

Relief Committee for the Warstricken Jewish Population (RELICO)

Organization established in Geneva in September 1939 by Dr. Abraham Silberschein. Mainly funded by the World Jewish Congress, RELICO's original goals were to search for missing relatives and provide monetary and legal assistance to Jewish Refugees. However, Silberschein soon concentrated his efforts on refugee activities.

In the early days of the war Silberschein was informed that the Germans were willing to release Polish Jews from Sachsenhausen, Dachau, and Buchenwald if they would leave Germany immediately. With help from a Jewish immigrant organization in America, Silberschein succeeded in getting several groups out of Germany in 1940 and into Bolivia and Palestine. RELICO also helped organize the emigration of Jewish refugees from Vilna and Kovno to Japan, Shanghai, and to the Dutch colonies. It also aided Polish refugees in Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Italy, in addition to refugees from the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France, who had reached the unoccupied (Vichy) zone of France.

In all his refugee activities, Silberschein used the services of various bodies to transmit information and deliver packages of food and medicines; these included the International Red Cross, the Polish, Czechoslovak, and Dutch consuls in Switzerland, representatives of the Vatican, the Protestant Church Council, and the Quakers. Due to its many contacts and its ability to transmit information quickly, RELICO was one of the first sources to break the news about the Chelmno and Treblinka extermination camps.

After squabbling with the World Jewish Congress' Swiss representatives, Silberschein divided RELICO into two sections: one, headed by Silberschein, continued relief activities for the Jews of Poland and of Eastern and Southern Europe, while the other searched for missing relatives, rescued children in Western Europe, and sent food packages to Theresienstadt. Silberschein's attempts to rescue bearers of South American passports by seeking validation for the documents from the South American governments were ultimately

unsuccessful. However, in 1944 he did manage to carry out rescue activities for certain Hungarian Jews.

After the war Silberschein worked with Holocaust Survivors in Poland, Germany, Austria, and Italy; was active in the hunt for war criminals; and helped young survivors with tuberculosis in Switzerland.