

The Anglo-American Displaced Persons Program for Germany and Austria

By MALCOLM J. PROUDFOOT

I

The Problem and Initial Planning

THE NAZI PROGRAM for the enslavement of foreign labor took shape as the events of war made increasing demands on German manpower. The overthrow of Poland in 1939, and the conquest of the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Yugoslavia, Greece, Denmark, Norway and portions of the Soviet Union during the years that followed, opened rich sources of foreign labor powerless to resist Nazi-German exploitation. Hundreds of thousands of Jews and others considered politically undesirable were deported and made to labor until they died in concentration camps and their associated sweatshops, mines, quarries and war factories. Millions more were recruited by means of open threats, or by slightly less obvious forms of economic coercion, seldom even with the pretense of a free choice.

Through neutral press sources the broad outlines of this Nazi program were readily discernible. But it was not until the publication of E. M. Kulischer's book, "Population Displacement in Europe," in the fall of 1943, that a factual picture of the magnitude of this program was made available for public examination. However, prior to the publication of this book, extensive studies had been undertaken by the British Foreign Office and the United States Department of State and their associated governmental intelligence agencies, by independent research workers in the field of population statistics, and by officials of the French, Belgian, Netherlands, Czechoslovakian, Norwegian, Polish, Greek

and Yugoslavian governments in exile. Yet each of these agencies and individuals attempted to ascertain the facts about only a portion of the Nazi-German foreign worker program and its economic, political or military implications. Only Kulischer and a few other research workers had sought to arrive at the total number of persons by categories and by nationalities involved in this forced migration. But the experts did not agree. Estimates varied from a low of 8 million displaced persons to a high of 30 million.

In the advance planning during the winter of 1943-44 of the Anglo-American military authorities in London, it was soon realized that with the defeat of Nazi-Germany the Allied armies would be faced with a staggeringly large and internationally complex problem of repatriating millions of Europeans. It obviously was not enough to know that this huge problem existed. To draft a plan it was necessary to obtain agreement among the experts as to the magnitude of the problem. All the evidence needed to be carefully weighed. Round number conclusions, with disagreement running into the millions, did not suffice. The most exact knowledge possible of the magnitude of the problem was required so that food, clothing, medical supplies and other necessities could be requisitioned to meet the need of caring for these foreign workers and deportees from the time of their liberation until they could be repatriated. For this purpose the military authorities initiated a research program involving the full collaboration of the British Foreign Office and Ministry of Economic Warfare, and the Economic Warfare Division of the American Embassy. All available information was compared, sifted and evaluated. Use was made of highly secret intelligence, tapping continental underground sources, concerning the number of foreign workers by nationality, working at specific factories in Germany and throughout Nazi-occupied Europe. Valuable supple-

mentary information was furnished by governments in exile. Finally a detailed estimate of the number of foreign workers, deportees and other categories of displaced persons by nationality was made for each country (given in summary form in Table 1). These figures were further subdivided by estimates for regions, provinces, departments, and urban centers. These data provided the factual basis for a master plan.

The master plan for the care and repatriation of foreign workers, deportees, and other categories of displaced persons in Nazi-occupied Europe was written during the winter and spring of 1944 by L. W. Cramer (American) and M. Macdonald (British) of the Displaced Persons Branch, G-5 Division (Civil Affairs/Military Government), of SHAEF with the active collaboration of the entire staff of the Branch. This plan, known to the Anglo-American armies as "SHAEF Administrative Memorandum Number 39": (1) defined the displaced person as a civilian outside the boundaries of his country by reason of the war, and the refugee as a national within his own country, temporarily homeless or at some distance from his home also by reason of the war; (2) placed full responsibility for the care and eventual repatriation of displaced persons on the military commanders in the field; (3) specified the rearward progression of displaced persons from collecting points, to transit centers, to assembly centers behind the fighting front; (4) made a basic distinction between the care to be provided for displaced United Nations nationals, and that to be given enemy nationals; (5) established a system of individual identification and registration, with instructions in 19 languages, for the control of displaced persons and for the issuance of their repatriation visas; (6) defined the functions and responsibilities of Allied Repatriation Officers; and (7) clarified

military responsibility for requisitioning supplies, billets, and transportation for displaced persons.

