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BRITISH RED CROSS  
B.A.O.R.  
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Report after Survey in Schleswig-Holstein.

We met Flight Lieutenant Neal (Welfare Branch 312 Mil Gov HQ Schleswig Holstein) on Tuesday July 30th, and discussed with him his request for help from the British Red Cross. He stated that the enormous influx of refugees had caused great distress and created a situation which required immediate attention. Refugees were living in a large number of camps in extremely bad conditions and shortage of supplies and adequate housing made it nearly impossible to alleviate any of the misery caused. Fl.Lt. Neal wanted BRC assistance and also a Danish Red Cross feeding Team to help the children - he knew that the latter were willing to come but required a definite official request.

On Wednesday 31st July in the morning we saw Col. Cran and other officers of the P.H.Branch - Col. Stebbing (Refugee Branch) and the Housing officers. All stressed the seriousness of the situation and in particular the PH Branch were worried at the high incidence of TB and Diphtheria as well as the loss of weight of the children - aggravated by the chronic overcrowding in houses and camps. They all considered that Schleswig Holstein had been sent far too many refugees and was quite unable to absorb them.

It is apparently utterly impossible to implement the Mil Gov policy of housing all expellees in private houses owing to the large number allocated to them and the speed with which the expellees have flooded into the area. A breathing spare (from July 27th) of one month has been granted by the CCG and in this period it is hoped that some of the refugees may be housed.

We pointed out at this stage that if a BRC was sent to the area it would not bring huge supplies - neither would it be able to get houses built - and explained what a Team's capabilities are.

In the afternoon of that day we visited Kiel in company with the leader of the Salvation Army there - and saw some of the camps in the area. Conditions in most were appalling and the overcrowding extremely severe. A ship moored in the harbour had been pressed into service and here Adj. Fenwick (SA) told us 320 refugees had been billeted but after a report to Mil Gov this number had been reduced to about half - one reason of this being that children's eyes were being affected by long periods below deck. Despite this conditions were still bad and cabins approx. 6 feet by 14 feet were "housing" up to 6 or 7 people.

On Thursday we visited Eutin in the morning and Lübeck in the afternoon. In both places refugees were housed in conditions of dirt and overcrowding - sick children and old folk massed together - without adequate light, sanitation, water supply or sufficient beds. In one instance we saw a large hall (the size of the HQ 5 Sale) containing 500 refugees in one mass of confusion - without partitioning, tables, beds - with scarcely room to walk between the make-do bedding. Young children were together with the old and helpless - and we were told they had been there a week. A Children's Home in Lübeck opened by the DRK that week revealed children in a very bad state of health.

On Friday we split - Douglas Childs visited Husum, Flensburg, and Schleswig and Martin Barnes Neumünster, and Pinneberg. In all areas conditions in the camps were the same - a mass of refugees quite beyond the capacity of the areas to absorb and without the barest necessities of life. In the Western Kreise the difficulty of water supply and sanitation owing the low lying ground was aggravatory the problem.

If these areas seen are indicative of the whole Province of Schleswig Holstein - then the situation is one of extreme gravity. There seems little chance of emptying the camps by billeting - spot checks that we made showed houses in slum conditions already. Many of the camps are not even weatherproof and the approach of winter makes the situation one of extreme urgency. Unless some improvements can be made it is certain that many refugees will die this winter from sheer lack of shelter and warmth. The DRK and local welfare organisations seem to be working well but the problem is made worse by the dislike of some of the local population for the refugees who have crowded in and swamped them - in some areas the refugees are in a proportion of 2 to 1 to the local population. Military Government are well alive to the problem and have achieved much. The approach of local elections complicates the situation as some officials are hesitant to apply the strong measures required to cope with the situation.

We both must strongly recommend that help be sent to this area before the situation determinates any further. The most urgent need is for camp welfare, including some kind of occupational activities to rouse people to help themselves even in a limit way, clinics for at least the children, and supplies of the most elementary kind. A team would need to work over a large area and must be capable of working alone or in pairs - experienced personnel are undoubtedly required. As centre Schleswig is probably best placed but much of the work is in the main centres of population - Lübeck, Neumünster, Flensburg, Husum, Pinneberg, etc. The country has wide stretches without any housing and this would add to the difficulty of choosing a main base. The Salvation Army at present concerned with Kiel could probably delay out later to neighbouring areas and this should be considered when placing a team or teams. A team coming into the area will have a hard job before them requiring much initiative - but help should be sent and sent urgently to help cope with what is an appalling situation.

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We add some facts and information gathered from various sources.

PUBLIC HEALTH BRANCH:

Increase of TB alarming, peak 175 cases reported in one week. Drainage bad - especially in Western areas (below sea-level). Water supply insufficient. Previous population 1¼ million - now 2¾ million. Food shortage despite agricultural area.

HOUSING BRANCH:

Housing survey May - June: satisfied accommodation was fully utilised. Some farms had 70 billeted.

REFUGEE BRANCH:

Allocation expellees 323,000; - 200,000 in. Reception itself good.

KREIS EUTIN:

8.000 Refugees in 83 camps.

STADT LÜBECK:

Original population 100.000 - now 300.000. Moral low. 12.000 refugees in camps. Scabies and VD bad.

KREIS HUSUM:

2.200 refugees in 15 camps. 1939 population 47.000 now 88.821.

KREIS FLENSBURG:

Population 25.000 of which refugees half. 12.000 refugees in 12 camps. Danish feeding scheme for South Schleswig Association. Only - membership risen from 9.000 to 25.000 - political significance.

KREIS SCHLESWIG:

5.000 refugees in 6 camps.