

PART I

THE PROBLEM

The Source of the Problem

Wars always have made refugees. The greatest war—the Second World War—left some 8,000,000 of them in Europe alone—uncounted millions of others elsewhere in the world. In those nightmare years of the “New Order”, the populations of villages, countrysides, cities, even entire provinces, were uprooted and scattered. Some of them fled before the advancing armies and ideologies. These were the true “refugees” who left their homes by choice to escape a known peril. Others were engulfed by the Nazi tide and wrenched from their homelands to serve as slave labourers on German farms and in German factories. In other words, they were “displaced” to serve the Nazi State and they became known as “displaced persons”.*

These mass movements took place after the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939. But there was another, older generation of refugees left by the First World War and the two decades of persecution and revolution that followed it. There were the so-called “White Russians”, the Armenians, the exiled Spanish Republicans, the pre-war victims of Nazi-Fascist racial and political persecution. Many of these had found refuge in Western Europe, where they had become partially assimilated. But a larger number, perhaps as many as 500,000, still required at least legal protection by international agencies.

The 8,000,000 refugees and displaced persons found in Germany, Austria and Italy at the end of the war were the survivors. Millions of others died or were executed during the war years. Those who were left were from every country in Europe and from every walk of life—men, women and children—Catholics, Orthodox, Protestants and Jews—farmers, artisans, professional workers.

* This distinction between “refugees” and “displaced persons” is a technical one, and the two terms will be used interchangeably in most cases.

The Armies of the Allied Nations found them living in concentration and slave labour camps in the ruins of the Third Reich that was built to last for a thousand years.

And there, today, three years after V-E Day, nearly a million of them remain.

The Road Back

In the months immediately after the German surrender, the highways of Europe were clogged with masses of refugees trekking homeward. By train, by truck and on foot, 4,500,000 of them aided by the Armies and by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, returned to their countries in the first three months after liberation. By the end of December 1945, the number of persons repatriated had risen to 5,500,000, but the rate was slowing down. It had begun to be apparent that some of the refugees had no desire to return to their homelands because of war-wrought changes in political and social conditions there. Governments had been changed... boundaries redrawn...

While the refugees awaited their turn for repatriation—or refused it—they continued to live in old concentration and slave camps and abandoned German Army barracks. The Armies and UNRRA fed, clothed and housed them, provided medical care, administration and legal protection. Another agency, the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, heritor of the refugee responsibilities of the Nansen Office and the League of Nations High Commissioner, turned its attention to the work of finding resettlement opportunities for the non-repatriable refugees and displaced persons. Scores of voluntary agencies worked closely with all of these official bodies in various aspects of the refugee task.

Throughout 1946, large-scale repatriation movements continued. From Africa, the Middle East and Western Europe, refugees returned to their homes, most of them to Eastern Europe.

Although approximately 7,000,000 persons had been repatriated by the end of 1946, there were still an estimated 1,600,000 refugees throughout the world who would need some form of international assistance. In December 1946, the General Assembly of the United Nations voted to create an International Refugee Organization as its agency to cope with all aspects of the problem, replacing the several other agencies then charged with responsibilities for various parts of it.

The Problem Today

The Preparatory Commission for IRO became an operating agency on 1 July 1947, pending completion of certain constitutional requirements for establishment of the agency. It assumed direct care of about 704,000 refugees and displaced persons, most of them in Germany, Austria, Italy and the Middle and Far East, with smaller numbers in other countries of Europe. It assumed responsibility for the protection of the interests of about 900,000 other eligible refugees, about 350,000 of them maintaining themselves in the occupied zones, 550,000—principally the pre-war refugees—distributed throughout the Western European nations. (Because the nations were slow to ratify the IRO Constitution and to pay their contributions to its operating budget, the Agency was forced to conduct its operations under a severe financial handicap. It had to undertake a 100 per cent responsibility with only a 75 per cent budget. It was forced to deny care and maintenance to all new applicants except those in the direst need.) It was forced to practise the strictest economies in the amount of food, clothing and services supplied to the refugees.

Today, a year later, the care and maintenance load has been reduced to 598,000 persons through the operation of programmes of repatriation and resettlement of refugees. Charts on this and the following page show the numbers and location of refugees receiving care and maintenance over the twelve-month period and the countries of origin of those remaining in camps on 30 June 1948.

Chart No. 1

Location of Refugees Receiving Care and Maintenance

Germany 508,000



These tables provide answers to the questions "How many DPs are there?" and "Where do they come from?" and "Where are they now?" It is logical to ask next:

How have they become the concern of IRO?

