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THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS AND DISPLACED PERSONS.

Amongst the cases of distress which are a consequence of the war, the problem of those who are to-day usually described as "Displaced Persons" is apparently the most painful and the most difficult to solve.

It may appear surprising, in view of the experience in refugee questions gained during the first World War, that welfare organizations should have been so slow in discovering the means to improve the condition of these people. But we should have a clear idea how vast and intricate a problem arose on the close of hostilities. Thirty million persons in Europe alone had been forcibly removed, by the events of war, from their home countries, to which they saw hardly any prospect of returning.

The causes of these migrations are well known — evacuation for military considerations, deportations, systematic transfers of entire populations, voluntary or compulsory enlistment of civilian workers, etc. It is not hard to conceive the material and moral distress of these exiles. Many of them succeeded, it is true, in returning to their countries of origin, but many have been compelled to stay in the camps, or to attempt to earn their living in communities which have also been severely affected by events of war. "Displaced Persons" are, as a rule, deprived of the facilities necessary for a normal existence — residential and working permits, and possibilities of relief. A great many are unwilling to return home and are thus no longer entitled to the protection of their governments.

To-day the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), acting under United Nations, has to a large extent taken over the work involved by these circumstances; the fact remains, however, that on the close of hostilities, *i.e.* at the most critical moment, no humanitarian organization willing to act in favour of these homeless people was able to undertake a relief action proportionate to their needs. Either they lacked financial resources, or their statutes covered relief only for certain categories of persons.

The question naturally arises: what was the International Committee's share in the efforts made on behalf of "displaced persons"? Thousands of appeals reached Geneva, for it could be presumed that the exceptional position of the Committee, which had enabled them to carry out their activities for five years in spite of all obstacles, would have left them ready to play a prominent part, at the close of the war, in settling this difficult problem.

Their co-operation was much desired, but it soon became evident that the Committee could only intervene in so far as they were authorised to do so, and within the limits of their available resources.

The fact that the Committee's work is not influenced by any political, racial or religious considerations gave the I.C.R.C. advantages which other organizations did not enjoy. Thus, the action of the Committee, even if it did not have the desired effect, had its full signification in its ability to reach Displaced Persons who could not receive help from any other source.

The Committee's network of delegations abroad and its methods of work, which had stood the test of practice, were a further advantage. The Committee began by assembling at Geneva all the data, whether collected by itself or freely supplied, relating to the number of refugees, their identity, living conditions, possibilities of repatriation, and so on. Private relief organizations for refugees and official bodies were supplied with this mass of details, which was finally handed over to the International Refugee Organization (IRO).

The Committee's efforts were not limited to exploratory work. The most distressing cases were given relief in kind, taken from the stocks at the Committee's disposal, or donated for the purpose. This relief was, of course, very small in proportion to the many who required help.

The moral distress of the Displaced Persons was as painful as their physical privations. At the close of hostilities, the refugees and their families were unable to correspond. Circumstances appeared to have purposely destroyed all means by which their relatives

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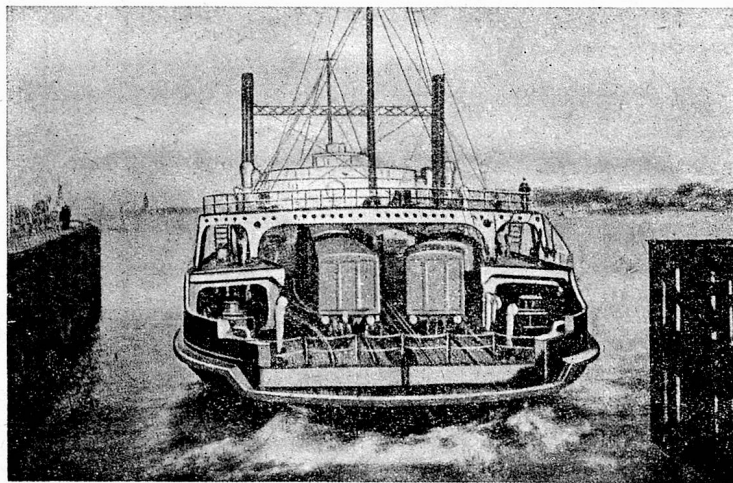
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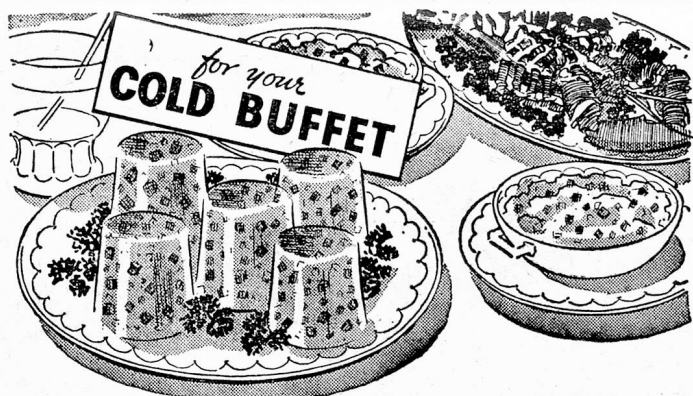
could have made contacts. Not only had the postal services broken down, but refugees anxious to find their relatives only knew their pre-war addresses, and these were useless, since the addressees had been scattered.