TABLE I.—ESTIMATED DISPLACED EUROPEAN POPULATION, MAY 1944
A. Summary by Countries

Country	Displaced nationals from	Displaced nationals within
Belgium	719,000	143,000
Bulgaria	205,000	25,000
Czechoslovakia	451,000	361,000
Denmark	62,000	16,000
France	2,393,000	652,000
Germany & Austria	1,396,000	7,738,000
Greece	117,000	111,000
Hungary	82,000	68,000
Italy	278,000	129,000
Luxembourg	32,000	35,000
Netherlands	664,000	33,000
Norway	68,000	78,000
Poland	1,489,000	1,452,000
Rumania	345,000	42,000
Soviet Union	2,086,000	226,000
Yugoslavia	492,000	128,000
Other Countries	590,000	132,000
TOTALS	11,469,000	11,469,000

B. Summary for Germany and Austria

Nationality	Total
Baltic States	100,000
Belgian	559,000 ¹
Bulgarian	25,000
Czechoslovakia	350,000 ¹
Danish	45,000
French	2,320,000 ¹
German (In Austria)	40,000
Greek	12,000
Hungarian	65,000
Italian	195,000 ²
Luxembourg	30,000
Netherlands	402,000 ¹

B. Summary for Germany and Austria

Nationality	Total
Norwegian	10,000
Polish	1,403,000 ³
Rumanian	14,000
Soviet	1,840,000 ⁴
Yugoslav	328,000
TOTAL	7,738,000

¹ It is interesting to compare these estimates with the accurate totals given in Table II. These estimates were given by the governments in exile, and, by their own admission after the War, had been inflated to mislead the Nazis in their recruiting program.

² This estimate proved to be low, but may have been accurate at the time since the main recruiting drive by the Nazis for Italians did not begin until the fall of 1944.

³ Estimates made by the London Polish Government in exile ranged from 2 to 5 millions. The highest estimate may have been correct since it is not known how many Poles were repatriated from the Soviet Area of Germany.

⁴ This estimate proved low, but no estimate was ever furnished by the Soviet Government.

Concurrent with the drafting of the plan, its essentials were implemented. Informal working arrangements for the selection, training and assignment of Allied Repatriation Officers were made with the French, Belgian, Netherlands, Norwegian, Czechoslovak, Polish, Greek and Yugoslavian governments in exile and with the Soviet Embassy, and the training program, eventually involving several thousand officers, was begun. Lectures were given to a thousand or more Anglo-American Civil Affairs/Military Government officers to acquaint them with the plan. Tons of identification and registration cards and instruction were printed and initial distributions were made. Location lists of concentration camps were prepared and distributed. Estimates of available German housing, based on bomb-damage survey material, were made, with particular reference to large public buildings. Special maps were prepared by the Office of Strategic Services, showing the location of cities, towns, worker's camps and concentration camps; international and other

political boundaries; and roads, river bridge crossings and railway lines. Supply estimates were made and integrated into the overall supply program being requisitioned to meet the Civil Affairs/Military Government requirements for civilians. Feverish preparations marked these seven months prior to D-Day, preparations which proved timely and essentially adequate.

II

Operations During Combat

WITH THE LANDINGS in Normandy the problem of caring for displaced persons increased initially from a few thousand fortification construction workers to approximately 50,000 persons by the fall of 1944 when the front stabilized to include most of France and Belgium and a southern portion of the Netherlands. The problem of displaced persons was completely overshadowed by welfare work required for more than one million French, Belgian, and Netherland refugees, tens of thousands of whom were homeless or separated by considerable distance from their homes. By caring for numerous refugees and not a few displaced persons, the Anglo-American armies became conscious of the reality of the hundred-fold larger displaced persons problem ahead in Germany, and hundreds of officers and thousands of soldiers became expert in varying degrees in the essential tasks of mass feeding, housing, sanitation, medical care, transportation and the other operations involved. The outstanding value of Allied Repatriation Officers to the program became apparent to the entire command. It was repeatedly demonstrated that one such officer, of the nationality represented by a group of displaced persons, could perform minor miracles in their control by quickly ascertaining immediate welfare, feeding, housing, clothing and medical needs, and by arranging with Civil Affairs Officers or local civil authorities

for the immediate remedial action. A hundred or more Civil Affairs Officers became expert in the care of displaced persons. Several dozen French welfare teams of from 5 to 8 women each, attached to Army and Corps headquarters, performed heroic welfare tasks, frequently under shell fire. This experienced personnel formed an invaluable nucleus of skilled workers, and this assistance undoubtedly accounted in large measure for the success of the future operations.

