

Gardner Jackson Papers
Box 64
Refugees Defense Committee

RUSSIAN REFUGEES APPEAL FOR HELP

Inmates of Camp in Italy Fight Enforced Repatriation— Many Commit Suicide

A group of displaced Russians in Italy has appealed to American and British public opinion against the forced repatriation of 200 of their compatriots.

The appeal, released yesterday through the Refugees Defense Committee of 112 East Nineteenth Street, said a number of the displaced Russians had committed suicide rather than return to Russia and others had been killed and wounded in trying to escape from their British guards. "In this moment of terrible drama," the appeal added, "we earnestly beseech the democratic forces in Europe and America to rouse themselves against injustice and to put a stop to the bloody mass crimes that are being perpetrated against those hapless Russian refugees who do not wish to return to their Soviet 'fatherland'."

Details of Fighting Given

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

ROME, June 5—The forced repatriation of Russian refugees in Italy was debated in the British House of Commons on May 21. Subsequently the Italian press published particulars.

The Russian Government had long insisted on the delivery, under the Yalta Agreement, of former Russian soldiers who fought for the Germans. Most were in Allied camps but Italy was responsible for some. Italy, feeling that as a defeated nation she was in a weak position to resist the Russian demands, finally turned all the Russians in her charge over to the Allies.

Soon afterward the first suicides and escapes occurred in two British camps near Rimini when a report spread that Britain had yielded to the Russian demands and was preparing to send the prisoners to Russia. They were told, however, that they would be sent to Scotland.

Toward the middle of May, 182 Russians were made to put on German uniforms and taken to Riccione, where they were put on a train. Married men were permitted to leave their wives and children behind. In Riccione the Russians, fearing they were being sent to Russia, rebelled but were overwhelmed by their guards after suffering some casualties. The dead, dying and wounded were loaded with the rest on cattle trucks and sent north.

In Bologna they were joined by sixty-five more Russians, reportedly from an American camp in Pisa. Another revolt occurred here with the same result. The Russians were said to have suffered seventy casualties. The train went on toward the Austrian frontier. At the American-Russian zone border in Austria, American authorities stopped the train. What happened after that is not known.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 6, 1947.

Press Release
June 5/47

Refugees Battled Return to Soviet

By DAN MARKEL

N. Y. Journal-American Washington Bureau.
WASHINGTON, June 5—The death and injury of 100 refugees who resisted forced deportation to Communist Russia was revealed today by David Martin in answer to charges that he is engaging in a campaign to discredit UNRRA. Martin, secretary of the refugees Defense Committee, offered Documentary proof of riots, suicides and multiple forced family separations at displaced person camps where UNRRA sought to prod its pitiful wards back into Soviet Russia.

REVEALS FACTS.

"The facts speak for themselves," Martin said.

"There is a report from Camp No. 6, near Rimini, Italy which reveals a bloody riot. In addition to the killed and injured, many committed suicide. When the revolt was suppressed, the camp leader ended his life by cutting his throat with a tin can."

The attack on Martin came from URRA director Lowell Rooks, who also included New York's ex-Gov. Charles Poletti, Dorothy Thompson and ex-Sen. La Follette in his condemnation.

New York Journal-American, Jones

THE NEW YORK SUN, THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1947.

SAYS REFUGEES FACE RED DEATH

Appeal Reports Suicides of Russians in Italy.

Displaced Russians in Italy are committing suicide rather than undergo enforced repatriation, according to the Refugees Defense Committee, 112 East 19th street, which appealed today for public opinion to mobilize behind its effort to save these refugees from "almost certain death" if they are sent home. The committee leaders said that they were asking the State Department and American correspondents in Italy to investigate reports of mass suicides, and of many being killed by guards.

It was pointed out that under the Yalta agreement, Britain and

the United States undertook to return to Russia all persons who were citizens of the U. S. S. R. before the war. By the first of this year, more than 2,125,000 nationals had been repatriated, in many cases amid scenes of violence and suicide, the committee charged, while 13,800 were in European camps. A much larger number, variously estimated at from 200,000 to 400,000, were reported to be living precariously outside the camps, doing their utmost to conceal their Russian nationality.

"We beseech the democratic forces in Europe and America to put a stop to the bloody mass crimes that are being perpetrated against those hapless Russian refugees who do not wish to return to their Soviet fatherland," the committee appealed.

Hoax Is Reported.

The statement charged that to facilitate the removal of Russian refugees, the local administration had unofficially spread the rumor that they were being sent to Scotland to work with British miners. "But when these same Russians were put in special steel railroad cars, heavily strung with barbed wire, then all illusions vanished, and the unfortunate refugees understood the nature

of the hoax that had been perpetrated on them," the committee asserted.

The New York organization made public several documents from Italy setting forth the details surrounding suicides by Russian refugees.

"We solemnly declare," one appeal from Italy read, "that we are guilty of no other crimes than that we carried on a struggle against the terror of the Soviet police system, against a tyranny without precedent in human history; or that we have dared to leave or have refused to return to the Soviet Union, kingdom of forced labor and the brotherhood of slavery."

