

Resettlement, Rehabilitation
and Aid For European Trade
Unionists and Liberals
1947-51

**RESETTLEMENT, REHABILITATION AND AID
FOR EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONISTS AND LIBERALS**

MEMORANDUM
on the
INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

62 West 45 Street
New York 19, N.Y.
Murray Hill 2-4672

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE, IRC

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The International Rescue Committee is dedicated to the belief that the perpetuation of the values of our civilization is dependent upon the freedom of the human mind. In consonance with this belief, the IRC has traditionally given its aid to those who have suffered because of their opposition to totalitarianism and whose contributions to mankind's cultural heritage and to the continuing struggle for freedom endow them with an importance transcending the immediate personal.

The Statement of Purpose of the International Rescue Committee reads as follows:

- (1) To provide material aid, and arrange resettlement and rehabilitation for those who because of their devotion to democratic principle and their opposition to all forms of totalitarianism are destitute, ill, or in danger.
- (2) To administer such relief and assistance within the framework of the very broad criterion of anti-totalitarianism (i.e., consistent opposition to Nazism, Fascism, Communism) without regard to race, nationality, religion, and without discrimination or preference between the numerous legitimate varieties of democratic views.
- (3) To direct public attention to the plight of all such oppressed and imperiled people.

All of IRC's activities ultimately derive from and are guided by this central Statement of Purpose; and in this sense they are all parts of a whole.

IRC's two most important activities at the present time are the Resettlement Campaign for Exiled Professionals headed by Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Iron Curtain Refugee Campaign whose chairman is General Carl Spaatz. These two campaigns are the natural complements each of the other. The purpose of the Iron Curtain Refugee Campaign is to give emergency aid in the form of food, clothing, cash grants, counselling, placement, and evacuation to places of safety, to those who have succeeded in escaping from behind the Iron Curtain. The Resettlement Campaign for Exiled Professionals has as its specific purpose the resettlement in this country of some 2,000 of the most distinguished refugees whose careers have been disrupted as a result of World War II and its aftermath. The Resettlement Campaign, in short, is the logical termination of the program of assistance initiated through the Iron Curtain Refugee Campaign; while the Iron Curtain Refugee Campaign automatically effects the process of qualitative selection essential to the success of the Resettlement Campaign.

Because of its pioneer work in aid to those special categories mentioned in its Statement of Purpose, the International Rescue Committee has today become the central coordinator of various related efforts. It has incorporated the American Committee for Emigre Scholars, Writers and Artists, which is now in charge of professional placements; it is the representative in this country of the Fighting Group Against Inhumanity (Kampfgruppe gegen Unmenschlichkeit); it is the chief agency through which the Fund for Intellectual Freedom operates its program of aid to refugee writers.

Resettlement and Rehabilitation

The International Rescue Committee is the principal non-sectarian agency that has been active in the DP field from the very inception of the DP immigration program.

Committed programatically to relief to victims of oppression and, primarily, to those who were active opponents of totalitarianism, its activities have always been oriented towards the ranks of the labor opposition to Nazism, Fascism and Communism.

The reasons for this are manifold. The two most important are: (1) that the democratic labor movement has been most conspicuous in the underground movements from Spain to the Soviet Union; (2) that the political structure of most of the countries in central and East Europe does not permit the labor and liberal groups to turn for help to sectarian agencies.

Under these conditions, those of the displaced persons and refugees, whether Spanish, German and Austrian - or Polish, Baltic or Hungarian, who found themselves faced with the need of effective help have turned to our Committee.

They were given a sympathetic hearing since our program is selective and not a mass operation.

Aid to Anti-Nazi Persecutees

Those who for their active participation in the resistance movement were imprisoned by the Nazi regime, were the first to be helped. The voluntary Emergency Rescue Committee and the International Refugee Association undertook to marshal support and make arrangements -- in close cooperation with the New School for Social Research, the Museum of Modern Art, the American Federation of Labor, the American Committee for Christian Refugees and others -- for successful evacuation of 2,500

leading exponents of Western culture to Portugal, North Africa and other embarkation points for freedom. Later the Emergency Rescue Committee and the International Refugee Association combined to form the International Rescue Committee.

Among the initiators and sponsors of this movement were Charles A. Beard, Elmer Davis, John Dewey, Lewis Gannett, Harry Gidsonse, John Haynes Holmes, William Allan Neilson, John Dos Passos, Dorothy Thompson, Oswald Garrison Villard and William Allen White.

The best known personages among the rescued included such famed writers as Franz Werfel, Konrad Heiden, Nicola Chiaromonte, Hans Habs, Jean Malaquais and Joseph Wittlin; artists on the order of Marc Chagall, Andre Masson and Jacques Lipchitz; Wanda Landowska, the great harpichordist; Jacques Hadamard, the distinguished mathematician; Alfredo Mendisabel, the philosopher; Frits Kahn, physician and anthropologist; Ernestine Freud, the speech therapist, to cite but a few of thousands whose lives and careers were sustained through timely intervention of private American assistance.

