

REPORT

ON THE ORT ACTIVITIES

AUGUST 1946-JULY 1947

Submitted to the meeting of the
CENTRAL BOARD of the WORLD ORT UNION
PARIS, July 6th-7th 1947

ORT UNION

PARIS

GENEVA

June 1947

Conforming to the situation, the work of ORT in Italy deals almost exclusively with the DPs in the camps and towns, but extends, too, to emigrants, and includes in Rome also the care of Italian and Jewish, mostly orphaned, children.

Only towards the end of 1946, the work here had a planned character. The plans for it were elaborated after Dr. Syngalowski's visit to the camps, and submitted by him to the refugee organisations, UNRRA, as well as to the Minister for Post-War Relief. The work in Italy started later than in other countries, as the fluidity of the Jewish DPs was greater here, and their patience even less than that of their equally ill-fated brothers in Germany and Austria. One must keep it in mind, that the refugees, who had succeeded in reaching Italy, looked upon their stay here as the shortest of all, and were therefore for this reason alone disinclined to be vocationally trained, no matter how short a time this training would last.

In this connection also the following fact must be noted : whilst in Germany the first beginnings of consequence in the field of vocational training was due to the initiative of the DPs themselves, who were not carrying out the decisions of some organisation or other - the fact, that this initiative originated in a former collaborator of ORT changes in no way the spontaneous character of this phenomenon - we did not find anything of this kind in Italy, when we first started there. The Hachsharoth, sometimes erroneously called "training centres" in some reports, have in reality in the post-War world nothing in common with vocational training. We investigated all of the Hachsharoth; here and there, some half-trained or fully trained artisans are doing some work for the needs of the community; where grounds for kitchen-gardens are available, these are more or less cultivated; but with the exception of two schools for fishery (even those are more of a theoretical than of a practical nature), there were no institutions for vocational training either in the towns or in the Kibbutzim. This also explains, why almost all Hachsharoth approached us later with the proposition to install training workshops.

In connection with the work of ORT carried out there - a work, which, as already said, was systematically executed only towards the end of 1946 - an agreement was arrived at with the UNRRA, according to which the privileges granted to ORT collaborators, and the measures taken to facilitate the tasks of ORT, are even more extensive than those granted in Germany and Austria. Mr. L. Varrichione, Chief of DP Operations, and his collaborators, show great understanding for the work of ORT, and have a very helpful attitude. If despite all this the projects elaborated and confirmed in collaboration with UNRRA could not be always realized, this is to be attributed to the present state of the UNRRA apparatus and to the disorder within this organisation, which is increasing with its approaching liquidation.

A further step towards legalizing the ORT work was made, when an Italian ORT organization was created, which is based on statutes of its own, and when good relations with the Italian Ministry of Finances and the Italian Ministry of Work were established.

The Central Committee under the presidency of Mr. Renzo Levi is in Rome, a Committee for Northern Italy was created in Milan, in which there are also

important technicians. The center of gravity of ORT activities lies in Northern Italy. The Central Office of the Italian ORT has its seat in Rome, via Savoia 84, the Central Office for North-Italy in Milan, via Albania 20 and the Office for the agricultural Department at Torino, via Lagrange 47.

The established plan provided above all for institutions for youths with a normal programme of studies, whereby in accordance with an agreement made with the central direction of the Youth-Aliyah the first year of study shall be completed in Italy and the continuation of the training will take place in Palestine. Concerning the adults, those who have already worked in handicraft or industry, but who have not yet completed a vocational training, will be first taken into consideration. Before accepting any application for the planned training workshops, negotiations took place with the Refugee Organizations which guaranteed that their members would not interrupt the training.

The difficulty to find instructors on the spot was partially overcome by sending specialists from Switzerland. The greatest impediment to begin with was the lack of appropriate premises for the training workshops. Here the insufficiency of the general camp organization was most apparent. The workshops, for which the direction of camps had put premises at our disposal, had to be removed after the arrival of the installation, sometimes even given up altogether because the rooms promised had been disposed of otherwise in the meantime.

A very great part of the installation, namely the machines and tools, could be bought in Italy. It is true however that the firms were always so late in their deliveries and the extraordinary difficulties of transport were such, that the opening of many workshops was put off considerably.

Nevertheless, after the first quarter of the present year, it could already be observed that the fact of such an energetic and firm beginning of systematic ORT activities had exercised an encouraging influence in all respects on large refugee masses who had been disappointed for so long, and that even here it had been possible to create a favourable atmosphere for the development of ORT institutions.

