

THE AGREEMENT

The UNRRA Agreement signed in the White House on November 9 was not a spontaneous or hastily improvised document, belonging to any one nation. It began when the first home was destroyed, when the first people came under enemy occupation, when the first indication of human need became evident ; it grew out of many minds seeking ways to revive suffering peoples, to aid in the eventual recovery of a war-torn world.

In London, an Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements, known as the Leith-Ross Committee, had worked for over a year on the problem of relief and rehabilitation of devastated areas in Europe. Economic, agricultural, medical experts did valuable spadework in tabulating needs and requirements.

The U.S. Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations under former Governor Lehman of New York had been organised in the United States and had already been at work in French North Africa. On May 17, 1943, the United Nations Conference on Food and Agriculture had met at Hot Springs, Virginia, U.S.A., to go into long-range post-war problems.

In short, men and nations had been concerned with freedom from want in many ways. With Axis defeat becoming a certainty, the time was ripe for a working organization to carry out urgent, planned steps to relieve the most essential wants of the occupied countries, both in Europe and in Asia. Preliminary discussions began between governments ; tentative proposals were exchanged and amended until a final draft, acceptable to all the United Nations, was approved. The United States agreed to convoke the historical meeting at the White House, where the delegates of 44 nations, coming from all continents and representing 80 per cent. of the human race, attached their signatures to the international agreement which constitutes the charter of UNRRA, the relief and rehabilitation organization.

Signers of this Agreement were :

Australia, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, French Committee of National Liberation, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iceland, India, Iran, Iraq, Liberia, Luxembourg, Mexico, Nether-

lands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippine Commonwealth, Poland, Union of South Africa, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.*

WHAT THE AGREEMENT SAYS

There were few wasted words in the UNRRA pact ; its spirit, devoid of frills and formalities, was one of honest realism. The preamble plunged into the task ahead : The United Nations are "determined that immediately upon the liberation of any area by the armed forces of the United Nations or as a consequence of retreat of the enemy, the population thereof shall receive aid and relief from their sufferings, food, clothing and shelter, aid in the prevention of pestilence and in the recovery of the health of the people, and that preparation and arrangements shall be made for the return of prisoners and exiles to their homes and for assistance in the resumption of urgently needed agricultural and industrial production and the restoration of essential services."

In 10 business-like articles, the Agreement continued :

UNRRA has the authority to plan, coordinate and administer, in agreement with the military authorities, the foregoing measures for the relief of victims of war in areas liberated from Axis control.

The Administration is to have the power to acquire, hold and convey property, to enter into contracts and undertake obligations appropriate to its objectives and purposes.

Each member government is to name one representative to the Council of UNRRA. The Council is to be the policy-making body of the Administration and is to be convened not less than twice a year by the Central Committee, consisting of the representatives of China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The Central Committee is to make policy decisions of an emergency nature between sessions of the Council. All such decisions, however, are to be open to reconsideration by the Council at any

* The Danish Minister in Washington, Mr. Henrik de Kauffmann, attended the Council Meeting in his personal capacity.