Over the first five post-war years, close to three hundred former concentration camp inmates of German and Austrian origin were resettled in the Western Hemisphere. Several dozens of them who, as political refugees, survived the war in hiding in France, Belgium or other countries, were helped in establishing new existences in these countries if they chose not to return to their home countries.

Approximately 500 others finally, were taken to Switzerland for medical rehabilitation. Those affected with tuberculosis as a result of their stays in prisons and concentration camps were placed in Swiss sanatoria. Those not affected with contagious diseases were taken to our rest home in Adelboden for stays varying from four weeks to four months. In the summer of 1950, this home was converted to a home for children of victims of Communist persecution.

Italian Children's Home

A similar children's home is being operated in Italy. Since 1950 it is under the auspices of the Italian-American Labor Council.

The relief and medical program to German and Austrian anti-Nazi persecutees was made possible by grants from the Reparations Fund of the International Refugee Organization. These funds, unfortunately, have been exhausted.

Spanish Republican Relief Program

The International Rescue Committee has a consistent record of giving much needed aid to liberal elements among refugees. Included in this category are the tragically ignored group of Spanish Republican deportees in France. Of all those who, in our generation, have taken up the struggle against totalitarianism, these Spanish Republicans are the most neglected. Today they are in a real sense the forgotten people of Europe. Yet these Spaniards were among the earliest to defend democracy in a war against Fascist military intervention. But since their flight from Spain, their story has been one of extreme misery and bitter exile.

Among those Spanish Republicans who survived prison camps as anti-fascists in a Nazi-dominated country during the war, many are tubercular, some are blind, others have single or multiple amputations from the Spanish Civil War. Their plight has been made more pitiful by over-crowded living conditions, undernourishment and the severe restrictions of French laws on foreign labor. There are those who are unable to work under any conditions, such as the old, the mutilated and the chronically ill.

Many of these deportees continued to fight fascism with the French resistance and are uncompromisingly anti-Communist as well. The aspect of their courageous faith in human liberties is not generally known to the

-4-

American public. The Spanish Republican representatives with whom IRC has always dealt are men like Pablo Casals and Indalecio Prieto, whose opposition to all forms of totalitarianism is a matter of record.

While it is true that there are Communist groups among the Spanish exiles, thousands of them have resisted this type of ~~program~~ in spite of the promises of food, clothing and care which are offered as bait by the Communist Party. The great tragedy is that, although these anti-Communist Spanish Republicans have refused aid from Communist sources, they do not receive the same degree of organized encouragement and support from the Western world.

The chief group which has taken an active interest in this situation is the IRC. With its special concern for political refugees, IRC was the main American agency to receive and disburse International Refugee Organization (UN) funds for the Spanish deportees over a period of four years. As none of these funds were used for overhead or administration, the IRC spent approximately \$25,000.00 each year from its own funds to maintain this relief project, and employed 10 case workers in France for this purpose. In addition to this, IRC has raised over \$40,000.00 in funds and supplies for these refugees to provide food and clothing, hospitalisation and medication, agricultural and industrial training or retraining, and was able to provide numerous prosthetic appliances which enabled amputees to become self-supporting.

In July, 1950, the IRO (UN) terminated its relief program and has no longer been a source of funds. The French Government has continued aid to the Spanish Republicans on a basis which cannot compare with the yearly contributions from the IRO (UN), which allocated over \$420,000.00 to IRC in 1949, the last full year of their relief program for Spanish Republicans.

The IRC has tried to share financial responsibility for at least the most needy cases. However, it is extremely difficult to arouse popular interest in the United States for the all but forgotten Spanish Republicans. Their plight no longer carries a dramatic appeal. They have simply maintained their allegiance to freedom and democracy in the face of conflicting pressures, both in the active war years and in patient exile.

Traditionally, the American trade unions are the only organized groups which can be expected to be interested in this problem.

Iron Curtain Refugees

The more recent labor and liberal refugees from the countries behind the Iron Curtain presented different problems. Those who qualify for immigration to the United States have been covered by our assurances and either arrived in the United States or are due to arrive in the near future. Their total number is well in excess of 1,000.

The IRC, as an authorized voluntary agency for resettlement under the U.S. D.P. Act, handles all the immigration work for the Jewish Labor Committee. Of the men most prominent among them should be mentioned: Henryk Blaser, Israel Libermann, Arthur Mumberg, and Natan Gierowicz.

Those of other nationalities are fully dependent on us. They are referred to us by accredited representatives of the different political groups and trade unions. Of the trade unionists who have recently been aided by the International Rescue Committee the following names are worth mentioning:

Of the Baltic group:

Kipras BIELINIS, member of the Central Board of the Lithuanian Trade Union Council, Deputy of the Lithuanian Parliament.

Vincas GERVICKAS, secretary of the Union Council of Kaunas, imprisoned after the Fascist coup d'etat for seven years. Imprisoned for the second time during the Nazi occupation.

... of being ...
... in ...
... these ...
... will ...