REFUGEES DEFENSE COMMITTEE
112 East 19th Street
New York 3, New York

APPEAL TO BRITISH AND AMERICAN PEOPLE FROM RUSSIAN REFUGEES OF CAMP NO. 6 - ITALY

We earnestly beseech you with all possible dispatch to inform the British and American people that on this last May 8 there took place a terrible and bloody drama in Camps No. 6 and 7, which has been set up under British administration near the town of Rimini in Italy: after having spent more than two years behind British barbed wire, 174 persons were taken from Camp No. 7 and 11 persons from Camp No. 6, all of whom were sent to the Russian Zone in Austria to be delivered to the Soviets. In the course of the removal many committed suicide and many more were killed while attempting to escape.

In order to facilitate the removal of the Russian refugees, the local administration had unofficially spread the rumor that those who were removed were being sent to Scotland to work with the British miners. Our poor Russians believed this. They were even happy about it. They were happy to be able to work so that they could repay the British people, even if only in part, for whatever expense had been entailed by their involuntary sojourn in the camps. They were happy of the opportunity to do their bit, however small, in the rehabilitation of the economy of England, of the country that had given them refuge and that had, down through history, won glory as the staunchest upholder of the ideals of democracy and freedom.

But when these same Russians discovered that they were to be doomed to death through repatriation, when they were stripped to the skin and searched and everything metallic was taken away from them, when they were put in special steel railroad cars (In Europe many cars are wooden - translator's note), heavily strung with barbed wire, and when British Army reinforcements were concentrated to expedite this export of death - then all illusions vanished and the unfortunate refugees understood the nature of the hoax that had been perpetrated on them.

Most of those who remain in Camps 6 and 7 now are women and children; many of the women are very old and many of the children are orphans. We no longer believe

in any promises. On the contrary, we are disposed to believe in the possibility that our wives, mothers and children will again be the victims of similar acts of treachery and violence. We are momentarily prepared for another such "surprise."

But we should still like to believe that, even though we have been deprived of all rights, one last privilege is left to us - the privilege of doomed men to their final testament. And it is of this privilege that we wish to avail ourselves by appealing through your kind assistance to the conscience of the people of Britain and of America.

In this moment of terrible drama, we earnestly beseech the democratic forces on Europe and America to rouse themselves against injustice and to put a stop to the bloody mass crimes that are being perpetrated against those hapless Russian refugees who do not wish to return to their Soviet "fatherland."

We protest with all our hearts and with all our energies against the loathsome attempts of the Soviet government and its many agents to portray us in the eyes of European public opinion as fascists and collaborators.

We solemnly declare that we are "guilty" of no other crimes than that we carried on a struggle against the terror of the Soviet police system, against a tyranny without precedent in human history; or that we have dared to leave or have refused to return to the Soviet Union, kingdom of forced labor and the brotherhood of slavery.

We ask the democratic world to believe that in the Soviet Union all of the elementary rights and freedoms have been abolished and that, under the cloak of revolutionary phrases, the monstrous regime which controls Soviet Russia is destroying and discrediting everything of which progressive mankind could be proud, everything which constituted the essence of the spiritual and material culture of humanitarian democratic Europe.

In this tragic and historic moment - tragic and historic for the people of Europe, as well as for the people of the camps - we raise our humble voices.

We, who for more than twenty five years have labored in the USSR and who have held many positions under the Soviet government, declare it our deepest conviction that only the immediate and united mobilization of all the spiritual and material forces of the democratic world can curb the bloodthirsty appetite of Russian Communism and can prevent the fall of the iron fist of violence which totalitarian bolshevism now holds menacingly over the democratic world.

May 12, 1947

Inmates of Camp No. 6

THE NEW YORK TIMES, FRIDAY, JUNE 13, 1947

COERCION AT CAMPS DENIED BY UNRRA

Gen. Rooks Answers Refugee Group's Charges of Red Infiltration in Organization

Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, June 12—Maj. Gen. Lowell W. Rooks, director general of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, today answered charges made against UNRRA personnel in a letter from David Martin, secretary of the Refugee Defense Committee.

He again insisted that "any suggestion that there is pressure, coercion, discrimination, or undemocratic action in displaced persons camps to secure repatriation is utterly without foundation."

Mr. Martin charged that Communist infiltration in UNRRA calls for international refugee organization screening of UNRRA employees to remove pro-Communists. He suggested removal of Paul Edwards, UNRRA director for the American zone in Germany on the ground that he both "went along" with Russia and stigmatized as "Nazi" and "Fascist" all refugees who refuse repatriation.

Edwards Reached in U. S.

General Rooks reached Mr. Edwards, now in this country on leave, in Aberdeen, S. D. General Rooks stated:

"The UNRRA director for the American zone in Germany specifically denies that he said, 'We agree with the Russians; we support their claims.'

"He acknowledges that he made the statement in which anti-repatriation groups are characterized as undemocratic remnants of pre-war regimes that reflect Nazi and Fascist concepts. I can only regret that he made such a statement as it constitutes a departure from UNRRA's policy of strict political neutrality.

"I attribute the error to overzealousness in time of stress. A serious riot had just occurred in a camp at Altenstadt and much unjustified criticism was being directed at UNRRA. Corrective action has been taken to prevent such errors in the future."

General Rooks said that he had heard stories of pressures in the camps, but they were pressures, sometimes involving actual physical force, "from groups or organizations trying to keep people from returning home."

Governments which are members of UNRRA agreed that repatriation was the best solution for those willing to accept it, General Rooks stated. He added that UNRRA has therefore "used its best efforts to bring about conditions favorable for repatriation. This has resulted, he said, in a policy fully supported by the United States under which UNRRA "is trying to arrange to have people who are actively opposed to repatriation placed in separate camps."