During the winter of 1944-45, some 60,000 liberated displaced persons were moved from forward combat areas to assembly centers in the interior of France and in the western and southern portions of Belgium. These movements were largely by train, utilizing boxcars insulated from the cold by straw. Army "K" and "C" rations were fed enroute. Stopovers for warm food and first-aid were made. Each train crew was supplemented by a Civil Affairs Officer, an Allied Repatriation Officer, a nurse or doctor, and a few soldier-guards. Destinations usually were prearranged in cities where barracks, schools, or other large public buildings, suitable for mass feeding and housing, were available. Movements in many instances were decidedly not without confusion or incidents of personal hardship. Difficulties resulted from poor or non-operative telephone connections, changes in train schedules due to the breakdown of locomotives and rolling stock, and through misunderstandings inherent in language differences. Fortunately these displaced persons were a robust lot, reasonably well nourished and clothed, and possessed of a happy and co-operative spirit resulting from their recent liberation.

In terms of nationality, three fifths of the displaced persons moved to rearward areas and cared for during the winter of 1944-45 were Soviet citizens. The remainder consisted of Poles, Czechs, Yugoslavs, and a few hundred each of approximately ten other nationalities. As for the

few thousands of Belgians liberated in France and Frenchmen uncovered in Belgium, for the most part they repatriated themselves with but scant assistance from the military and civil authorities. Little is known concerning the magnitude of this essentially independent movement.

III

The Initial Rôle of UNRRA

DURING THE PLANNING STAGE, while SHAEF was located in London, the potential importance of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to the displaced persons program was fully recognized by the Military authorities. During November, 1944, a working agreement in broad general terms was entered into between the Supreme Commander and the Governor General of UNRRA. This agreement permitted the integration of UNRRA personnel with the staff of the Displaced Persons Branch of SHAEF, and joint planning was undertaken at once. It cleared the way for an UNRRA program for recruiting, training and equipping welfare teams to care for displaced persons in assembly centers and to provide UNRRA administrative staff for Army Group and Army headquarters.

Integrating UNRRA civilian personnel into all levels of the army during active combat raised many serious objections from the standpoint of over-taxed military facilities and questions of military security. Opposition developed from those who considered the displaced persons program a postwar problem. Who could argue that winning the war did not come first? However understandable this opposition may have been, it caused a number of vexatious delays in perfecting required administrative arrangements. Nevertheless, one by one, these problems were solved. Opposition was overcome by farsighted leadership at the command level. It was clearly seen that unless action was taken at once, un-

few thousands of Belgians liberated in France and Frenchmen uncovered in Belgium, for the most part they repatriated themselves with but scant assistance from the military and civil authorities. Little is known concerning the magnitude of this essentially independent movement.

III

The Initial Rôle of UNRRA

DURING THE PLANNING STAGE, while SHAEF was located in London, the potential importance of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration to the displaced persons program was fully recognized by the Military authorities. During November, 1944, a working agreement in broad general terms was entered into between the Supreme Commander and the Governor General of UNRRA. This agreement permitted the integration of UNRRA personnel with the staff of the Displaced Persons Branch of SHAEF, and joint planning was undertaken at once. It cleared the way for an UNRRA program for recruiting, training and equipping welfare teams to care for displaced persons in assembly centers and to provide UNRRA administrative staff for Army Group and Army headquarters.

