

Thursday, 21 August 1947

ORT Schule Hofgeismar

Director:

Wahrhaftig

Director of IRO:

Leon Spiegel

	<u>Number of Pupils</u>
Machine shop practice	21
Auto-mechanics	10
Electro-technics	10
Radio	9
Pattern making	12
Dress making	18. ²

The machine shop is exceedingly well equipped and looks more like a standard school machine shop than most of the others I have seen in ORT schools. The machines came from UNRRA - two lathes, one drill press, one milling machine, 20 vises. Considerable electric installation was left by UNRRA. In a corner of the shop is a glass ^e ~~enclosing~~ ^{ed} ~~offere~~ ^{ice} used by the teacher and also by the man who keeps account of all equipment and supplies.

Radio shop. This shop is now being used by both radio workers and electro-technical workers. A fair amount of equipment was available. The two teachers seemed to be doing efficient work.

A new shop is being equipped for the electro-technical workers. A number of motors are being mounted on benches. Current is being brought in. In a few days the shop should be available for the students.

Bricklaying. This work was being done in a substantial shed that had probably been used for parking cars. The students were building brick walls, using old bricks. All types of construction were being attempted and accomplished quite efficiently. The teacher, whose appearance was more that of a rabbi than a manual worker, seems to be accomplishing very effective work.

The auto-mechanic shop had been in operation only a week but was already functioning smoothly. The basic equipment was a large Army truck, plus several motors that had been mounted on benches. Various engine parts were mounted on an exhibition board. The shop was in perfect order. This is a good example of what can be done quickly and effectively with initiative and planning.

Dress making. The usual program was being carried on to good effect. Of course, there was the usual lack of sufficient material.

Men's pattern making and women's pattern making. This is a new class, so we did not see it in session.

This is one of those ORT schools that immediately reflects the initiative, understanding, and proficiency of the director. While it is true that the buildings in which the shops are housed are in rather good condition, compared with those in some other schools, it is also true that still other schools and shops set up in equally good buildings are much inferior. The school gives one a sense of real educational accomplishment in a difficult situation.

Unquestionably, an important factor in bringing in the success of the schools is the fine attitude of the IRO director, even though he has been there only three weeks. He is a man of understanding, human sympathy, intelligence, and great patience.

At one point, while we were in the camp, we were greeted by wild shrieks from one of the buildings. It turned out that one of the campers, whose wife was pregnant and who needed more room, had, without permission, taken over the office of the rabbi. When the camp police came to eject him he protested physically and vocally. He yelled like a maniac, attracting a crowd. (He was said to be an epileptic and seemed to be feigning a fit without, however, deceiving anybody.) Of course, Mr. Spiegel was called in and ruled that the man must go back to his own room and await the vacating of another room, which was promised to him within two or three days. Mr. Spiegel was both calm and sympathetic. Another incident: Two thirds of the boys in the machine shop had struck because the teacher (who had founded the shop six months before) was "too strict." A few had returned, penitently, but others were holding out. The products of the shop and the whole set-up seemed excellent, so it looked as if the boys were at fault. Of course, no outsider can really know. However, I suspect that this again is evidence of the unfortunate deterioration of some of these young people. In insisting upon accurate work and discipline the OET staff was contributing to the moral education of these young people as well as to their vocational education. Wherever the staff does not warrant, the staff is lax. In this respect it fails in one of its important duties.

After our visit we lunched at Director Spiegel's billet. Here was an interesting gathering. Starting at my left and going around the table ^{there} were present the following:

1. Mr. Solun, born in Kruikob, Poland, emigrated to the United States in 1937. Studied in Berlin for 15 years, also in Paris for a short time, was in the US-Army, went back to the United States and worked as an engineer in several factories. Returned to France to visit his mother and brother

and there met Dr. Lvovitch, who induced him to work for ORT. Solun's mother spent 18 months in hiding in France. After being in a concentration camp in France for some time his brother was released on a French factory owner's plea that he needed him for war work. The brother was twice pulled ^{off} ~~on~~ ^{full} trainlogs of Jews headed for the crematorium^y. The mother was also in hiding after the first world war when the Russians were looking for people of wealth. Her husband had been a wealthy manufacturer. She is apparently a remarkable woman.

2. Mr. Wahrhaftig is a DP, born in Lodz, extremely capable, but a little/cynical about the future.

3. Mrs. Hirschberg, born in Hungary, wife of a dentist who is giving a course in dental mechanics at the camp. Dr. Hirschberg had had considerable experience in America, but was in Germany when the war broke out and was caught up in it.

4. Mr. Ferber, a representative of JAPP, born in Poland, lives in Palestine. Argues for Zionism on the ground that if a separate nation is set up as member of United Nations the Jews will be different from Englishmen, Americans, Germans, Frenchmen, the same as the peoples of these nations are different from each others. Therefore, Jews' difference, as Jews, will disappear.

5. Mr. Spiegel's sister-in-law, born in Poland.

6. Mr. Spiegel, born in Berlin, fled to Poland. Married in Lodz, where he met his future wife. She has been in a concentration camp, has the usual number on her arm. Mr. Spiegel has a cousin, Jack Hirsch, who is a lawyer at 280 Broadway which is only five blocks from my school. I promised that I would ~~come to~~ see him upon my return. Mr.

Spiegel wants to come to America, even though he says that practically all the Jews want to go to Palestine.

7. Mrs. Spiegel, born in Lodz.

ORT Schule Mönchberg

This is a small school, taken over, within the last month, from the camp committee. The building looks pretty old from the outside but the rooms inside are quite usable.

Dress making. Thirteen students, doing the usual work with considerable success. Two Swedish sewing machines ~~have~~ ^{been} recently ~~being~~ provided by ORT. The room was formerly used half of each day as a milk distributing station.

Pattern making. The usual lecture of the teacher, while using the blackboard. Eight men in attendance.

Schlosserei. This shop was just being organized. Two pupils were at work. A new bench, made especially for this school, had just been installed. Six vises. German teacher. Looked pretty bare but gave promise of being a good shop.

Soap making. In a fourth room, formerly used as a kitchen, it is proposed to ^{teach} soap making. One of the DP's has had considerable experience. The possibility of setting up the shop depends upon the availability of fat. If this is procured the shop could start working. Of course, the soap will have to be returned to its source.

Mr. Solun wanted the prospective students in this school to go to Hasenhecke, 3 km away, but they would not walk that far. The people of the camp live in a former Arbeiter-