Training of Youths.

In the period covered by this report, the following trade schools and training workshops for youths were functioning in Italy:

A training workshop for joinery with 12 pupils and one for mechanical locksmithery with 17 pupils in Avigliana. The latter is directed by a specialist sent from Switzerland. As the equipment of this school was inadequate, a transport of machines and tools was lately sent from Switzerland.

It is intended to open evening courses for adults in Avigliana, too, using the same staff of instructors.

At Selvino there are training workshops for locksmiths-mechanics (12 pupils) and for electrical installations (15 pupils). The pupils of both workshops

are at the moment following a joint preliminary course for metal work. Those workshops, too, have lately received machines and tools from Switzerland.

In May, a school for girls with 33 pupils was opened in Selvino.

A similar school for girls with 50 pupils exists in Rome. The pupils are instructed in dressmaking, embroidery, manufacture of lingerie, and knitting. Furthermore, generally educative subjects are taught, namely mathematics, drawing Hebrew, Italian, Jewish history, and household economics. Most of the pupils are orphans or come from very poor Italian-Jewish families.

In collaboration with the State school for radio technics, "Righi", an ORT school for radio technics was also established in Rome, 30 youths are working there at the moment. The instruction is supervised by the director of the "Righi" school, Professor d'Alessio.

Particular attention must be called to the school for building construction in Milan; this is the first Jewish school of its kind in Europe. The school has sections for masons, carpenters, tilers, and the manufacturing of bricks. It will train 30 pupils every 15 weeks. Director of this trade school is architect-engineer B. Schönfeld. The practical work is supervised by four Italian specialists.

In establishing the school, the present great demand everywhere for craftsmen in the building industry was taken into account, and especially the fact, that with the enlargement of the Aliyah the demand for skilled workers in this field in Palestine is bound to grow. Milan was chosen for the setting-up of this school for the reason that Italian masons, tilers, cement and concrete workers have world-wide renown. The various Zionist groups among the DPs in Italy show great interest in this institution. The pupils are former book-keepers, shop-assistants, and Jeshiwah graduates; despite the very difficult conditions of their lives in the Scuola Cadorna, they all keep good discipline in their work. The Italian formen speak highly of their application and their skill in practical work.

According to an agreement between the ORT Direction in Milan and the A.J.D.C., the pupils of this school receive additional food parcels from the latter organization.

The arrangement which the ORT Direction made with a building enterprise about the employment of the graduates deserves special mention. The pupils, who have finished their training, will be able to work as paid craftsmen with a reputed firm in the trade. ORT has already arranged for the necessary permission from the Italian trade-unions.

Training of Adults.

Apart from the above mentioned schools and training workshops for youths, the following training workshops and vocational courses for adults were functioning in Italy in the period covered by this report:

A training workshop for locksmiths-mechanics with 31 pupils, one for knitting with 10 pupils, and one for manufacture of men's underwear with 10 pupils, all in Grugliasco.

the Rivoli vocational training center, comprising at the moment a very well equipped training workshop for sanitary installations with 19 pupils, a tin-smithery with 9 pupils, and a joinery with 20 pupils.

the Cremona center, comprising training workshops for locksmithery, joinery, electro-technics, radio technics, and dressmaking, with a total of 57 pupils.

With the assistance of the firm of Olivetti, ORT inaugurated a school for typewriter mechanics with now 17 pupils at Ivrea near Torino. The well-known factory for typewriters Olivetti is situated in the same place. The school is plentifully equipped with tools and materials. Apart from two experienced Italian precision mechanics, recommended to ORT by Olivetti and now employed as instructors, ORT engaged a third instructor who is at the same time acting as interpreter. The pupils were gathered from various DP camps for the express purpose of undergoing the training in this school. Here, in an atmosphere in no way recalling the life in the camps, they can devote themselves entirely to their professional formation, thus making rapid progress. Their board and lodging at Ivrea was taken care of by UNRRA.

This principle of forming groups of ORT pupils and treating those like Hachsharah Centers, was proposed to UNRRA in a memorandum of the Geneva ORT Union. The first, successful experiment is now completed at Ivrea.

The Ivrea school is already the second ORT school for typewriter mechanics in Italy. The first was established in the Adriatico camp near Milan and is now training 29 pupils under the direction of an instructor who was delegated from Switzerland to Italy just for this purpose. The technical equipment is complete here, too. Apart from the necessary tools, the pupils have 23 typewriters at their disposal, which they dismantle and reassemble. Through the offices of their Milan branch, the same firm Olivetti has also helped in equipping this school.

