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CENTRAL COMMITTEE
OF LIBERATED JEWS IN THE
BRITISH ZONE
GERMANY
1945 — 1947



ZENTRAL-KOMITEE
DER BEFREITEN JUDEN
IN DER BRITISCHEN ZONE
1945 — 1947

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Report
on O.R.T. Activities in the British Zone
1946/1947

O.R.T. is the sole Jewish organisation which concentrates on reconstructive help only and this accounts for the fact that whilst all the first-aid organisations proceeded to Germany to give their help to the liberated Jews immediately upon the cessation of hostilities, O.R.T. had to wait until the world policy towards emigration crystallized. It would be useless to embark upon costly schemes of reconstructive help in Germany if the Jews were allowed to leave the country soon after the liberation. However, as soon as it became clear that they were here for some considerable time to come, O.R.T. took the matter in hand.

The problem is formidable. Vocational training of the young people and re-adaptation to new occupations of the adults requires four basic elements: —

1. Suitable buildings.
2. Trained instructors.
3. A minimum of machinery, tools and raw materials. X
4. Suitable human material.

1) As O.R.T. came into Germany rather late the problem of adequate buildings for schools and workshops was one of great difficulty and many schools had to scatter their classrooms in various and least suitable places, which made supervision and instruction very difficult.

2) The lack of instructors was a very serious problem. We have never had an adequate number of them anywhere. The war and the armies have depleted the civilian populations of skilled men, and as these instructors for Germany were to be found in Western Europe, the problem of the language of tuition was almost insurmountable for the instructors knew neither Yiddish nor German.

As time went on, the Liberated Jews themselves began to supply a considerable number of skilled men willing to use their knowledge for the training of their comrades. However, very often they were only good artisans who either forgot their cunning during the six years of their camp life, or have not possessed the talent for teaching. This, in itself, created a problem of training instructors and organising refresher courses.

3) The post-war world found the civilian population depleted of the major part part of tools and machinery they had used in pre-war days.

Various O.R.T. Committees and training centres in the USA, Canada, Switzerland, England, etc., began to send tools and machinery to help in the training of the liberated Jews, and Mr. V. Grossman was the first man to appear in Germany with a considerable transport of tools and machinery brought from an O.R.T. school in Canada and purchased from the Canadian Government, from their war stocks in Holland. This was followed by an organised effort to supply the necessary tools and machinery from all over the world, and now machinery is forthcoming from the "Relief to Europe" from Sweden, from our Committees in various countries of Western Europe and America. By now, one may say that a large number of O.R.T. schools and other training centres are fairly well equipped with the most necessary modern tools and machinery.

4) The human material of the liberated Jews presented also a thorny problem from the point of view of training. Most of the young people have missed their school years and were often without elementary education required for taking up skilled labour. On the other hand, there was such a variety of ages among the students, that the problem of training could be solved only by exceptionally gifted teachers.

The first vocational school in the British Zone was established in Belsen at the end of 1945. With the arrival of the first machinery, the Belsen School received a considerable supply of sewing machines and tools. 62 sewing machines, of which 20 were on electric power were sent to Belsen and only about a dozen of them were distributed among the workshops of the Kibutzim.

In the course of the first year of its existence over 900 people were trained in the school and the majority of them remained there for a period of six months and more. Over 300 dressmakers have been trained and a balance of

120 are still in training. In June 1947 the O.R.T. School counted over 350 students in various trades ranging from radio classes, machine tools, auto-mechanics, electro-technicians and plumbers to all kinds of needle trades.

The school for Dental Mechanics at Belsen was an outstanding success and 47 students who were trained for six months have continued to practice for another six months, carrying out the better part of Welfare Work for the community in Belsen. With the assistance of the Jewish Committee and the A.J.D.C., a dentist was installed in the school premises and the impressions made are placed in the hands of the students in the laboratory who, under the guidance of Mr. Greenman, the Director, are able to carry out the work speedily and free of charge, to the patients. — see original

The O.R.T. school in Hannover was divided between the two camps in Vinnhorst and Ohestrasse. Two workshops, one for dressmaking and another for corsetmaking were established with two Jewish local instructors in charge of them. In Ohestrasse a school was established with courses for machine tools, auto-mechanics, welding, electro-technics and dressmaking; 17 tailors took a course of cutting from an expert cutter of a German school and were supplied on examination with diplomas. X At Lindener Berg at the Headquarters of the World O.R.T. Union in Hannover a class for training in doll and other soft toy making under the guidance of an excellent instructor was set up. The dolls and toys produced by the trainees were distributed in children's nurseries. — S.O.

