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## V. Assistance to Civilian War Victims

### REFUGEES AND STATELESS PERSONS

#### Emigration (Travel Document No. 10,100 A)

Numerous Displaced Persons appealed to the ICRC either for information, or to enlist support for their applications to various authorities for permission to emigrate.

By far the most important contribution of the ICRC in this domain was Travel Document No. 10,100 A<sup>1</sup>. The Committee itself, however, planned to cease the issue of this document as soon as the local authorities could provide their refugees with official travel documents or passports.

*Holland.* — In January 1948, the Netherlands Red Cross informed the ICRC that the Dutch Government had decided to give identity papers to the refugees in its territory. Consequently, the ICRC document ceased to be issued in Holland.

*France.* — The Ministry of the Interior requested the Paris Delegation to cease the issue of travel documents. It was found necessary, however, to continue their issue temporarily, to enable refugees to leave for countries which, like Argentina, would not accept, in default of a national passport, any other travel document.

*Italy.* — The London Agreement of October 15, 1946, had placed the onus of issuing Travel Documents on the Italian Govern-

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<sup>1</sup> In French, "No. 10,100 bis". As already stated in the *General Report* (Vol. I, p. 669) this document was designed to help Displaced Persons emigrate to a country of their choice, to facilitate their repatriation, or to enable them to explain their presence in places where they happened to be as a result of the events of war.

ment. As this regulation had not actually been implemented, instructions for its application were drawn up in October 1947 between the International Refugee Organisation (IRO), the Italian Red Cross department for legal assistance to aliens (AGIUS), and the ICRC Delegation. The regulation would have permitted the ICRC to close its Delegation in Rome, the main function of which was precisely to issue Travel Documents to many refugees. In December 1947, however, the IRO representative in Italy requested the ICRC to keep its Delegation in Italy open until further notice, because of the delay in giving effect to the terms of the London Agreement and of certain discriminations introduced by the Italian Government. The ICRC agreed, requesting at the same time that the question of a contribution to the costs of the Delegation be submitted to the IRO Preparatory Commission. Subject to whatever decision might be taken on this point, the ICRC representatives in Rome in collaboration with IRO and AGIUS (who carried out the preliminary investigations) continued to issue Document 10,100 A, after the applicant's *bona fides* had been carefully checked.

The ICRC Delegation in Genoa also issued the Travel Document mainly to German nationals who had entered Italy illegally and who, being unable to emigrate to overseas countries, wished to return to Germany.

*Spain.* — The ICRC issued Travel Documents to a number of refugees of several nationalities. For German and Austrian refugees, the Allied Control Commission provided, from July 1947, a Travel Document which was recognised both by foreign diplomatic services and by the Spanish authorities. The issue of the ICRC Document to refugees of these two nationalities therefore became superfluous.

*Germany.* — The creation by the Allied authorities of a Travel Document, which from February 1947, could be granted to Germans as to other nationals, made further issue of the ICRC Document superfluous.

*Austria.* — The authorities established a Travel Document which it was difficult to obtain. The issue of the ICRC Documents

therefore continued indispensable in Austria, as the following instance will show. The ICRC was asked to help some 6,000 Slovenians in the British Zone of Austria, who wished to emigrate to Argentina. They had been promised Argentine visas, and begged the ICRC to support their request that the Argentine Government send a representative to Austria, and that the funds they had deposited in the Federal Bank on their arrival in Austria should be reimbursed, not in Austrian currency, but in the shape of machinery, tools and equipment that could be exported to Argentina. The ICRC replied that these were matters for IRO; with the latter's consent, the applicants might have the ICRC Travel Document, allowing them to travel to Argentina via Rome.

The Argentine Consulates in Paris, Rome and Shanghai recognised, apart from official passports, only the ICRC Travel Document as a valid identity paper.

*Egypt.* — The authorities recognised without question the ICRC Travel Document, but considered it only as a paper to which a visa might be validly attached. It may be added that Egypt granted *laissez-passeurs* fairly easily.

*Greece.* — The Athens Delegation was, at its request, supplied with all details necessary to inform political refugees wishing to emigrate.