Edwards Scored By Group

The Refugee Defense Committee made public yesterday a letter to Maj. Gen. Lowell W. Brooks, Director General of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, criticizing Paul Edwards, UNRRA Director for the American Zone in Germany, for his alleged statement that those refugees who refuse repatriation reflect Nazi and Fascist concepts.

"If it were not for the short time that remains to UNRRA, this evidence of a lack of impartiality would warrant the removal of Mr. Edwards," the letter stated.

The letter signed by David Martin, secretary of the committee, 112 East Nineteenth Street, repeated charges that there is a substantial pro-Communist infiltration in the UNRRA administration and that this administration had been using "moral, psychological and physical pressures to persuade the refugees to return."

Press
Release
June 12/47

Ask Ban on Reds In Refugee Aid

N. Y. Journal-American Washington Bureau.

WASHINGTON, June 12.—Communist infiltration in UNRRA "is a matter of commonplace knowledge," the Refugee Defense Committee charged today in an open letter to Brig. Gen. Lowell W. Rooks, UNRRA director general.

The committee demanded that UNRRA personnel be thoroughly screened before being transferred to the International Refugee Organization, which will replace UNRRA, and that all pro-Communists be barred from the new set-up.

"Since the IRO will be financed exclusively by the non-Communist countries, and since IRO's purpose is to help refugees most of whom are avowedly anti-Communist, both fairness and common sense would dictate the rigid exclusion of pro-Communist personnel from IRO," Gen. Rooks was told.

U. S. AIDE ASSAILED

The letter was sent to the general over the signature of David Martin, secretary of the defense committee.

Martin lashed out at Paul Edwards, UNRRA director in the American zone in Germany, accusing him of stigmatizing refugees who have refused repatriation to their Communist-ruled lands as "Nazi or Fascist."

"Only in the language of the Communist world and its various peripheries are all those who oppose Communism put down as 'fascists' or 'nazis,'" his letter added.

Martin declared that if it were not for the fact that UNRRA will soon expire, the committee would suggest Edwards' removal.

All Hearst Newspapers

New York 3, N. Y.

AN OPEN REPLY TO THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF UNRRA.

Dear General Rooks:

At a press conference on June 4 you undertook to reply to certain criticisms our organization has made of UNRRA's administration of the displaced persons. If the reports which quoted you are correct, you accused our committee of acting out of "political rather than humanitarian motives" and characterized our statement that there was a substantial pro-communist infiltration in UNRRA as an attempt to "smear" the entire administration. You then went on to say the following: "They would prefer to see these unhappy displaced persons sit where they are in the camps in Germany, Austria and Italy until they rot thoroughly - and largely at the expense of the American taxpayer - rather than go home where, I am convinced, the greater part of them would find their best opportunity to rehabilitate themselves."

In the first place, we should like to state for the record that none of the criticisms we have had to make were intended as a blanket condemnation of UNRRA. We know that UNRRA has performed a great humanitarian service in many fields and we are convinced that the majority of its employees have been loyal and efficient servants. Our criticisms have been directed specifically against the section of UNRRA in charge of displaced persons and, more particularly, against the activities of this section since the inauguration in September 1946 of the all-out repatriation drive which the UNRRA officials in charge, with somewhat cynical frankness, named "Operation Carrot."

In the second place, we should like to state for the record that our organization is not opposed in principle to repatriation. But we believe that repatriation should be on an entirely voluntary basis. We agree wholeheartedly that repatriation is the sensible solution in the case of those who are not opposed to Communism or even in the case of those who do not feel too keenly, one way or the other, on the subject. With very few exceptions, those who belonged to this category have already accepted repatriation. With equally few exceptions, those who re-

main in the camps have given what should be sufficient indication that they do not belong to this category; if they have resisted all the pressures and inducements to which they have been subjected, then it can only be because they find the regimes in their homelands so utterly abhorrent that they prefer all the hardships of exile and life in the camps to what awaits them on their ancestral soil.

In our letter of April 16 we expressed the point of view that it was UNRRA's duty (1) "to facilitate the repatriation of those refugees who voluntarily desired repatriation" and (2) "to care for those who refuse to return home because they find the regimes in their homelands intolerable." . . . "We are not asking UNRRA to dissuade the refugees from returning home," said our letter. "UNRRA must remain neutral. It must neither persuade nor dissuade. Any endeavor to reassure the refugees about conditions in their home countries would fly full in the face of the official declarations made by the American President, the State Department and the American Ambassadors to Poland and Yugoslavia."

We accept your assurance that UNRRA has never employed coercion to get the refugees to go back. But this is a charge we have never made. What we have said is that UNRRA or, more specifically, certain UNRRA administrators, have employed various types of moral, psychological and physical pressures in their endeavors to persuade the refugees to return. This is a statement which we can back up to the hilt; indeed we are at present preparing a compilation of certain official UNRRA documents dealing with this type of persuasion. We shall be speaking of this and other matters in a communication which you will receive from us later this week.

Our organization has taken the stand that the evidence of pro-communist infiltration in UNRRA makes it imperative that UNRRA administrative personnel be screened before being taken over by the IRO. Again we wish to emphasize that this is no more intended as a blanket condemnation of the administration than the President's introduction of the loyalty check is intended as a condemnation of the American Civil Service.

