SHANGHAI REFUGEE COMMUNITY

THE LIQUIDATION OF THE COLONY of Central European refugees in Shanghai, started in 1946, continued during the period under review. From a total of 14,874 refugees at the time of the Japanese surrender, the number decreased to 7,242 on December 31, 1947, and was 5,850 at this writing (May 1948). During the past year, they departed at the average monthly rate of 400.

During the past year, even more than in previous years, the United States furnished the principal haven for the Shanghai refugees. Of 6,208 who departed from March 1, 1946 to December 31, 1947, 4,245 (68.4 per cent) went to the United States, 902 (15.5 per cent) to Australia, and 1,061 (16.1 per cent) to all other countries, including about 120 to Palestine. At one time Australia seemed to offer good prospects for resettlement, but, as is apparent from these figures, this was no longer the case.

There was no indication that a complete and early liquidation of this forlorn and artificially sustained community might be expected. The evacuation of the Hongkow Ghetto proceeded at a faster pace than that of the European displaced persons camps only because an uncommonly high percentage of its residents enjoyed a favorable position under the American immigration law, having been born in that part of Germany which made them eligible for entry into the United States under the German immigration quota. Some 2,000
were German, 1,870 Poles (all but 320 of them, however, not real Poles but Germans born in the provinces of Posen and Upper Silesia, ceded in 1918 to Poland), 1,400 Austrians, 65 Czechoslovakians and 560 came under other quotas. As is evident from these figures, once this group departed, the rate of immigration was bound to decrease or cease completely unless special legislation were enacted by the Congress of the United States.

Under these circumstances it was becoming increasingly clear that for some years to come Shanghai might remain the residence of an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 refugees, forming the hard core of the colony. This core was made up of the “small quota people” [i.e., those from countries with small quotas under the United States immigration laws], the aged and the sick who for various reasons are ineligible for immigration, and a small number, probably no more than a few hundred, who had found a satisfactory livelihood in Shanghai and wanted to stay on.

The age distribution was more normal than might be expected in a community cut off from new immigration for more than eight years, and one from which the younger elements were the first to leave. According to recent Joint Distribution Committee statistics, children under sixteen years of age and old people over sixty-five accounted for about 15 per cent of the population, indicating a balanced population group. In the “productive” age class from sixteen to fifty-five, there were 67.5 per cent, but 17.5 per cent were aging persons from fifty-six to sixty-five. The birth rate, low during the war years, rose after the liberation, but dropped again recently.

The educational background of this community was not disproportionately “intellectual,” only 20 per cent having university training, 60.6 per cent high school, and 13.4 per cent grammar school education. The occupational breakdown shows a preponderance of the white collar occupations [58.7 per cent]; more than 30 per cent are listed as craftsmen, and 11.3 per cent follow the liberal professions.
Economic Situation

There was a recognizable acceleration in the inflation of the Chinese currency. The free market rate was quoted at 9,000 to 10,000 Chinese dollars to the American dollar at the beginning of 1947; the rate increased to 50,000 by the middle of 1947, was 140,000 at the end of that year and has now for the first time passed the one million mark.

Under these circumstances, it had become a commonly accepted practice to fix wages and salaries on the basis of an index; however, they did not actually keep pace with the devaluation of the currency. Though the price level in terms of a stable currency was also lowered, the net result was a decrease in purchasing power. On the other hand, the revival of the export trade, which might have been expected, did not materialize. The trade recession became, in fact, more serious during the period under review.

The effect of these developments on the Jewish population was not quite uniform. A few individuals with good connections, or with a particularly keen business sense, benefited, together with a handful of persons on the payrolls of foreign firms holding dollar contracts. The vast majority, however, old residents and refugees alike, suffered greatly. In addition, refugees were adversely affected by the shrinkage of their colony. Many who used to make a modest living inside the community as salesmen, shop owners, shop assistants, etc., were now unemployed.

After ten years in Shanghai, the refugees found themselves as dependent on outside help from the International Refugee Organization and Joint Distribution Committee as before. The IRO was sympathetic with their plight and, in spite of diminished resources, kept the food supply at a satisfactory level. The JDC remained the "big friend" and the messenger of American good will to whom the refugees turned in every difficulty. A total of 51.7 per cent were receiving a small cash allowance and free medical care, plus IRO food parcels; 30.8 per cent received only IRO parcels, and only 17.5 per cent were self-supporting.
The housing problem was one which the refugees could not solve without large-scale assistance from the JDC. During the period under review, four of the five former camps had to be returned to their Chinese owners. Nevertheless, the percentage of refugees living in JDC-rented houses increased from 26.2 per cent at the beginning of 1947 to 37.6 per cent at the end of April 1948. Temporarily at least, the displaced persons were now generally better housed than before, although living conditions were still very much sub-standard.