*China.* — As far away as China, Ukrainian, Russian and Polish refugees approached Delegates for the ICRC Travel Document, to enable them to emigrate to South America or Australia. The ICRC placed the documents at the Delegate's disposal, emphasising at the same time the conditions the refugees must fulfil.

It was during the last months of 1947 that the ICRC Delegations in Tangiers, Argentina and Venezuela notified the passage or arrival of the first refugees travelling with the Committee's Document.

#### **Visits to Camps for Displaced Persons**

Besides supplying Travel Documents, the ICRC had its Delegates visit camps for such refugees. Continuing the work described

in the *General Report*<sup>1</sup>, Delegates visited camps for Displaced Persons to investigate complaints and distribute relief.

*French Zone.* — In the French Zone of Germany, visits were made to the camps of Kuhlberg, Brombach and Siegmaringen-Nonnenhof. Generally speaking, the morale of Displaced Persons was low, chiefly because of the lack of occupation. At Brombach, which was visited on three occasions between October 1947 and January 1948, Delegates found that great improvements had been made as the result of suggestions they had offered.

*British Zone.* — In Voerde Camp, the ICRC Delegate was able to have thieving of parcels stopped by raising the matter with the Commandant. Delegates also visited the Yugoslavs at Diepholz and Munsterlager Camps, and in Gütersloh Hospital.

*Italy.* — Camps in Italy were regularly visited by Delegates, particularly those at Farfa-Sabina, Fraschette di Alatri, the Lipari Islands and the Milazzo Prison, at Messina. In the course of visits, Delegates were able to obtain satisfaction for a large proportion of the individual applications made. Collective appeals were referred to the competent relief organisations. In Milazzo Prison, where refugees were detained for mutiny, the ICRC was able to issue relief and bring their situation to the notice of the above-named Section of the Italian Red Cross (AGIUS). The Delegate received nominal rolls of the refugees interned at Farfa, Fraschette di Alatri and Milazzo Prison; the original lists were retained at the Central Agency in Geneva, to meet requests for information.

*Greece.* — Here too, the Delegates, from July 1947 on, visited several camps for interned refugees, including those at Hadjikyriakion (Piraeus), Larissa Station (Athens), Larion and Syra, and distributed parcels of food and clothing. At Hadjikyriakion the Delegate arranged that Rumanian political refugees should be given work and receive relief in the same way as other refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, p. 671.

The problem of aiding millions of people who had been forcibly removed from their homes remains almost untouched, even if, as a result of great exertions, their most pressing needs have been met. The repatriation of rather more than a million Greeks from Asia Minor to Greece after the first World War took some years to carry through, and demanded very large relief funds. This operation furnishes a criterion for estimating the task involved in resettling so many millions of people in a Europe half-destroyed and famished.

The relief undertakings referred to above, having been altogether inadequate to make any impression on the problem, the ICRC sought other means.

*Volksdeutsche*. — Obviously, a problem of such magnitude could only be solved with the help of Governments; the ICRC therefore approached the Preparatory Commission for the International Refugee Organisation, which met at Lausanne in July 1947, and drew its attention to the case of the 150,000-180,000 *Volksdeutsche* (members of German racial minorities) who had been expelled from their homes in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

On July 22, 1947, the ICRC submitted a Memorandum to the Chairman of the Commission, giving a review of the matter and emphasising its urgency. The ICRC believed it would be in the highest degree desirable that the Commission should extend its terms of reference to include *Volksdeutsche* amongst the persons eligible for relief. The Committee drew attention to the fact that a proportion of the *Volksdeutsche* were not of German origin, but of Austrian, Lorraine, Luxemburg or Flemish stock; furthermore, out of those who were strictly of German origin, many had been victims of discriminatory legislation.

This Memorandum apparently influenced the Assembly; it decided, by Resolution No. 39, to consider as eligible for legal protection and resettlement under IRO the *Volksdeutsche* who had sought asylum in Austria and were not covered by the Potsdam

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<sup>1</sup> See *General Report of the ICRC, 1939-1947*, Vol. I, p. 673.