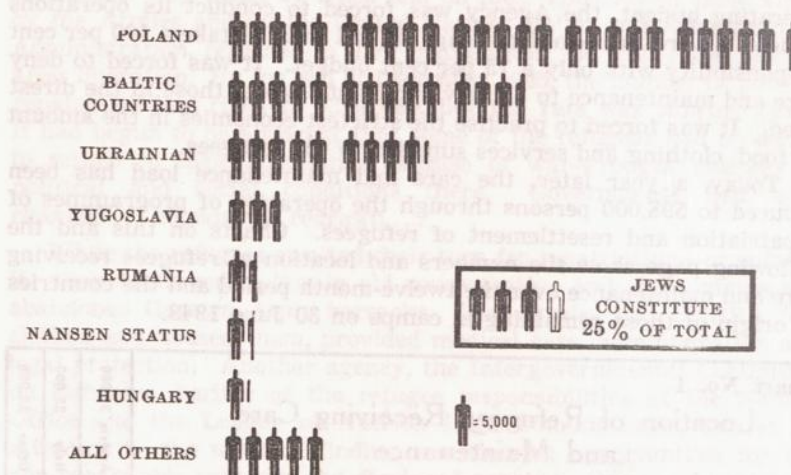
IRO was established to help persons uprooted by the war and its aftermath; to return home those who wished to go; and to

protect and help those who refused to return because of valid racial, religious or political objections. The IRO Constitution requires eight pages in which to list the conditions of eligibility, and there are many refinements of the general principles stated above. These careful definitions serve to ensure that IRO's aid is extended only to those who have real need of it.

Chart No. 2

Where Have the Refugees Come From?

COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP, LAST HABITUAL RESIDENCE,
OR ETHNIC GROUP



Here are some specific classes of refugees who are declared to be eligible in the IRO Constitution :

1. Victims of Nazi, Fascist or Quisling regimes.
2. Spanish Republicans and other victims of the Falangist regime in Spain.
3. Persons who were considered to be "refugees" before the outbreak of the Second World War.
4. Persons who were compelled by Nazi, Fascist or Quisling regimes to undertake forced labour or who were deported from their countries for racial, religious or political reasons.

"The Facts About Refugees."

ERRATUM

In Chart No. 2 on page 6, for "5,000" read "10,000".

origin or former habitual
able to avail themselves
of that country.

from IRO assistance are :

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and the enemy in operations
the persecution of civil
members.

table by treaty.

organizations seeking the
of any Member of the
the leaders of movements
turning to their countries

civil service of a foreign

such areas as the Sudeten-
tates do not receive IRO

Eligibility Officers to be
appeal from that decision
Eligibility Appeals.

THE PROBLEM

es wait for the chance to
and sheltered by the IRO.

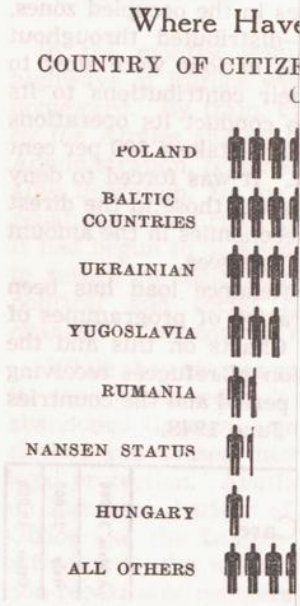
be kept employed, to the

extent that is possible in the ruined economies of the occupied areas.
And they must receive training to refurbish old skills and develop
new ones so that they will be able to earn their livelihood when
they are re-established.

These functions, and a dozen subsidiary ones, are the responsi-
bility of the Department of Health, Care and Maintenance.

protect and help those who refused to return because of valid racial, religious or political reasons. This report requires eight pages in length and there are many references above. These careful details are extended only to those who

Chart No. 2



Here are some specific categories of persons who may be eligible in the IRO Commission:

1. Victims of Nazi, Fascist or Quisling regimes.
2. Spanish Republic refugees and other victims of the Fascist regime in Spain.
3. Persons who were considered to be "refugees" before the outbreak of the Second World War.
4. Persons who were compelled by Nazi, Fascist or Quisling regimes to undertake forced labour or who were deported from their countries for racial, religious or political reasons.

5. Persons outside their country of origin or former habitual residence who are unwilling or unable to avail themselves of the protection of the Government of that country.

... **NOT eligible** : Specifically barred from IRO assistance are :

1. War criminals, Quislings and traitors.
2. Any persons who voluntarily assisted the enemy in operations against the United Nations or in the persecution of civil populations of United Nations Members.
3. Ordinary criminals who are extraditable by treaty.
4. Persons who have participated in organizations seeking the violent overthrow of the government of any Member of the United Nations, or who have become leaders of movements seeking to prevent refugees from returning to their countries of origin.
5. Persons who are in the military or civil service of a foreign state.

Persons of German ethnic origin from such areas as the Sudetenland, Pomerania, Silesia and the Balkan States do not receive IRO assistance.

A refugee who has been declared by Eligibility Officers to be ineligible for IRO aid has the right to appeal from that decision to a semi-judicial Review Board for Eligibility Appeals.

PART II

HOW IRO IS MEETING THE PROBLEM

While the displaced persons and refugees wait for the chance to begin a new life they must be fed, clothed and sheltered by the IRO. Their health must be guarded. They must be kept employed, to the extent that is possible in the ruined economies of the occupied areas. And they must receive training to refurbish old skills and develop new ones so that they will be able to earn their livelihood when they are re-established.

These functions, and a dozen subsidiary ones, are the responsibility of the Department of Health, Care and Maintenance.