Integrating UNRRA civilian personnel into all levels of the army during active combat raised many serious objections from the standpoint of over-taxed military facilities and questions of military security. Opposition developed from those who considered the displaced persons program a postwar problem. Who could argue that winning the war did not come first? However understandable this opposition may have been, it caused a number of vexatious delays in perfecting required administrative arrangements. Nevertheless, one by one, these problems were solved. Opposition was overcome by farsighted leadership at the command level. It was clearly seen that unless action was taken at once, un-

less the green light was given UNRRA to recruit, train and assign personnel, no orderly transition could be hoped for when that agency assumed responsibility. Administrative orders were written and approved, providing UNRRA with vehicles, UNRRA personnel with army clothing, Post Exchange supplies, army food stocks, billets, gasoline and lubricants, and the privilege of using Army Finance Offices and Army Post Offices.

UNRRA staff officers at SHAEF, in co-operation with the UNRRA European Regional Office in London, and under the close supervision of the military authorities, began an extensive recruiting program drawing on personnel from the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Belgium and the Netherlands. Recruiting well qualified personnel was most difficult during the winter and spring of 1944. In the United States and in the United Kingdom the labor market was subject to stringent wartime controls. In France, Belgium and the Netherlands the labor market was in a state of utter confusion resulting from the psychological effect of recent liberation, and it proved a well-nigh insuperable difficulty to check the reliability of individual work records.

In spite of these difficulties, but not without confusion, frequent replacements of key personnel, delays in the shipment of supplies, and other forms of lost motion, a real start was made with the establishment during March 1945 of an UNRRA Mobilization and Training Center at Granville, France, with facilities for 1,000 trainees, although this project was almost abandoned at birth due to a German Commando raid from the Channel islands which damaged the premises and resulted in the capture of an UNRRA official. Here, at Granville, under general administrative supervision by the Army, reconditioned trucks from the United Kingdom, Anglo-American army supplies, and newly recruited UNRRA personnel began to arrive. In a few weeks the first

assembly center "Spearhead" teams, of 8 members each, were on their way to displaced persons assembly centers immediately behind the fighting front.

IV

Mass Repatriation

WITH THE OPENING of the Anglo-American offensive late in February 1945, the German Army changed its policy toward displaced persons. Instead of evacuating them behind its lines, it adopted the tactic of pushing them forward as a device to embarrass the Allied advance. The responsibility of the Anglo-American armies for the care of displaced persons increased at a highly accelerated rate. The numbers expanded from 60,000 in February to 200,000 in March.

Under existing working arrangements with SHAEF, the French and Belgian civil authorities were responsible to the maximum extent possible for the care of displaced persons liberated within their respective countries. However, as Germany was penetrated and an increasing number of displaced persons were evacuated from Germany to France and Belgium for purely military reasons, this arrangement required modification. SHAEF assumed full responsibility for the care of this new flood of displaced persons. Civil Affairs Officers by the hundreds and service troops by the thousands were pressed into service. By the beginning of April the real flood of displaced persons began, and, with the rapid advance during April and the final collapse of the German armies in May, the entire displaced persons problem with all of its immediate urgent human problems fell squarely into the lap of the Anglo-American armies. It was an act of Providence that the cold of winter had given place to the warmth of spring and early summer.

Already in April the astonishing capacity and mobility of the Anglo-American armies was manifest. There was no de-

lay and no formality in the rapidity with which displaced persons were moved. Empty supply trucks by the thousands were loaded with displaced persons near the front and transported rearward to railheads. Here empty returning supply trains were loaded to capacity with Frenchmen, Belgians, Netherlanders and other Western Europeans. Hundreds and even thousands of airplanes, after bringing supplies of gasoline, food and munitions to the combat troops, were similarly loaded for the return journey.

The rapidity with which Frenchmen, Belgians, and Netherlanders were repatriated will become a Saga of World War II. In three short months nearly 1,500,000 Frenchmen, 250,000 Belgians, 250,000 Netherlanders and thousands of Danes and Norwegians were returned to their homelands. For a portion of this three months' period over 20,000 Frenchmen were repatriated daily by train alone, and for several days the total was over 30,000. Repatriation by truck accounted for thousands more. Airplanes repatriated upwards of 150,000 Frenchmen and reached peak days of 30,000 or more. Belgians and Netherlanders, though smaller in total number, were repatriated by the same means with comparable rapidity. Every unit of the Anglo-American army co-operated either directly or indirectly in this mass movement. Western Europeans saw the way open to return to their homeland and their families. Officers and men of the Army realized their responsibility and knew that every man, woman and child repatriated was one less to care for and feed. Home governmental authorities readily changed their requirements, allowed their nationals to return without visas and screened them for nationality after repatriation. All realized the precious advantage of the summer months and all co-operated unremittingly to complete the job before winter. But the Western Europeans represented only 40 per cent of the total problem. The other 60 per cent—

Russians, Poles, Italians, Balts, Czechs, Yugoslavs, Greeks, Hungarians and Rumanians—could not be repatriated with such dispatch.