Agreement (which provided for the resettlement in Germany of the German minorities in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland), subject to such assistance not being precluded under some other clause of the IRO Constitution.

*Jugoslavia.* — The ICRC tried to assist *Volksdeutsche* in Yugoslavia; it argued, in particular, that since a number were due to leave Austria (particularly, former residents of Southern Tyrol who were due to settle in Italy), an equal number from Yugoslavia could be received in Austria.

*Czechoslovakia.* — From July 1, 1947 to June 4, 1948, the ICRC Delegates made 33 visits to 24 civilian camps.

The Delegation gave aid to several groups of persons belonging to racial minorities. Some of these people were in a peculiarly difficult situation; the ICRC representative assisted in their transfer to Germany, tracing relatives, re-uniting dispersed families and supporting petitions for release.

In January 1948, the Prague Delegation learnt of 105 ex-prisoners of war, members of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, who had been released in Russia; these men, regarded as civilians, were detained in the Czech Penitentiary at Ruzyne and were unable to enter Germany because they had no permit from the Allied Occupation Authorities. The ICRC applied to both Czech and German authorities, but negotiations dragged on until June 1948, when 61 of these ex-prisoners were finally allowed to enter the American Zone of Occupation. The remainder had meanwhile escaped, or had managed to join their relatives in the Soviet Zone.

*Poland.* — Here the ICRC was able to visit only the assembly centres of Wroclaw and Lodz, and the entraining centre for evacuees at Kalawsk. The Delegation had, however, access to eight prisoner of war camps in which civilians were also held, and three homes at Trzebiatow, where aged Germans were assembled for evacuation <sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For relief to children, see below, p. 66.

*Jugoslavia.* — The ICRC worked, in collaboration with the Yugoslav Red Cross, to assist the Germans who still remained in the country. Part of them were helped to emigrate, and the ICRC offered, subject to the consent of the Yugoslav authorities, to have its Delegates approach the authorities in overseas countries in order to facilitate immigration.

*Rumania.* — The ICRC recommended applications from German minorities in Rumania, to the Rumanian Red Cross, which agreed to deal with them.

*Hungary.* — In view of the very difficult circumstances in which *Volksdeutsche* in transit from Yugoslavia had to travel, the ICRC appealed on their behalf to ten welfare organisations, one being the League of Red Cross Societies. The League applied in its turn to the Hungarian Red Cross, and the latter, on July 15, 1947, stated that it would assist to the best of its ability.

#### **Tracing of Civilians — Re-uniting of Dispersed Families**

The ICRC was informed that tracing formerly done by UNRRA would henceforth be carried on by IRO. The matter was then discussed with the Director of the Central Tracing Bureau at Arolsen, who made it known that, in principle, the work would be continued through the four Zone centres in Berlin, Rastatt, Ludwigsburg and Göttingen<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, the ICRC continued to concern itself with the problem of thousands who had been dispersed, and repeatedly approached the Occupation authorities on their behalf.

#### **Relief for Children**

The International Committee associated with the United Nations appeal for children. Writing, in April 1948, in support

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<sup>1</sup> The last-named to replace a British Red Cross centre hitherto doing the work in that area.



of the United Nations scheme to help the child victims of the war, the Honorary President, M. Max Huber, said :

It is natural that the United Nations should concentrate on the children the efforts it is undertaking to help the world. One's heart, as well as one's mind and conscience, lead one to think first of all of the children. It is they who are least responsible for the distress in which the world finds itself, and who represent in the fullest the life and promise for the future of each nation and the entire world.

To help the children — this is a task which must be accomplished, whatever the circumstances, and at no matter what price. If, as a living reality made up of men and women and as a moral idea in itself, humanity renounced this duty of human fellowship, it is nothing less than its very self it would renounce.

*Germany.* — The ICRC Delegation in Berlin acted as forwarding bureau for relief consignments from Australia, Ireland, South Africa, the United States, and particularly Switzerland; it also handled the gifts of German prisoners of war. By the end of 1947 over 2,500 tons of foodstuffs, medicaments and other supplies had been dealt with. Thanks to these supplies, an extra meal (350-400 calories) was given daily for three months to about 120,000 children in the Soviet Zone. Young mothers were similarly helped <sup>1</sup>.