Karoly MUDRIS, chairman of the Central Board of Lithuanian Workers Union in exile

Of the Czech group:

Jan STORA, regional secretary of the Czechoslovak Trade Union Federation in Klackov Znojmo and Jihlava, member of the Central Committee;

Joseph DYORAK, organizer of the White Collar Union of Czechoslovakias; ~~Bohuslav KOHOUT~~, board member of the bookbinder's union;

Josef KONG, member of the executive board of the Postal Workers Union; Arno HALS, general secretary of the Czechoslovak Trade Union Federation until 1939 (resettled in Canada)

Of the Polish group:

Mathew STACHIV, the chairman of the Ukrainian Trade Union Center in Poland

Danek-J KORZETIAK, youth secretary of the Trade Union Center; Vladislav BROM, officer of the Metal Workers Union, former co-convenor of the metal workers' trade union camp inmates;

Kieczyслав KUK-ROSTAWSKI, contributor to trade union papers. Of the Hungarian group, finally, three names may suffice:

Karol PETER, the dean of the Hungarian Labor Movement. Eugeno GORDA, a well known labor journalist, and James GARD, ex-member of Parliament for the Social Democratic Party.

Of the scores of trade unions that have been organized in the United States, some are active in the work of the Free Trade Union International, e.g.:

- Mr. Sancha Vollmann, the ~~representative~~ representative of the Romanian Trade Union Center in exile;
- Mr. Zivko Topolovic, the chairman of the Yugoslav Trade Union Federation;
- Mr. Leopold Maczula, member of the Polish Trade Union Executive in exile.

There is, however, the group of new refugees who did not come to the United States or Canada. Many of them have reached countries of Western Europe, but few of them are able to establish themselves there. Even more pressing are the needs of those who managed to escape to the West after January 1, 1949, and especially those who came after October 1950, the IRO registration dateline. These individuals turn to our offices with requests ranging from immediate relief (parcels and funds), flight transportation from Vienna and Berlin to the West of Germany and Austria, to at least provisional settlement in France, England, Sweden or any other country which is willing to accept them. At the same time the emigration action from these countries to the United States continues for those whose quota turns are reached under regular immigration or who arrived in these countries before January 1, 1949, and are not firmly resettled.

RELIEF DISTRIBUTED THROUGH ARBEITER WOHLFAHRT

The aid which the International Rescue Committee now distributes in Western Germany and in West Berlin is given out through Arbeiter Wohlfahrt, the relief arm of the German Trade Union movement. IRC played the leading role in the early accreditation by the U.S. Military Government of Arbeiter Wohlfahrt as a recognized receiving agency within GRALOC, The Council of Relief Agencies Licensed for Operation in Germany. At the time of GRALOC's formation, a member of the IRC, who is on our Board of Directors, acted as special liaison officer in this effort. Through the offices of the IRC in Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Ludwigsdorf, and Bremen, the total 1950 cash disbursements were \$31,955,449. Approximately 6,000 persons were provided with relief and counseling, and the following relief was distributed through Arbeiter Wohlfahrt:

- 12,850 lbs. clothing
- 5,630 pairs shoes
- 4,265 books
- 1,510 GABE food packages

In addition, bulk food shipments were sent to West Berlin, in close cooperation with Mayor Ernst Reuter, to offset the unemployment crisis last spring and the anticipated mass invasion of communist indoctrinated youths from the Soviet section. These shipments consisted of the following:

- 2,592,500 lbs. powdered milk (U.S. Gov't surplus)
- 613,448 lbs. powdered eggs (U.S. Gov't surplus)
- 375,450 lbs. butter (U.S. Gov't surplus)
- 277,915 lbs. cheese (U.S. Gov't surplus)
- 364,037 lbs. baby foods and cereals
- 307,931 lbs. rolled oats
- 40,800 lbs. meat and vegetables - canned

The total value of these food shipments was \$959,977.36. They were distributed as follows:

- to 50,000 children and
- 118,500 adults

In addition a thirty day supply of these various foods were given to five Berlin hospitals designated by Arbeiter Wohlfahrt, as well as to old-age homes, youth hostels and camps under Arbeiter Wohlfahrt sponsorship.

REPUBLICA ESPAÑOLA



PRESIDENCIA DEL CONSEJO DE MINISTROS

Paris, February 25th, 1947

Miss Sheba Strunsky
Secretary to the
International Rescue Committee
Paris

Dear Miss Strunsky,

The help given to the Spanish refugees by the organisation you represent has been most meritorious. I have been able to follow it step by step and I know very well how many miseries and sufferings have been relieved by its generous and active solidarity.

As a Spanish refugee, I had been very grateful to the International Rescue Committee. To-day, as Prime Minister of the Spanish Republic, I am very glad to reiterate my gratitude. I hope that the Committee will continue to urge the American people not to cease their help to the Spaniards now in exile because of the grave offence of having maintained their allegiance to the democratic ideals.

Yours sincerely

Adolfo López
Premier