We are convinced that there is ample justification for this recommendation. We would point out that leading national periodicals like Saturday Evening Post and Readers' Digest have carried articles by qualified observers dealing with communist infiltration in UNRRA. In Europe this Communist infiltration in UNRRA is a matter of commonplace knowledge. Indeed, at the preparatory committee of the IRO the question was raised by the Dutch and Belgian delegates, both of whom expressed the point of view that IRO should take measures to prevent the inclusion of pro-communist elements. Finally there is the statement by Mr. Elliott Shirk, formerly American Zone Director for the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees - a statement which was prepared after consultation with U.S. Army officers: "We have long been aware of forces at work in our camps inimical to the human and legal rights of Displaced Persons. Lately these forces have been weighted so heavily in favor of the U.S.S.R. that freedom of speech is disappearing and active fear replacing it."

These statements are, admittedly, generalizations. But there is ample documentary evidence to back them up. We enclose for your information a photostatic copy of Stars and Stripes for May 15, carrying a statement by Mr. Paul Edwards, UNRRA director for the American Zone of Germany. The caption of the article reads: RUSSIA BACKED ON DP CHARGES. The article - a United Press dispatch written by Richard S. Clark - quoted Edwards as saying the following: "We agree with the Russians. We support their claims. These anti-repatriation groups are not the product of democratic processes but are rather the remnants of prewar regimes that reflect Nazi and fascist concepts."

In our opinion Edwards' statement is expressive of an altogether impermissible hostility to those refugees who refuse repatriation - and is indicative of much else besides. Only in the language of the Communist world and its various periphories are all those who oppose Communism put down as "fascists" or "Nazis." If semantic criteria mean anything at all, then Edwards, in the few words quoted above, gives certain unmistakable indications. To charge, as Edwards does, that those who refuse repatriation to their Communist-dominated homelands "reflect Nazi or fascist concepts" is tantamount to accepting the Soviet thesis.

The charges now made by Edwards were originally made by the somewhat more eloquent Mr. Vishinsky at the United Nations. At that time Mrs. Roosevelt replied to Mr. Vishinsky as follows: "I gather that Mr. Vishinsky felt that anyone who did not wish to return under the present form of government must of necessity be fascist. I talked to a great many of these people who do not strike me as fascist." I can think of no more fitting reply than this to Mr. Edwards.

I should like to draw your attention to the fact that it was Mr. Paul Edwards who replaced Mr. J. H. Whiting after the exposure of the terms of Administrative Order 199 had forced the removal of Whiting. This order, if you will recall, provided for the outright suppression of anything that might be termed anti-repatriation propaganda; the isolation of anti-repatriation elements; the transmission to the Soviet authorities of lists of Soviet citizens; the opening of all camps to Soviet Liaison Officers, "including the privilege of making house calls to inquire regarding the residents in each house," a program of pro-repatriation indoctrination, involving "the distribution of Soviet proclamations, literature, films and newspapers"; and, finally, it provided for the summary punishment of any "act of disorder, violence, disorder, or insult towards Soviet officers." You are no doubt aware that the State Department itself made representations to the UNRRA administration concerning certain of the provisions of Order 199.

We believe that Edwards' statement gives all the more point to our recommendation that UNRRA personnel be screened before being transferred to the IRO. We know that for technical reasons it would be impossible for UNRRA or the IRO, as United Nations bodies, to refuse to employ an administrator on the grounds that he was a Communist or sympathetic to Communism. But there are ample technical grounds for demanding that those in charge of the displaced persons be free from such political prejudice as would make impartiality vis-a-vis their refugee wards impossible. Since the IRO will be financed exclusively by the non-Communist countries, and since IRO's purpose is to help refugees most of whom are avowedly anti-Communist, and since the Communist position from the first has completely negated the right of asylum, both fairness and common sense would dictate the rigid exclusion of pro-Communist personnel from IRO.

The previous UNRRA director for the American Zone displayed such overt hostility to the refugees that he had to be removed. His successor, the present director, has given evidence of an equal lack of impartiality - and if it were not for the short time that remains to UNRRA, we believe that his removal, too, would be warranted. Unless the UNRRA administrative staff is carefully screened in order to remove the Whittings and the Edwards, there can be little hope that the IRO will conduct itself differently.

Let us reassure you in closing that we are not unaware of the great humanitarian service performed by UNRRA. With its recent policy towards the refugees we are, however, compelled to take serious issue.

DAVID MARTIN
Secretary, Refugees Defense Committee

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TUESDAY, MAY 27, 1947.

TOWARD IRO

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs gave its unanimous approval yesterday to a bill authorizing the United States to join the International Refugee Organization, which was created at the last session of the U. N. General Assembly. The Senate has already given approval to this plan. If the House now follows suit, and if both branches of Congress then authorize the proposed American contribution to the project (a sum now fixed at a maximum of \$75,000,000), there is good reason to hope that IRO can be set up as a going concern before June 30, the date when UNRRA ends its refugee work. If this does not happen, the American armies of occupation in Germany and Austria, already beset by many difficulties, will find this additional problem on their hands.