*Poland.* — The most difficult aspect of child relief with which the ICRC had to deal after June 30, 1947, was the repatriation of German or *Volksdeutsche* children <sup>2</sup>, whether orphans or separated from parents living in Poland. The ICRC, having learned in August 1947 that there were 500 such children in Poland, instructed its Warsaw Delegation to make further enquiries. A camp at Katowice was found to be receiving for repatriation all German children who were orphans or separated from their parents. The Polish authorities agreed to consider the information supplied by the ICRC about children sought for by parents in Germany, and to receive them into Katowice Camp. Working

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<sup>1</sup>) See below, p. 81.

<sup>2</sup>) See above, p. 64.

on similar lines, the British Red Cross made contact with the Polish Government about the transfer to Germany of 4,000 German children then in Poland.

In these circumstances, the ICRC sent to Warsaw all individual requests for repatriation submitted by parents in Germany. It learned, however, in November 1947 that preparations for repatriating German children were being held up, and applied repeatedly to the Polish authorities for the repatriation at least of all German children for whom addresses in Poland and the address of parents in Germany were both known. The ICRC offered at the same time to trace Polish children in West Germany whose name and Polish address the Polish authorities could supply.

The ICRC approached the British authorities in Germany in February, 1948, and pressed for the reception into their Zone of all German children whom the Polish Government was then disposed to repatriate. The British authorities replied that they did not object, in principle, to the return of the children, but that the lists submitted would have to be carefully verified, to make sure that the parents really were resident in the British Zone; this was an essential preliminary to any further practical steps. This reply was transmitted to the Polish authorities, and repatriation of the children finally began in July, 1948.

The ICRC Delegation in Berlin co-operated with the Polish Red Cross in assisting Polish children in Germany who were waiting to be sent home. Relief supplies thus given were intended in particular for children's homes and repatriation convoys.

At the request of a Lithuanian Red Cross organisation at Reutlingen, the ICRC asked the Swiss Red Cross (Child Welfare Branch) to help send to Switzerland a party of Lithuanian children who were refugees in Germany, and who needed a stay of two or three months in a country where they could be better fed.

*Spain.* — In Autumn 1947, the ICRC concerned itself with the repatriation of Polish children from Spain. Correspondence on this subject with its Warsaw Delegation and the Geneva Delegation of the Polish Red Cross closed on October 30, 1947, the date on which the children left Spain for home.

*Greece.* — Thanks to supplies sent by the Red Cross Societies of South Africa, Norway and Switzerland, by the Joint Relief Commission of the International Red Cross and by the Irish Gift, food, milk and clothing were given (in co-operation with the Greek Red Cross, the Greek authorities and local relief Committees) to thousands of Greek children, and to orphanages and training centres under the Ministry of Justice. The Athens Delegation continued the work it began during the War<sup>1</sup> by helping Greek children. In July 1948, for example, over 25,000 children received daily issues of sweetened milk, thanks to sugar sent from the Irish Gift.

We may add that, in response to the appeal of the ICRC, the Swiss Relief Fund (Don Suisse) set up two children's villages in Greece, to accommodate war orphans. The Athens Delegation was asked to find, in the most seriously affected areas the sites most suitable for these villages. One chosen -- Ziros, in Epirus -- was officially opened, and by June 1948, sheltered 728 children. Later events, however, caused the village to be evacuated. The other, Dovra, in Macedonia, could not be opened, the zone of military operations having spread to the region in which it is situated.

### **Relief to Jews**

#### *Exodus 47*

Early in 1947, some 4,500 Jewish emigrants coming from DP camps in Germany, embarked clandestinely at Sète on the *Exodus 47*, chartered by Jewish organisations and bound for Palestine.