Ahlem Farm, which over a year ago was leased to O.R.T. for the establishment of an agricultural school had only the land available for work and the students placed on it for training experienced great difficulty in accommodating themselves in the few rooms left free by some Nazi inhabitants who had been given rooms elsewhere. An agricultural expert (Mr. Lifschitz) was in charge of the training; a tractor, tractor ploughs and other equipment were supplied. The farm, which has a considerable number of hothouses, lends itself for training in intensive horticulture and market gardening.

The Communities of Brunswick and of Lüneburg have approached the O.R.T., asking for help in the establishment of training centres. Brunswick is ready to begin work in two trades, electro-technics and dressmaking. Equipment is being prepared and machinery sent to them. In Lüneburg an upholstery workshop is ready to start its work and the opening of a dressmaking workshop is being considered. In Northeim a training centre for dressmakers has been in existence during the course of the last two months, and the question of a school for dental mechanics is under review.

One of the greatest achievements in the O.R.T. work it is hoped, will be the School for Maritime Trades in Neustadt (Holstein). Together with the Maritime School, a class for Dressmaking was established under the leadership of an O.R.T. supervisor in the British Zone (Miss Bluzstein) and proved to be an outstanding success.

62 students from Neustadt and from neighbouring places have joined the workshop and are carrying out their programme by working six hours a day. O.R.T. supplied 14 sewing machines, a dozen electric irons and ironing boards and a considerable quantity of material (which was increased by a generous grant of material by the Jewish Committee of Belsen), and other accessories for drawing and cutting.

As Neustadt was a German submarine base, a diving tank was found which, after repairs undertaken by O.R.T. proved an exceptional opportunity for a class of divers and salvage workers. A well equipped machine tool shop was placed at the disposal of O.R.T. by UNRRA and an excellent ship building carpentry workshop was established by O.R.T. with the aid of the materials supplied by the Swedish Committee. A welding workshop is being equipped and classes for a considerable number of electro-technicians and radio-technicians have been installed by O.R.T. — see original

It has been the custom of O.R.T. schools to supply the best trainees with a set of tools when they have completed their training.

Needless to say, an artisan in possession of the tools he requires is better equipped for the battle of life. In Neustadt the machine tool shop is so well equipped with machinery that the O.R.T. instructor finds it possible for the students to produce their tools in the course of their training, leaving only a few more complicated instruments to be purchased elsewhere. In the same school, the carpentry shop produces boxes for the sets of tools to be given away. On one occasion, Major Fowler, the C.C.G. Commandant of the Camp, in addressing a big gathering at the school, begged of the Jews to join the O.R.T. school as he could see no better place where they could get ready for their new life once they are out of Germany.

The Swedish Government offered facilities for a three monthly refresher course in technical trades to 25 Jewish instructors from Germany. Publications

prepared by experts in each of the trades practised in the O.R.T. schools have been issued by the Central Board in Geneva and have proved to be of great help for the instructors.

In reviewing the results achieved in the field of Vocational Training in the British Zone and in planning the next steps for the future, it must be stated that the formidable task was tackled quite successfully and the achievement is not to be underestimated.

Under the abnormal conditions prevailing in this country, the task could not be adequately carried out without the wholehearted assistance of all the other Jewish organisations. In submitting this report to the second Congress of the Liberated Jews in the British Zone, the O.R.T. would therefore like to place on record the fact that this division of spheres of activities among the various Jewish bodies adhered to by all the organisations in the field of operation has vastly contributed to a friendly and helpful co-operation for the benefit of all those in need of this work.

Mrs. J. Mowhowitch, Director,
British Zone

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