Displaced Eastern Europeans and Italians required immediate care and were accommodated in mass housing units in some 800 big and little assembly centers throughout the SHAEF Area of Germany and Austria. Fortunately German food dumps and depots were plentiful. Initially these displaced persons were fed almost entirely from this source. Clothing and shoes were no problem during the summer. Improvised shelter, often in bombed buildings with no windows and with leaky roofs, presented no acute hardship. Displaced persons by the millions were dusted with DDT powder, thousands were given medical treatment, and epidemic diseases were kept in check.

By far the worst problem was presented by the displaced persecutees found in concentration camps. Such camps as Dachau, Belsen, Mauthausen, Gusen, Ebensee, and Buchenwald were heart-rending sights, and contained health problems that beggared description. Over 300,000 concentration camp inmates were found alive and the majority required immediate medical attention. Typhus, diphtheria, dysentery, tuberculosis, and thousands of advanced cases of starvation required careful treatment. Inmates were confined for absolutely essential quarantine and to save them from the fatal consequences of premature consumption of normal foods. Probably hundreds died in the first days of their liberation through eating chocolate bars and other rich foods given them by unthinking but kindly intentioned combat troops. Hospital trains, ambulances and planes repatriated thousands of concentration camp inmates to their Western European homelands, but tens of thousands more for reasons of their health or because transport facilities were not open to Eastern Europe, remained for several months in these

places. This fact subjected the Anglo-American military authorities to much unjustified criticism. It suffices to say that considering the conditions in these concentration camps, conditions amply described in the press, they were cleaned and rendered fit for habitation, aside from their heavy psychological stigma, in a matter of days or at most in a few weeks. German civilians from neighboring towns and German prisoners of war were requisitioned to clean the premises, bury the dead in decent marked graves, and burn the pestilential barracks. Complete army hospital units were quickly moved onto the premises, and the slow process of rehabilitation began. The healthy and essentially vigorous inmates were either repatriated or moved to assembly centers away from the concentration camps. Mistakes were made, some criticism undoubtedly was justified as a result of the action or inaction of inexperienced personnel. But when consideration is given to the magnitude of the problem, the fact that it had never before been faced by American or British armies, the rapidity of its solution, resulting in the saving of thousands of lives through timely and heroic efforts, the job done is deserving of unqualified praise.

During May, 1945, a meeting was arranged in Halle, Germany, between the American, British and Soviet authorities with a view to reaching an agreement regarding the repatriation of Soviet citizens from the SHAEF Area, and of displaced Western Europeans and former prisoners of war from the Soviet Area. After protracted negotiations, agreement was reached and a plan was drawn. Reception-delivery points were established on both sides of the boundary between the Soviet and SHAEF Areas. Within a few weeks a two-way movement across the demarcation line was in full swing. Rail and air transport were both used to the fullest possible extent. Aircraft on their eastward flight carried Soviet citizens from France, Belgium and Western Germany

in numbers upwards of 100,000 and on their westward flight brought back a proportional number of displaced Western Europeans and liberated Allied prisoners of war. This movement continued at a rapid rate during June, July and August. By the end of August 2,000,000 Soviet citizens had been returned and 454,000 Western European displaced persons and prisoners of war had been repatriated.