Near the Palestine coast the ship was intercepted by Coastal Patrol vessels and prevented from berthing. The passengers were transhipped to three British vessels and taken to Port Bou (France). They were invited to land by the French authorities, who expressed willingness to receive them, but they refused, asserting that they wanted to go only to Palestine, or, failing that, to Cyprus. A difficult situation arose, the doctors on board not

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<sup>1</sup> See *General Report of the ICRC, 1939-1947*, Vol. III, p. 455.

having the means necessary to treat a large number of sick. On July 31, 1947, the Jewish Agency in Palestine approached the ICRC with a request to send doctors to the three vessels. Early in August, the British authorities gave their consent, on condition that the duties of the Red Cross delegates should be medical only. Within a few hours the ICRC engaged three doctors in Geneva, who boarded the ships on August 5, bringing with them the necessary medical supplies, purchased in France. Meanwhile, the Paris Delegation had dispatched a truck-load of medical supplies to Marseilles for the *Exodus*.

The ICRC Delegates had a most difficult task to perform. The passengers were in a poor state, mostly weakened by bad living conditions and unsuitable food. Two-thirds suffered from dysentery. On board, there were 105 women with pregnancies varying from six to nine months. The doctors had to see 120 to 150 patients daily, and to detect fresh cases amongst passengers who would not attend the consultations, owing to distrust between emigrants and the ship's officers. Operations and confinements took place in the gangways, some seven feet wide and lighted only by port-holes. Much coaxing was required to induce patients to consent, in urgent cases, to be landed and taken to hospital in Marseilles. With increasing confidence, relations improved and the emigrants were often eloquent in their gratitude for the Delegates' care, helping them as much as possible in their work. A sufficient stock of medicaments was built up on board to allow proper attention during the journey to Hamburg.

On September 8 and 9, 1947, six weeks after the Jewish Agency made its appeal, the emigrants were landed at Hamburg and the Delegates' mission was at an end. They accompanied the emigrants, however, as far as the camps assigned them by the British authorities.

### *Visit to Gil-Gil Camp (Kenya)*

In this camp were Jewish internees who had been placed under preventive arrest by the British authorities in Palestine.

In September 1947, the ICRC Delegate, after visiting the internees, wrote to the Camp Commandant to suggest a number of

improvements, including better delivery of next of kin parcels, larger money remittances, consultations by civilian doctors, and wages for internees doing medical or administrative work. The authorities fell in with most of these suggestions.

The ICRC asked the British Government to repatriate the internees when the British Mandate in Palestine came to an end. This the Government agreed to do. The internees then asked that the ICRC Delegate should travel with them, as their itinerary included calls in Arab ports. A Delegate went in June, 1948, to Gil-Gil, where he remained with the internees for several weeks before accompanying them on the first part of their journey.

## MEDICAL ASSISTANCE TO CIVILIANS

### **Campaign against Tuberculosis and Epidemics**

The ICRC, in collaboration with various public authorities and national organisations, continued the work referred to in the *General Report*<sup>1</sup>: the fight against epidemics and tuberculosis, help to the war-disabled, and organisation of medical missions and training courses for doctors and nurses.

A notable example was the aid given to the Austrian authorities during an epidemic of infantile paralysis which occurred in Austria in the Summer of 1947. The ICRC sent, jointly with the Swiss Relief Fund, quantities of medicaments to the places (Innsbruck and Graz, in particular) where the disease claimed most victims.

When examination for tuberculosis in the Displaced Person camps in Germany came to an end, the ICRC sought other uses for two mass radiography apparatus. One was sent to the French Zone of Occupation and, with the necessary equipment, it was placed at the disposal of the University Hospital in Tübingen. The second was lent to the Hessian Medical Association. The ICRC receives periodical reports on the use of the apparatus.

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<sup>1</sup> See Vol. I, pp. 710 and ff.



### **Medical Practitioners**

The number of doctors returning from captivity or from Displaced Person camps continued to increase steadily. The ICRC undertook an enquiry about the possibilities of finding them work abroad, and its efforts had some success.