First Graduations in Italy.

The first examinations for ORT pupils trained in handicrafts took place in Milan. As proposed by ORT, the State Department for Trade Schools (the Consorzio Provinciale per l'Istruzione Tecnica di Milano) had undertaken the examining as well as the nomination of the examiners. The first group of pupils to be examined were 16 tailors, who passed the examination with great success. The examiners praised the pedagogical talents and the teaching methods of the ORT instructors. Among the experts was Professor G. Marangoni, author of the textbook on tailoring used in all Italian schools. The diplomas issued by ORT will also bear the signature of the Consorzio. Furthermore, it is stated on these diplomas, that the examining board was composed of experts appointed by the Consorzio. The second group to be examined were 11 cutters for ladies' dresses, who graduated with the same success.

The courses for tailoring in the Adriatico camp are continuing; at the moment, there is one for tailors with 16 pupils and two for dressmakers with together 37 pupils.

In Rome and Cinecittà near Rome, there are 4 courses for cutting, namely two for women with together 62 pupils, and two for men with together 38 pupils.

At Grottaferrata near Rome there is a training workshop for knitting with 45 pupils.

Agriculture.

A remarkable work was started in the field of agriculture. At Avigliana there is an agricultural school for 25 young people. 8 hectares land with a large kitchen-garden and orchard belong to the school. An agreement was made with neighbouring wine-growers for the training in viticulture, another one, also with a neighbour, in view of training the pupils in apiculture.

The school has its own dairy, at the disposal of which we have placed 8 cows and calves. It possesses also its own poultry, for which we have lately installed an incubator.

The school is managed by an agronomist, a gardener, and a teacher of theoretical subjects. As in all other ORT schools, a great working-spirit and exemplary order are to be found there.

At Grugliasco and at Rivoli a total of 125 persons have received short agricultural training. Later, training gardens were established there, and dairy and poultry farming is also being done.

27 persons are trained in a training garden in camp Palese - Bari.

Another agricultural training center was established at San Marco near Pisa, where there is a Hachsharah of the Italian Jewish youth. Here, 26 young people receive practical and theoretical instruction in various agricultural branches.

A character of its own has the ORT school for tractor drivers at Capanelle near Rome. This school was founded in collaboration with the State school for agricultural mechanics and its Director, Prof. Rizzo, and will train 40 tractor drivers every two months. The first group is now being trained and will graduate in July.

Formation of Instructors.

In agreement with the J.D.C. Direction, a short-term course for the agricultural managers of the Hachsharoth was held at Torino-Lucento a short while ago. The 17 participants were instructed in taking care of gardens and poultry.

Apart from the ORT agronomists, professor Carbone, Director of the Italian Zootechnical Institute, contributed to this course. In the laboratories of this institute, the students were offered the opportunity of watching microscopic experiments. As a result of this course, the Kibbutz Nichelino Vernea was able to greatly extend the cultivated area. A group of young people (30) there are being thoroughly trained in gardening under the guidance of a graduate of our course for instructors.

A training workshop for joinery was established in Selvino. This spring, 20 teachers by profession were trained there for the direction of children's workshops for woodwork. The Geneva ORT Center delegated a Basle specialist to Selvino for this purpose. The graduates will exercise their newly acquired skill partly already in Italy, but mostly in schools in Palestine.

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The realization of this important plan which was to be applied to Italy, is hampered here by a situation, the extent of which could not be foreseen by us, and moreover is little known outside Italy. The fact is that the overwhelming majority of refugees are complaining of hunger - and with reason, too -. As a result of the undernourishment, even those willing to work and to learn, choose the easiest trades, and decline the working of metal and wood on the grounds of their obvious physical weakness. If a remedy cannot be found, all the efforts of the ORT will be in vain.

In one of the conferences, which took place under the initiative of the Milan ORT, and in which participated the local Directions of J.D.C., UNRRA, and the representatives of the various refugees organizations, this disastrous situation was amply discussed.

The fact, that in Cremona 2 good pupils of the ORT training workshops for cabinet-making left those to become street-sweepers, because they could earn a little money that way and thus appease their hunger, is not a unique case.

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In the period covered by this report, there functioned all in all in Italy 41 trade schools, training workshops and vocational courses with a total of 936 pupils.