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Underground Railway Irritates Jewish Problem

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VIENNA, Austria—The Jewish underground railway through Austria is helping to build up the explosive force of the refugee problem in European areas occupied now by American troops.

The underground aids Jews from eastern Europe to reach Austria and to move westward to the American zone of Germany. It functions smoothly and with the informal assistance of the United States army.

If Jews persecuted by the Nazis and Jews fleeing Soviet Russia continue to stream into American areas, means must be found for them to move on to Palestine, or somewhere. Otherwise there eventually will be trouble for the Jews and for the U. S.

Regular Schedule Cited

The railway is so well organized that Jews in Vienna can telephone Jews in Budapest, Hungary, and learn how many of their refugees are likely to arrive next week or, even, next month.

This flight of Jews from Eastern Europe, through Austria to the American zone in Germany, is being informally regularized. As they arrive in Vienna from Budapest they receive railway tickets purchased with privately raised funds.

Proceeding to western Austria, which is occupied by the United States Army, the Jews stand by until there is room for them in the American zone in Germany, commanded by Gen. Joseph T. McNarney. Then the Jews move on.

Gen. Clark Commanding

Gen. Mark Clark is the American commanding general in Austria. He and his officers know all about the underground railway operation. It is United States policy to aid the persecuted Jews. Although other displaced persons will be turned back at the frontier of the United States zones in Germany or Austria, the gates are up for the Jews to come in.

"At present," says Clark's official report on the situation, "Jewish displaced persons in the U. S. occupied zone of Austria total 5,280. These were left in Austria as a result of the war and are happy. They are receiving the best of care and some rehabilitation at places like the Jewish settlement at Bad Gastein. They present no special problem."

The underground railroad does not create problems in Austria. The Jewish underground railroad and the United States army...

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Grave Problem

It is the main problem of the Jews who cross the border in Austria. The Jewish underground railway and the American zone apparently do operate to solve the problem by passing the Jews on to McNarney in Germany, where they settle down to await the opening of Palestine. If it does not open soon there will be trouble with or about the Jews in Germany.

The Clark report continues:

"Jewish transients fleeing from persecution in Poland and other eastern areas do present a major problem. Their flow through our zone averages between 2,000 and 4,000 monthly. (Last month it was 8,000.) Those arriving in Vienna are housed in temporary camps.

"They are fed on the Austrian ration, plus contributions from the American Joint Defense Committee. Then they move on again. Most of them reappear in the United States zone of Austria where they are fed and housed again, only to filter out to the west or south. Since there are no authorized outlets for this continuous stream, our facilities for handling them are seriously strained."

Get 2,000 Calories

The Austrian ration fed to the Jews is 2,000 calories supplemented by other assistance. Austrians are getting only 1,200 calories a day. But, the fleeing Jew is protected against the fluctuations of food which have forced the Austrian — and German — daily ration to well below minimum health levels.

Clark estimated that upwards of 100,000 Jews in Poland are likely to come through Austria seeking Palestine. There were 634 of them in the largest group.

"These people want to be on the ground when the 100,000 are selected to go to Palestine," Clark explained. "There is an organization behind this move-

ment—no doubt of that. We try to keep in touch with the organization and we get information (on arrivals) which frequently is very accurate. The Soviets obviously are facilitating the movement. The persecuted Jews reach Vienna and they come to Uncle Sam."

Time For Action

Those most closely associated with the situation believe the time to do something and to avoid trouble is now.

The Jew who comes for shelter to the American zone is, technically, a persecuted person. He is a person who has been persecuted by the Nazis. Actually any Jew may come. Many are coming from Poland who never saw a Nazi. They are the Jews who fell back before the Germans in June, 1941, and spent the war inside the Russian lines. But they are as eager as the others to escape. So we interpret our own rules loosely. Everyone knows these Jews were not persecuted by Germans—but they are welcomed and sheltered in the American zone just the same.