Coincidental with this mass return movement of Soviet citizens, arrangements were made in June with the Allied Force Headquarters (AFHQ) in Italy for the daily repatriation of 3,000 Italians through the Brenner Pass, and for further repatriation movements of Italians through Switzerland, both from Southern Germany and from France. At the same time provision was made for the northward movement of German prisoners of war, German civilians, and relatively small numbers of Eastern and Western Europeans. Their movements were carried off more or less on schedule, with some stoppage for the repair of bridges along the rail routes. By the middle of September 580,000 Italians had been repatriated, leaving only a few thousand in Germany and Austria. The repatriation of some 135,000 Czechs was essentially completed with a minimum of formal arrangements by the end of September. Czech movements were, for the most part, through Pilsen from the west, and through Budweis from Austria to the south. During July train movements were arranged with the Yugoslav Government for the repatriation of Yugoslavs across the Austrian-Yugoslav border just north of Jesenice. By the end of September this movement had been completed, all but for a few thousand persons of doubtful nationality or doubtful loyalty to the Yugoslav Government, and a total of 200,000 Yugoslavs had been repatriated. During September arrangements were made and carried out for the repatriation of some 10,000 Greeks by air to Athens, although in addition a thousand or

more Greeks were repatriated via the Brenner Pass, overland through Italy, and by small coastal vessels to their homeland. The end of the summer months saw the completion of the work of repatriating all remaining French, Belgians, Netherlands, Danes and Norwegians who desired to return and whose nationality was not in doubt, and a start was made on the problem of repatriating Poles, Rumanians and Hungarians, and Germans from Austria. By the end of September the period of mass repatriation was over. The displaced persons program of the Anglo-American armies entered the static phase; a phase with different, but equally difficult problems.

V

The Static Phase

AT THE BEGINNING of the static phase during October, 1945, the balance sheet of the Anglo-American displaced persons program stood as indicated in Table II. It is at once apparent from this table that Polish nationals represented the major remaining repatriation problem, followed by considerations involving the repatriation of Balts, Yugoslavs, and ex-enemy Hungarians and Rumanian nationals.

The repatriation of Poles presented many difficult problems. Opinion among these people as to whether they wished to return to their homeland varied from day to day, depending on the latest whispered rumor of conditions at home. In general 75 per cent expressed the desire to return. Certainly the Anglo-American military authorities were more than willing, yes, even anxious, to arrange for their repatriation, but many real obstacles stood in the way. Initially, during the summer, railroad facilities through the Soviet area to Poland were burdened to capacity by the homeward movement of 2,000,000 Soviet citizens. During September and October Soviet Repatriation Officers combed the British, United States and French areas looking for such of

TABLE II.—THE DISPLACED PERSONS SITUATION IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA,
OCTOBER 1, 1945

Nationality	Requiring repatriation	Repatriation doubtful	Repatriated
Belgium and Luxembourg	a few	..	298,000
Bulgarian . . . . .	..	..	2,000
Czechoslovak . . . . .	..	3,000	135,000
Danish . . . . .	..	..	5,000
Estonian . . . . .	..	21,000	..
French	a few	..	1,512,000
German (in Austria)	112,000	..	51,000
Greek	2,000	..	12,000
Hungarian	150,000	..	16,000
Italian	10,000	..	186,000
Jew . . . . .	..	25,000	..
Latvian . . . . .	..	61,000	1,000
Lithuanian . . . . .	..	47,000	..
Netherlands	a few	..	274,000
Norwegian . . . . .	..	..	6,000
Polish	630,000 ¹	207,000	94,000
Rumanian	10,000	..	5,000
Soviet . . . . .	..	..	2,034,000
"White" Russian . . . . .	..	32,000 ²	..
Yugoslav . . . . .	..	25,000	204,000
Others and Unclassified . . . . .	..	147,000	24,000
TOTAL	914,000	568,000	5,259,000
GRAND TOTAL PROCESSED	..	6,741,000	..

¹ Based on the assumption that 75 per cent do and 25 per cent do not desire to be repatriated.