On the eve of hoped-for action by the House a private agency deeply interested in this question, the Refugee Defense Committee, calls attention to one anomalous provision in the Constitution of IRO. It defines "refugees" as victims of Nazi or Fascist regimes, or of the quiescent governments which supported those regimes; Spanish Republicans, and "persons who were considered refugees before the outbreak of the Second World War." But this definition actually covers only a very small proportion of the real refugees. The great majority of them are not refugees from Nazi, Fascist or Falangist persecution; they are Ukrainians, Poles, Balts and Yugoslavs who are refugees from the totalitarian regimes of our Russian ally and its satellites. No doubt that is why the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, White Russia, Poland and Yugoslavia cast five votes—the only five—against the historic resolution of Dec. 15, 1946, which created IRO.

It would have been better for all concerned if the Constitution of IRO had used a broader definition. Nevertheless, as the Refugee Defense Committee points out, this constitution is sufficiently elastic (and sufficiently contradictory) to permit a wide margin of interpretation. "If the IRO personnel are carefully selected and if the American representatives are wisely instructed, there is no reason why IRO should not be able to act as an effective defender of the refugees." Certainly this is their one best hope. We trust that the House will act promptly.

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, MAY 25, 1947.

COMMUNIST THREAT TO REFUGEES SEEN

Defense Body Demands Change in International Unit's Rules That Stress Repatriation

Revision of certain policies adopted by the International Refugee Organization was demanded yesterday by the Refugee Defense Committee, 112 East Nineteenth Street, in a memorandum addressed to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

The committee, headed by Charles Poletti, Robert La Follette and Dorothy Thompson, approved adherence to the IRO "in principle," but expressed apprehension over its present policies.

The memorandum, released by David Martin, secretary of the RDC, asserted that the projected IRO program planned to apply pressures to obtain the repatriation of displaced persons, and that one particular provision would protect communists but persecute anti-communists.

Also, it was asserted a "large pro-communist infiltration" in the staff of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration by persons who were to be transferred to the IRO constituted a danger to those refugees who refuse repatriation.

UNRRA Record Deplored

The memorandum continued: "The constitution of the IRO is sufficiently elastic, and sufficiently contradictory, to permit of a wide margin of interpretation. If the IRO personnel are carefully selected and if the American representatives on the IRO are wisely instructed, there is no reason why the IRO should not be able to act as an effective defender of the refugees."

"If, on the other hand, the IRO should develop into the continuer, both in personnel and in policy, of the unaimed UNRRA administration, then it will earn for itself the curses of all of its million wards—as UNRRA has already done for itself."

The memorandum said that the definition of refugees in the IRO constitution was entirely inadequate, limiting them to victims of the Nazi or Fascist regimes, Spanish Republicans or persons considered refugees before the outbreak of World War II.

"The fact is," the memorandum asserted, "that only a tiny minority of the refugees in Europe today are refugees from Nazi, Fascist or Falangist persecution. The vast majority of them are refugees from the regimes that have been set up by our Soviet ally and its satellite powers."

Resettlement Urged As Aim

"It is true that considerations of diplomatic etiquette might have made it difficult to include these categories by name in the constitution of a sub-committee of the United Nations. But this still does not justify the employment of a formula which completely obscures the real nature of the problem."

The committee urged that the IRO place its principal emphasis on resettlement rather than repatriation.

It contended that with "negligible exceptions" persons classified as "surrendered enemy personnel" did not serve with the German Army because they were pro-Nazi but because they were starved into accepting service, because they were opposed to the Soviet regime, or because they found the world about them so utterly confusing.

A provision of the IRO denying refugee status to leaders of movements hostile to the governments of their country of origin would have deprived Alexander Kerensky of refugee status after the first war, the committee noted.

Essentially, this clause which applies to "leaders" and "sponsors" violates "the traditional concept of the right of asylum as well as the basic right of freedom of speech," the committee said.

P E T I T I O N

ON THE SUBJECT OF: The "Repatriation Drive" Currently Being Carried on by
the authorities in Charge of the Displaced Persons.

TO: The Honorable George C Marshall
Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington D C

PRESENTED BY:

Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America
National Catholic Welfare Conference
American Friends' Service Committee
Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society
American Federation of Labor
Congress of Industrial Organizations
Refugees Defense Committee
International Rescue and Relief Committee

May 14 1947

When the question of the refugees was being debated by the Human Rights Committee of the United Nations, the United States delegation under the leadership of Mrs. Roosevelt resolutely opposed every demand of the Soviet Powers that the Displaced Persons be forcibly returned to their homelands. Repatriation, said the American delegation, should be entirely on a voluntary basis. Those who had reason to fear persecution if they returned home should be accorded the traditional right of asylum.

In a world where human life had come to mean so little, the refusal of the democratic nations to compromise with the totalitarian nations at the expense of these hapless refugees was heartening indeed -- and this all the more since the democratic nations could not have been unaware of the costs and difficulties involved in providing sanctuary for those who refused repatriation.

It is to be regretted that the attitude of the various authorities entrusted or to be entrusted with the care of the Displaced Persons has reduced to rather questionable Proportions the right of asylum for which the American delegation fought so uncompromisingly at the United Nations. Many refugees who were opposed to repatriation have already succumbed to the pressures that have been applied to them. Instead of decreasing, these pressures have been increasing, so that at the present time the plight of the refugees has reached a state of crisis that cries out for the strong and immediate intervention of the United States, Great Britain and the other democratic powers.

