICRC, and one delegate was authorised to stay in each camp ..." (*Vol. III, p. 83*).

Clearly, the German authorities were at pains to relieve the dire situation as far as they were able. The Red Cross are quite explicit in stating that food supplies ceased at this time due to the Allied bombing of German transportation, and in the interests of interned Jews

they had protested on March 15th, 1944 against "the barbarous aerial warfare of the Allies" (*Inter Arma Caritas, p. 78*). By October 2nd, 1944, the ICRC warned the German Foreign Office of the impending collapse of the German transportation system, declaring that starvation conditions for people throughout Germany were becoming inevitable.

In dealing with this comprehensive, three-volume Report, it is important to stress that the delegates of the International Red Cross found no evidence whatever at the camps in Axis occupied Europe of a deliberate policy to exterminate the Jews. In all its 1,600 pages the Report does not even mention such a thing as a gas chamber. It admits that Jews, like many other wartime nationalities, suffered rigours and privations, but its complete silence on the subject of planned extermination is ample refutation of the Six Million legend. Like the Vatican representatives with whom they worked, the Red Cross found itself unable to indulge in the irresponsible charges of genocide which had become the order of the day. So far as the genuine mortality rate is concerned, the Report points out that most of the Jewish doctors from the camps were being used to combat typhus on the eastern front, so that they were unavailable when the typhus epidemics of 1945 broke out in the camps (*Vol. I, p. 204 ff*) - Incidentally, it is frequently claimed that mass executions were carried out in gas chambers cunningly disguised as shower facilities. Again the Report makes nonsense of this allegation. "Not only the washing places, but installations for baths, showers and laundry were inspected by the delegates. They had often to take action to have fixtures made less primitive, and to get them repaired or enlarged" (*Vol. III, p. 594*).

Not All Were Interned

Volume III of the Red Cross Report, Chapter 3 (I. Jewish Civilian Population) deals with the "aid given to the Jewish section of the free population," and this chapter makes it quite plain that by no means all of the European Jews were placed in internment camps, but remained, subject to certain restrictions, as part of the free civilian population. This conflicts directly with the "thoroughness" of the supposed "extermination programme", and with the claim in the forged Höss memoirs that Eichmann was obsessed with seizing "every single Jew he could lay his hands on."

In Slovakia, for example, where Eichmann's assistant Dieter Wisliceny was in charge, the Report states that "A large proportion of the Jewish minority had permission to stay in the country, and at certain periods Slovakia was looked upon as a comparative haven of refuge for Jews, especially for those coming from Poland. Those who remained in Slovakia seem to have been in comparative safety until the end of August 1944, when a rising against the German forces took place. While it is true that the law of May 15th, 1942 had brought about the internment of several thousand Jews, these people were held in camps where the conditions of food and lodging were tolerable, and where the internees were allowed to do paid work on terms almost equal to those of the free labour market" (*Vol. I, p. 646*).

Not only did large numbers of the three million or so European Jews avoid internment altogether, but the emigration of Jews continued throughout the war, generally by way of Hungary, Rumania and Turkey. Ironically, post-war Jewish emigration from German-occupied territories was also facilitated by the Reich, as in the case of the Polish Jews who had escaped to France before its occupation. "The Jews from Poland who, whilst in France, had obtained entrance permits to the United States were held to be American citizens by the German occupying authorities, who further agreed to recognize the validity of about three thousand passports issued to Jews by the consulates of South American countries" (*Vol. I, p. 645*).

As future U.S. citizens, these Jews were held at the Vittel camp in southern France for American aliens. The emigration of European Jews from Hungary in particular proceeded during the war unhindered by the German authorities. "Until March 1944," says the. Red Cross Report, "Jews who had the privilege of visas for Palestine were free to leave Hungary" (*Vol. I, p. 648*). Even after the replacement of the Horthy Government in 1944 (following its attempted armistice with the Soviet Union) with a government more dependent on German authority, the emigration of Jews continued.

The Committee secured the pledges of both Britain and the United States "to give support by every means to the emigration of Jews from Hungary," and from the U.S. Government the ICRC received a message stating that "The Government of the United States ... now specifically repeats its assurance that arrangements will be made by it for the care of all Jews who in the present circumstances are allowed to leave" (*Vol. I, p. 649*).

Biedermann agreed that in the nineteen instances that "Did Six Million Really Die?" quoted from the Report of the International Committee of the Red Cross on its Activities during the Second World War and Inter Arma Caritas (this includes the above material), it did so accurately.

A quote from Charles Biedermann (a delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross and Director of the Red Cross' International Tracing Service) under oath at the Zündel Trial (February 9, 10, 11 and 12, 1988).

The above is chapter nine from the book "Did Six Million Really Die?"

For the entire book "Did Six Million Really Die?", click here.
http://www.vancouver.indymedia.org/news/2004/03/122056.php