² Includes White Russians, self-styled Ukrainians, and Kalmuks.

their nationals as might still require repatriation. During these two precious months of the waning summer the Soviet authorities were unwilling, until they were certain none of their nationals remained behind, to make arrangements for the repatriation of Poles, although the movement of their nationals had dwindled to a trickle and apparently existing facilities could have accommodated tens of thousands of Poles. Fortunately, through the co-operation of the Czecho-

slovakian Government, a small beginning was made in October for the repatriation of from three to four thousand Poles on a daily basis, via Pilsen, Prague to the Katowice area. In general the real shortage of railroad rolling stock in all Zones of Germany had an adverse effect on the repatriation of Poles. There was extreme reluctance on the part of all concerned to commit their rolling stock on long rail journeys which inevitably involved delayed turn-arounds. Particularly locomotives and coaches which could be heated were at a premium. The beginning of cold November weather ruled out the use of straw-lined box cars for eastward journeys to interior areas where the climate was far more rigorous than that experienced in Central France. By the middle of November rail movements of Poles through Czechoslovakia had all but stopped. Rail movements of Poles to the north through the Soviet area of Germany, for all practical purposes, never got started. Hence, the Anglo-American armies, assisted by some 5,000 UNRRA assembly center team members, were faced with providing for some 800,000 Poles for the winter.

During October and November, action was quickly taken, with Soviet co-operation, to repatriate the Hungarians and Rumanians. This movement was principally via Austria and Czechoslovakia, and the program was essentially completed before the onset of winter weather. As for the Balts, "White" Russians and claimed Yugoslavs and Czechs, the majority either did not wish to be repatriated or the home country refused them entry. Finally, the most difficult problem of all was represented by the some 20,000 to 30,000 German Jews and other Germans who had been inmates of Nazi concentration camps. The Jews, almost without exception, desired new homes in Palestine, and all persecutees loathed the very thought of remaining in Germany.

Taken together the displaced persons remaining in the

Anglo-American-French areas comprised well over one million persons. As a winter assignment, their requirements for general care, shelter and clothing multiplied ten-fold. Already in October the Anglo-American armies and UNRRA workers had initiated extensive programs for improving and equipping the assembly center for winter use. Roofs were repaired, window glass replaced, stoves were installed, heating systems were put into working order, and fuel was collected; civil affairs clothing stocks, involving hundreds of thousands of individual articles, including blankets and shoes, were distributed; new quarters were requisitioned and occupied, and structures which could not be adapted to winter use were vacated. Welfare considerations too were given increasing attention. Excellent work was done by UNRRA team members. Jewish displaced persons were given special attention and care by workers of the American Joint Distribution Committee, and other Jewish welfare agencies affiliated with UNRRA. Rations for all United Nations displaced persons were increased in September from a minimum of 2,000 calories per person per day to 2,300, and in the case of Jews and other persecutees to 2,500 calories. This was in sharp contrast to a minimum of 1,550 calories set for German civilians. UNRRA "amenity supplies," such as cigarettes and tobacco, razor blades, shaving soap, combs, sewing materials and kindred items, were widely distributed. Nursery schools for infants, grade schools for children, and even courses in adult education were established in the assembly centers, which through consolidation into larger quarters had decreased in number by about one-half. Motion pictures were shown, foreign language newspapers, magazines and books were distributed, religious services were conducted by resident priests and rabbis. Arrangements were made on a necessarily limited basis for sending and receiving post cards, letters and packages to and from

friends and relatives in other centers and in other countries. Athletics and games, hobby work, and part-time voluntary employment were provided. Committees of residents, elected by democratic means, set the policies and the rules and regulations of the centers, although, of necessity, within the framework of overriding Military Government law. Minimum essentials, and much more besides, were provided before the cold of winter set in. Compared with general conditions prevailing throughout the remainder of Germany and in certain countries of Eastern Europe, the lot of the displaced person was an easy one.

VI

Public Criticism

WHAT THEN of the public criticism levelled at the Anglo-American armies and at UNRRA for the conduct of the displaced persons program in Germany and Austria? Was this criticism justified? Yes, the individual instances upon which these complaints were based were, for the most part, accurately reported. These complaints did much good. They were a constant spur to greater effort and timely remedial action. The statements made about overcrowded living conditions generally were justified. But in the main these criticisms were superficial; they lacked perspective. Large scale facilities suitable for mass feeding, housing and welfare work were, and remain for winter and spring months, the only practical way to administer to the needs of more than one million war-stranded foreign workers and persecutees. German and Austrian civil authorities, through their shattered disorganized welfare machinery, could not care for these people, and these people, if such care were offered, were in no mood to be served directly by the former "master race." They required care by friendly army and UNRRA personnel and such personnel, of necessity, was

limited in number. Installations suitable for the mass accommodation of displaced persons likewise were limited, what with other army requirements against a background of cities and large towns from 50 to 90 per cent destroyed by war. Requisitioning scattered dwellings and apartments and evicting Germans was no general answer. Large barracks, school buildings, hospitals, workers' villages and similar installations were needed. The fact that an essentially adequate number of such installations was found was a fortunate but unanticipated by-product of Nazi militarism and totalitarian planning.