(I) Over a long period of time there were numerous reports from unimpeachable sources that certain UNRRA administrators were employing various types of pressures and inducements to get the refugees to go home. On March 18, a conference of UNRRA directors in Paris announced a "program to repatriate this Spring 369,281 displaced Poles and Yugoslavs", this program to be preceded by "the circulation in various DP camps of 'the fullest information possible' about Poland and Yugoslavia, whose governments will supply the facts." (N.Y.Herald-Tribune, March 19, 1947). UNRRA administrators have indicated that they hope to push their repatriation drive to the limit in the brief time left to them -- and the word "compulsory" has even appeared in some of their statements.

(II) The Preparatory Commission of the IRO at its recent meeting in Geneva spoke of launching the IRO by initiating a tremendous repatriation drive. In this connection it is noteworthy that the IRO constitution says that its main purpose is "to encourage and assist in every way possible the return of the Displaced Persons to their countries of origin."

(III) Finally, there is the recent Proclamation of General Lucius D. Clay in which he urged the refugees "to volunteer to go home this Spring rather than face the uncertainties of continued residence in Germany." We know that General Clay personally has been most sympathetic to the cause of the refugees, and we cannot believe that he could have issued his proclamation unless he had despaired of finding a democratic solution.

We are convinced, however, that a democratic solution can be found.

It is not right to demand of the 200,000 Jewish Displaced Persons that they return to the countries where six million of their brethren were slaughtered, countries which for the Jews evoke memories that make rehabilitation a psychological impossibility.

It is equally inhuman - in many respects it is even more inhuman - to urge the Poles, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs and Balts, who have fled from totalitarian terror in their own countries, to accept repatriation. The 850,000 Political refugees who still remain in the camps and assembly centres of Europe have already refused repeated offers, frequently accompanied by substantial inducement, to return home. It is not an easy thing for people of the land to cut themselves off from their ancestral soil. If they have spurned the many overtures that have been made to them and resisted all the pressures that have been exercised on them, then it can only be because they find the regimes existing in their homeland so utterly abhorrent that they prefer all

the hardships of exile and the camps to life in their ancestral homeland. Nor must the fact be overlooked that by their repeated refusals the refugees who remain in the camps have stigmatized themselves as recalcitrant oppositionists in the eyes of the governments demanding their return.

The official pronouncements of the American government on the subject of the Yugoslav, Polish and Russian regimes could hardly be reassuring to a man who feels himself to be thus stigmatized. Nor are they particularly reassured by those well-wishers who tell them that, while it may be dangerous for intellectual opponents of communism to return home, simple peasants have absolutely nothing to fear if they are repatriated. We would point out that the New York Times recently estimated the number of political prisoners in Yugoslavia at 500,000. When it is considered that Yugoslavia's total population is only 14,000,000, it is very obvious that the bulk of the 500,000 must be not intellectuals, but "simple peasants."

We believe that neither UNRRA nor the IRO nor any other authority has any moral right to attempt to persuade the Displaced Persons to return unless they are prepared to offer a practical and workable guarantee that they will not be subject to racial or political persecution in the countries to which they are asked to return. The declarations of the Department of State in re the Yugoslav elections and the Polish elections would indicate that the American government is convinced, on the basis of all available information, that freedom of political opposition does not exist in the countries within the Soviet sphere of influence; and they would indicate further that the government sees no way at this time in which it can act to prevent these violations of the Yalta Agreement and the Atlantic Charter.

At the foundation of all freedom is freedom of choice. It is not consistent to speak of the need for supporting the forces of democracy everywhere in the world and at the same time to deprive the mass of refugees in Europe of the freedom to choose whether they wish to live under communist regimes or whether they wish to remake their lives in the democratic world. What is more, it is difficult to see how either UNRRA or IRO can hope to persuade these until-now unpersuadable refugees to return home without exercising considerable pressure on them. One is compelled to ask precisely what forms of pressure the authorities contemplate using to achieve the goal of repatriation.

We would urge you, Mr. Secretary, to give these problems your immediate and sympathetic consideration. To offer the refugees no alternative but repatriation or starvation is to negate the right of asylum which is a traditional tenet of the democratic faith.

After the last war, the League of Nations succeeded in coping with a refugee problem much like the one that exists today. If the pro-refugee nations were to combine all their efforts, we are convinced that, among the many countries of Latin America, among the Empire countries and in the United States, homes could be found for the vast majority of the Displaced Persons in Europe. We are convinced, too, that the integration of the Displaced Persons into the life and economy of the democratic world would contribute both culturally and economically to its progress. It need hardly be pointed out that, had the pro-refugee governments, as soon as the war was over, embarked on a concerted refugee policy, the majority of the Displaced Persons could have been resettled for somewhat less than what it has cost to feed them and house them under abysmal conditions in the camps of Europe since the end of the war.

It is not too late for the democratic governments to embark on such a program now.

For the Federal Council of Churches
of Christ in America

SAMUEL MCCREA CAVERT

For the National Catholic Welfare
Conference

EDWARD E. SWANSTROM

For the American Friends Service
Committee

JAMES READ

For the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

SAMUEL TELSEY

For the American Federation of
Labor

FRANK FENTON

For the Congress of Industrial
Organizations

JAMES B. CAREY

For the Refugees Defense
Committee

DAVID MARTIN

For the International Rescue
and Relief Committee

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OPEN LETTER TO GENERAL ROCKS (NO. 2)

June 25, 1947.