These various problems led the I.C.R.C. to take immediate steps to find a practical scheme for assisting the Displaced Persons and facilitating their return to a more normal way of life. Many were given the means to inform their relatives of their present residence, and tracing operations were commenced on a large scale, in order to reunite dispersed families. A great deal of information on the subject was recorded at Geneva and was handed to UNRRA, when this organization decided to deal with this particular task.

The Committee then devised, for the use of refugees, the so-called "Travel Document." This particular measure continues to render considerable service.

All the steps taken by the I.C.R.C. were intended to meet emergency requirements; they paved the way for more extensive schemes. Although the Committee were never blind to the scantiness of the means at their disposal and the temporary nature of their work, they felt that they were assisting the efforts of some future international organization, which would enjoy ampler facilities for dealing with the problem as a whole.

(Bulletin I.R.C.)



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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER.

Unser "Easter Ramble."

Voller Erwartung stiegen wir am Samstagmorgen in den Bus der uns Richtung Buxton führen sollte. Gerne verliessen wir die Stadt und freuten uns so recht als wir auf's Land kamen und durch hübsche Dörfer fuhren. Wie an einem Maienitag standen die Bäume im herrlichem Blütenschmuck und aus den Gärten leuchteten die Blumen in allen Farben. Es war ein solch strahlender Frühlingsmorgen dass einem so recht froh und leicht um's Herz wurde. In Whaley Bridge verliessen wir den Bus um auf Schuster's Rappen weiterzuziehen. Es ging durch Wälder und saftig grüne Wiesen dem Goyt entlang. Der Fluss schlängelte sich munter durch die Landschaft, und ihm zur Seite wandernd konnte man das Gefühl haben in der Heimat zu sein.

Auch die liebe Sonne meinte es recht gut mit uns, sie lachte so freundlich dass man bald hie und da kleine Schweissperlen funkeln sah. Doch plötzlich tauchte vor uns ein See auf, lieblich eingebettet zwischen sanft ansteigenden Hügelzügen. An dessen Ufer liessen wir uns nieder um unseren mitgebrachten Lunch zu verzehren. Für die durstigen Kehlen spendete der See sein klares Wasser in Hülle und Fülle. Frohgemut und wohlgestärkt verliessen wir alsdann den trauten Ort und zogen weiter bergwärts. Und jetzt, da unsere ausgetrockneten Kehlen wieder frisch geölt waren, brachten wir unserer Freude an dem herrlichen Tag durch singen Ausdruck. Und dass wir in unserem Singeifer vom rechten Weg abkamen und dafür dann ein hohes "Bord" erklettern mussten, gehörte natürlich zum Programm.

In Bälde verliessen wir den kühlen Wald, um auf offener Strasse der Höhe zuzuwandern. Eigenartig mutete uns diese Berggegend an. Kein Baum, kein Strauch, oder eine grüne Alp, nur gelbbraune verdorrte Farnblätter. Wir waren also schon über der Baumgrenze. Nun schlugen wir einen Saumpfad ein und überquerten den Bergbach auf den Steinen die aus dem Wasser ragten. Hier hat es weite Flächen von Erikastauden, die uns begleiteten bis auf den Gipfel.

Dort angelangt kletterten wir nach kurzer Rast über ein Mauerlein, und hinab gings in's andere Tal mit Sang und Klang. Aus weiter Ferne grüssten uns auch schon die hellen Häuser von Buxton. Der Abstieg dauerte nicht lange, noch ein letzter Blick rückwärts über die hübsche Berggegend uns schon kamen wir zu den ersten Vorstadthäusern. Hungrig und durstig erreichten wir das Ashwood Hotel wo uns ein prima "Zabig" erwartete. Wir "langten" aber auch fest zu und ich glaube das Tässchen Tee wurde bis auf den Grund geleert. Auf dem nachfolgenden Gang durch die Stadt, tranken wir natürlich auch von dem Heilbrunnen, und das gab uns die Kraft für das nachherige lange Schlangenstehen auf den Bus.

Auf unserer Heimfahrt liessen wir nochmals unsere Heimatlieder erklingen und als plötzlich noch Regentropfen an den Fensterscheiben hinab rieselten, waren wir erst recht glücklich unterm Dach zu sein. Etwas verspätet zwar doch froh gelaunt und wohlbehalten, kamen wir wieder in Manchester an. Ein herrlich schöner Tage neigte sich zu Ende und wir alle werden gerne noch recht lange an diesen Ausflug zurückdenken.

Paula Simmler.