As for the remaining complaints, little need be said. Food, though available in adequate amounts, varied in its acceptableness with the availability or lack of fresh vegetables, the skill of individual cooks, and the national food-eating habits of the displaced persons. Life in barracks or school buildings, with two, six and even thirty to a room, depending on the size of the room; cots with straw ticks and blankets but seldom with sheets; long lines waiting for meals, for personal supplies and for entertainment; little or no privacy except in a drab room; required personal duties to maintain sanitary conditions and general order; and regulations, no matter how reasonable, about the numbers allowed to leave the centers and the distances they could travel (regulations really necessary for the protection of the displaced person who on the outside looked like any other civilian to the military police and to the German civil police, but not to the German civilian quick to detect the foreigner in conversation)—all these conditions existed against a personal background of future uncertainty. Uncertainty as to work and future income and the duration of necessary inactivity. Uncertainty about missing husbands, wives, children, fathers, mothers, and sweethearts. It is a tribute to the good-heartedness and essential gratitude of the displaced persons

that they endured their lot with stoicism. The fact that malcontents and sharp-eyed newspaper reporters found ample material for criticism is not to be wondered at, although conditions have steadily improved under the spur of their complaints. But the basic discontent has no cure on the spot. The return to normal civilian living in the homeland or elsewhere alone can effect the cure.

VII

Final Steps

A MILLION OR MORE displaced persons in Germany and Austria cannot be supported indefinitely in a state of unhappy idleness. Final steps must be taken to bring about a solution for this problem. UNRRA has been unwilling to assume the cost or the responsibility for the distribution of essential supplies of food and clothing for displaced persons in Germany and Austria, and hence cannot assume full responsibility for the solution of this problem. The Intergovernmental Committee for Refugees, which initially was willing to accept responsibility for finding areas of resettlement for stateless displaced persons (those who did not wish to be or could not be repatriated), was not able to do so because the member-governments limited its scope to include only persons juridically stateless. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Organization has recognized some aspects of the problem, but so far has not been sufficiently organized to take steps to assist in its solution. Therefore, it remains, one could in fairness say, as usual, for the Anglo-American armies to act. The following steps are recommended for final military action:

1. *Set a Date for Final Repatriation.* A final date should be set for the repatriation of all displaced persons in Germany and Austria, let us say for convenience, September 1, 1947. This date should be publicly announced during the

spring. It should be made clear to all concerned that repatriation after that date, though still possible, will be at the expense of the individual displaced person.

2. *Deport Collaborators.* All those who claim to be Yugoslavs, Czechs, "White" Russians, Ukrainians, Kalmuks, or other persons of doubtful nationality, and who are unwilling to be repatriated, should be carefully screened. Those suspected of having collaborated with the Nazis, either as political agents, as members of the Wehrmacht, or in some other active capacity clearly detrimental to the Allied cause, should, at the request of their home governments, be deported.

3. *Support or Resettle Persecutees and Other Deserving Persons.* Jews and other persons cruelly persecuted by the Nazis, or their children, or Poles and other United Nations nationals who fought as members of the Anglo-American armed forces but who do not wish to be repatriated, should be accorded continued support and special privileges. If areas of resettlement cannot be readily found for these deserving people, then they should be established in separate self-contained industrial towns, or in villages with title to sufficient farm land to assure their support.

4. *Require Remainder to Live as Civilians in Germany.* All remaining displaced persons who do not choose to be repatriated but who are not proved to have collaborated with the Nazis, and who are not entitled to special privileges as persecutees or former members of the Anglo-American armed forces should be turned out of the assembly centers, not later than September 1, 1947, to earn their livelihood as civilians in Germany. However, those turned out should be given the assurance that under Military Government law they will be protected against discrimination by the Germans.

Chicago