Dear General Rocks:

We are writing to you again because we feel that it is necessary to establish an understanding on certain points with both the present and future administrators of the displaced persons.

Before proceeding to a consideration of your reply, I should like to emphasize again that whatever criticism we have to make is not intended as a condemnation of the UNRRA Administration as a whole - which has performed an indispensable humanitarian work in many fields - but is directed specifically against that section of the UNRRA Administration in charge of the IPs and more particularly against its activities since the inception of the first big repatriation drive in December 1946.

In replying to our several statements you have declared repeatedly that UNRRA has received no evidence that any displaced person repatriated through its efforts has been persecuted in any way subsequent to repatriation; that, on the contrary, UNRRA workers who have checked on the welfare of the repatriates have submitted uniformly favorable reports on their treatment. The mass of evidence at hand, however, constrains us to reject this assurance.

In the first place, we should like to point out that UNRRA has had no field workers in the territories of the former Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian Republics or in any of the other territories, either prewar or postwar, of the U.S.S.R. Of all the regions behind the iron curtain, the former Baltic Republics are perhaps the most completely shut off from the observation of the democratic world. Since the end of the war no official representative of the British or American governments, no representative of any independent agency and no representative of the democratic press has been permitted to tour these territories so that he might see with his own eyes what was going on there. This fact by itself should be sufficient to arouse the gravest suspicions; of itself, too, it almost makes credible all the reports of mass deportations to Siberia and of totalitarian terror which from time to time seep out of these countries or are brought out by escapees.

In view of these repeated reports, in view of its own lack of access to these territories, and in view of the complete exclusion of all independent observers, we fail to understand how UNRRA could take it upon itself to assure the Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian refugees that they have nothing to fear if they return to their homelands. Nor can we understand how you yourself, in your high office of Director General of UNRRA, could undertake to make the categorical assertion that there is no evidence that any repatriated displaced person has been subjected to any form of persecution. We have on hand a copy of UNRRA Repatriation News, Issue No. 13, May 15, 1947. This bulletin announces the publication of a "strongly and effectively worded statement" by the President of the Lithuanian Republic "in which he urges Lithuanians to return to their homeland." UNRRA team captains are instructed to "watch for their copies" and to distribute them when they arrive.

The bulletin also reproduces the text of a similar statement addressed to the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic. If UNRRA were merely to distribute these statements without comment, there could be no objection. But we consider it ^{at the} height of immorality or the height of irresponsibility for UNRRA Administrators to underwrite these declarations about regions to which the democratic world has been denied all access.

We are aware that in the case of Yugoslavia UNRRA has had a certain number of workers in the field, and we are quite prepared to believe that they have checked on a number of the repatriates - necessarily a very small percentage - and have found them to be leading unpersecuted lives. But again there are facts which constrain us to disbelieve the categorical assertion that there has been no persecution of repatriates in Yugoslavia. Ambassador Richard C. Patterson, Jr. has informed the press that slave labor in its vilest form exists in Yugoslavia; and all accounts by responsible American correspondents agree that the Yugoslav state has become completely totalitarian and that some half million or more of its citizens are now slave laborers in Tito's concentration camps.

Since the majority of the repatriates were anti-communist at the time of their return, it would not be unnatural to assume that they were placed under careful surveillance by the secret police; certainly there is no reason for believing that they are granted a privileged status which exempts them from the constant espionage and frequent persecution which is the lot of the average citizen in the modern totalitarian state.

In Poland, it is true, the opposition still enjoys a few vestiges of liberty so that the arrests and deportations and executions have not been on quite as massive a scale as in the Baltic countries or in Yugoslavia. But political situations do not remain static. The tendency in Poland, as in Hungary, Bulgaria and Rumania, has not been upwards but downwards. If the events of the past few months have any meaning at all, then we can only conclude that the tendencies at present at work in Poland will shortly be consummated by the complete suppression of the political opposition and by the establishment of a totalitarian police state on the Russian and Yugoslav models.

How many of these displaced persons who have accepted repatriation under UNRRA auspices have been subject to persecution we cannot say. That there has been persecution is beyond denial. You are undoubtedly aware that inside and outside the UNRRA camps today there are many displaced persons who, having accepted repatriation, found the conditions in their homelands so utterly unbearable that they risked their lives to escape again to the admitted horrors of life in Germany and Austria.

When Director General La Guardia visited the Yugoslav camp at El Shatt last September, he asked one of the delegation why he refused to return to Yugoslavia. "Because I don't wish to repeat the experience I had the last time I returned" said the delegate. "What was that experience?" asked Mr. La Guardia. "I was arrested and sentenced to be executed." . . . "Why?" . . . "Because I was considered too friendly to the British," answered the delegate.

The respected Catholic weekly America has printed the evidence of a Ukrainian girl who accepted repatriation to her native Dniopetrovsk. We quote a few excerpts from it here:

-3-

"When I arrived at my native Dniepropetrovsk, I was assigned to a kolhasp (collective farm) under strict supervision of a communist foreman. . . . I was treated as if I were a criminal because I had been taken by the Germans. . . . One day, at the instigation of my communist patron, I was taken by a group of eight Soviet soldiers. . . . For two days I was maltreated, molested, raped. . . . I knew then that I could not live longer in my native country. . . . The new repatriates met even worse fates than myself. Most of them never saw their families or native villages, but were sent directly to Kazakstan and Siberia. . . . I decided that my fatherland was a living hell in comparison with liberated France."