Communal and Cultural Life

Though suffering from a frustrated desire for immigration, economic difficulties, and political insecurity, refugees still maintained a vigorous communal life. The Jüdische Gemeinde, deprived of two thirds of its membership, was more than ever dependent on JDC support for the discharge of its religious obligations. Regular services were held for both the Orthodox and the Reform groups, the latter commanding an average attendance of 200 to 300 worshipers. All Zionist organizations remained very active notwithstanding their limited earning powers, the refugees contributing about 15 per cent of the total amount raised in two drives for Palestine, one for the Karen Hayesod and one for defense. Funds had already been provided for 8,000 trees, to be planted on Palestine’s soil in commemoration of the Hongkow dead. Both the United Nations partition decision and the declaration of the Jewish state were celebrated by huge crowds; the younger people, especially, hoped that emigration to Palestine would soon be possible on a larger scale.

The JDC-sponsored community center continued to offer sport and social facilities for the remaining youth. Lectures were still regularly given, but theatrical activities came to a standstill with the departure of most of the professional actors. Their place was partly filled by amateurs who were able to perform in the English language, an innovation for Hongkow. The only refugee daily newspaper struggled along, devoting most of its space to Palestine news.
THE RUSSIAN AND THE SEPHARDIC COMMUNITIES

In the past year, USSR for the first time offered fugitives and their descendants the privilege of registering for citizenship, and many eagerly seized this opportunity in order to be free of the blight of statelessness. Those who did so were later repatriated if they desired. From May to December 1947 three evacuation trains left Shanghai and about 6,000 persons of Russian descent, of whom 800 were Jews, were believed to have returned to the land which many of them were to see for the first time.

But even the Jewish members of this group, whose economic base was firmer than that of the more recent refugees, were desirous of emigrating, chiefly because of their political insecurity. Most of those who returned to Russia belonged to the poorer elements, with a sprinkling of intellectuals and white collar workers who saw no way of utilizing their training and their talents in this city.

Nevertheless, the internal life of this community of no more than 2,500 people actually showed a healthy growth. Social services for the aged, the indigent, and the sick were extended. The Shanghai Jewish Club, center of social life, was enlarged; the Brith Trumpeldor Youth Organization and Jewish Women's Association showed activity. There were two bi-weekly Russian-English magazines, Our Life (General Zionist) and Tagar (Revisionist). In elections held in March, 1948, for the board of the Ashkenazi Communal Association, the Zionist parties won most of the seats, with the Revisionists in the lead.

The famous old Sephardic community lost some of its important families, and some of its most prominent members transferred their activities to Hongkong. Most of them were Iraqi citizens with relatives in Bagdad, and had to disavow Zionism publicly.

OTHER FAR EASTERN COMMUNITIES

Of the smaller Jewish communities, the Tientsin community of some two hundred Jews seemed reasonably well off and were
most responsive to the various Zionist drives. They formed a closely knit unit, maintaining their own club, known as *Kunst*. There were smaller Jewish groups in Hankow, Peking and Tsingtao. Mukden, in the war zone, had been practically deserted by its Jewish inhabitants. According to sporadic news reports from Harbin, the Jews left in that city, though deprived of their businesses and possessions, were unharmed during recent events.

There were practically no Jews remaining in Kobe, Japan, which had a small but fairly active community before the war. The Jews of Manila, in the Philippines, suffered terribly during the war, co-operated during the American reoccupation campaign, and now enjoyed full citizenship and received fair treatment.

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**DISPLACED PERSONS**

*By Abraham S. Hyman*

**For the Jewish displaced persons** the first year of their liberation (1945–1946) was a period of physical recovery and of frantic search for family; the second (1946–1947) saw their numbers greatly augmented as a result of the mass flight from Poland and witnessed the crystallization of the DP pattern of life; the third (1947–1948) saw a stabilization of their numbers and brought them some hope of an early end to their homelessness.

**Rumanian Influx**

In the spring of 1947, when it appeared that the number of the Jewish displaced persons had reached its peak, a mass