### **Nurses**

The ICRC continued its study on the work of the Red Cross nurses and voluntary assistant-nurses, and their training for wartime duties ; a report has been published. In addition, from July 1, 1947 to December 31, 1948, information was given on the following subjects to over 800 individual enquiries from nurses in various countries : prosecutions for having enlisted in the Medical Services of the Occupying Power; conditions of work in Switzerland or abroad; professional training; repatriation; emigration; and relief. The ICRC was able to send footwear for Berlin nurses, and to bring to the notice of various relief organisations or private persons, particularly deserving nurses who were sick or in distressed circumstances.

### **" Documentation médicale "**

In June 1948 the ICRC had brought out, in French, the first 22 numbers of a medical publication for the doctors in captivity.

At the same time, it decided to issue a German edition. For this there was a very urgent need, the German-speaking doctors being still very short of international medical literature. Numerous University Faculties, Medical Institutes, Research Centres and individual practitioners became subscribers.

Many original contributions reached Geneva from doctors and specialists abroad who offered to collaborate.

### **RELIEF TO THE WAR-DISABLED**

Care of the war-disabled has always been included among the accepted activities of the ICRC. With very limited means



the Committee tries to make what assistance it can give them as effective as possible.

(a)—*Information.* — In the course of his travels in Eastern Europe, the head of the ICRC Medical Division visited a number of hospitals and clinics. He gave talks to professors and orthopedists, and had films shown on the training of the war-disabled. Copies of the films were later presented to the Yugoslav and Bulgarian Red Cross Societies.

In order to keep abreast of developments affecting the war-disabled, the ICRC has been in touch with international organisations in Geneva and with many official and private agencies in Great Britain and the United States. The data received are summarised, and articles and short statements drafted for the War-Disabled Section, which supplies them on request.

(b)—*Collective Relief.* — The War-Disabled Section used gifts and cash received to relieve, through the National Red Cross Societies and central welfare organisations, disabled ex-service-men in poor circumstances. The value of relief thus given by the Section was as follows :

July-Dec., 1947 . . .	157,125	Swiss francs
Jan.-June, 1948 . . .	65,000	" "
July-Dec., 1948 . . .	125,000	" "

The supplies included the following :

Orthopedic equipment and machines for the manufacture of artificial limbs; crutches; equipment for training the blind (basket-work, brush-making, netting, weaving wool, Braille watches and typewriters); films on the training of amputees; medical equipment; dressings and bandages; medicaments; tonics and restoratives; underwear; blankets; footwear; recreational equipment.

Recipients were of fifteen different nationalities : Albanian, Austrian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Yugoslav, Latvian, Polish, Rumanian and Spanish.

(c)—*Individual Relief.* — Individual requests for help came in steadily. Enquiry on the spot enabled the ICRC, from July

1947 to June 30, 1948, to assist eighty-six cases in eleven different countries, who were in particularly distressed circumstances.

In the absence of adequate funds, the ICRC must often confine itself to advising correspondents of associations or institutions to which they should apply. Those asking about hospital accommodation in Switzerland are told what formalities are necessary. Over one thousand such applications were dealt with from July 1, 1947, to December 31, 1948.

### “ GENEVA ” AMBULANCE TRAIN

It had been decided in the Spring of 1947, that an ambulance train, to be called the “ Geneva ”, should be formed for the repatriation to Germany from Eastern Europe of seriously wounded and sick prisoners of war, and inhabitants of German territories now incorporated in Poland. In Autumn 1947, the Berlin Delegation obtained from the German railway management the loan, until December 31, 1948, of a former ambulance train which had been handed back by the Allies. The train was refitted and put into service at the end of 1947.

Negotiations between the ICRC and the Soviet authorities led to an agreement under which the Soviet administration assumed the management and running costs of the train, while the ICRC provided it with foodstuffs and medical stores.

The “ Geneva ” consisted of twelve sleeping cars, each having thirty-three beds, and could thus convey 396 cot-cases. Other cars lodged the staff, the kitchen, the cold storage, an office, an operating theatre, heating and luggage vans. The train travelled under the Red Cross emblem.

On January 26, 1948, the train made its initial trip, carrying 321 sick repatriates from Frankfort-on-Oder to Thuringia; it then conveyed 399 women, who had been interned in Russia, from Frankfort to Pirna. As from July 1948, the train served for repatriating children<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See above, p. 68.