There is one more point we should like to make on the subject of persuading the displaced persons to accept repatriation. There is indisputable evidence that in those countries where the communists have succeeded in establishing themselves to the exclusion of all opposition, the children from the age of six are being systematically militarized and brutalized and indoctrinated to anticipate the coming war with Western "reaction." Even were it not for the persecution of their parents, we think it could fairly be argued that to return children to such education as awaits them on the other side of the iron curtain is by itself a crime against humanity.

In your statement to the press in reply to our letter you again denied that UNRRA had employed any pressures to induce the Displaced Persons to accept repatriation. We have in our possession so many depositions by displaced persons and so many copies of official UNRRA documents in which the pressures to be employed are frankly discussed, that we are at a loss to understand your statement.

One of the most terrifying and effective of the various pressures employed by UNRRA was the repeated screenings to which the displaced persons were subjected - screenings which in some camps deprived more than a third of a personnel of their IP status and cast them out to starve in a starving and hostile German world. You are no doubt aware that in a number of camps mass petitions were submitted protesting against the brutality of UNRRA's screening methods. You are no doubt aware, too, that early this year the United States Army in Germany intervened to halt the UNRRA screening program because it had caused so much alarm among the IPs. We quote from the Stars and Stripes for January 25:

"Frankfort, Jan. 25. The Army today disclosed it had ordered UNRRA field teams to halt a new screening program which had caused alarm among thousands of Zone IPs who considered it 'political'.

Alex Squadrillo, executive officer of the USFET G5 IP branch said 'all the IPs were somewhat agitated' when they received questionnaires on their political affiliations and background.

Facts asked in the survey could be used against IPs by governments in the lands they no longer want to live in, the IPs feared.

One letter of protest signed by nearly 5000 at the Augsburg-Hochfeld Baltic Camp, requested the Army to investigate the action. . . .

Squadrillo said 'IPs are beginning to regard UNRRA as political organization, rather than an international relief organization.'

In the light of available evidence, it could hardly be denied, too, that the UNRRA Administration has attempted to induce repatriation by discontinuing educational, recreational and other cultural activities in the DP camps, by withdrawing school equipment from use, and by transferring camps even in the dead of winter and, more frequently than not, to inferior sites. What has been involved cannot by any stretch of the imagination be put down as a series of unrelated and accidental abuses; on the contrary, it must be ascribed to a conscious program to induce the refugees to return by discomforting them physically and morally, and by utterly depriving them of any hope for an alternative solution.

In support of this assertion, we quote from one of many documents - a letter to a Polish School Director, signed by C. W. Hiltz, Director of UNRRA Team 130:

"September 26, 1946

"In line with the total emphasis on repatriation, word has been received from Central Headquarters in Germany, to the effect, that as of October 1st, all Polish schools, vocational courses, work shops, handicrafts, etc., shall be discontinued.

This order applies to the three occupation zones, and we have no alternative but to carry out this instruction.

Will you kindly cooperate in this as in other matters?"

The transfer from one camp to another may seem like a small thing to people who are rooted in their homelands and their homes, but in reality it was probably the greatest single factor contributing to the breaking down of resistance to repatriation. The inhuman manner in which these transfers are sometimes accomplished are amply documented by the refugees themselves, and by UNRRA's official records. We list here only two cases of the many: (1) on Jan 10, 1947, personnel of the Marnau camp at Augsburg were transferred in 20 degrees of frost, after their resistance had been broken by shutting off heat and electricity and withdrawing food rations for a period of 3 days. (2) In November 1946, the Yugoslav colony at Munich-Freimann was transferred to a disused SS barracks at Bad Aibling, despite the warnings of a refugee committee, headed by a competent doctor, that the conditions at Bad Aibling were so unsanitary and facilities so completely lacking that any transfer was bound to result in catastrophe. Within 3 weeks after the transfer, 25 of the 80 children who came to Bad Aibling were buried in little graves outside the barbed wire, and beside these little graves were many larger graves. We append for your information a statement by Dr. Milan Shijachki, President of the Yugoslav community at Munich-Freimann, dealing with the events described above. We leave it to you to decide whether or not transfers under such conditions constitute "pressures".

The success of the first repatriation drive initiated 1st October and ending 31st December 1946, during which approximately 51,000 Polish DPs agreed to return to their homeland, has been the subject of a very frank analysis in the monthly report of the Military Government, U.S. Zone, for Feb 1947 (No. 19). We quote:

"An evaluation of this drive indicates that the 60 day-ration offer was not the primary inducement, but rather that decisions to return were more directly related to news from Poland, persuasive propaganda, and mass psychology. The mandatory uprooting of many groups, necessitated by the consolidation of centers, also induced repatriation."

-5-

It is not an easy thing for a peasant to go into exile from his homeland, to shut himself off from the earth he tilled, from the friends he knew, from the family he loved. If the people who remain in the Displaced Persons camps have refused all the inducements and resisted all the pressures to which they have been subjected, (to do so required nothing short of an heroic constitution) then it can be only because they are somewhat less prepared to make their peace with communism than were some of the UNRRA administrators who have been urging repatriation on them. For such people the real solution is not repatriation but resettlement.

In closing, we congratulate UNRRA on its massive accomplishment in repatriating so many millions who desired repatriation. Our quarrel has been with its attitude towards the displaced persons who refuse repatriation.