

"NATION"

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# Europe's Wandering Jews—and Others

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**A**N IMPOSING-LOOKING parliament of thirty-two nations met in London last week as the "Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees." It heard a report from its chairman, Sir Herbert Emerson, former High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations, enlarged its executive committee to include Soviet Russia, adopted a constitution, and set up a new committee of experts to deal with travel documents for hundreds of thousands of refugees who will emerge from the war with neither homes nor passports nor even a recognized nationality. In the course of its discussions the word Jew was seldom heard and the word Palestine never.

The fact is that despite all the hullabaloo about organization this international body will have little to do with the immediate problem of probably twenty million human beings in Europe described in official language as "displaced persons." Set up at Evian in 1938 to help political and racial groups get out of Germany, the Intergovernmental Committee's first job virtually ceased upon the declaration of war. It was reorganized after the Bermuda conference in April, 1943, with a larger field. It has since acted as a sort of international clearing house for such official organizations as the American War Refugee Board and such voluntary organizations as the American Friends Service Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee, aiding the emergency rescue operations of the Jews trickling out of Hitler's *Festung Europa* into Spain, Switzerland, or Turkey.

Reorganized again, its function is redefined as principally dealing with the third and ultimate stage of the refugee problem when those who have homes to go to have reached them, immediate relief has been provided, and the residue of uncertain numbers is left to be sent no one today knows whither. Then the Intergovernmental Committee will act as successor to the old Nansen Committee, which issued papers for "stateless persons," then principally White Russians.

Meanwhile the expectation in London is that some eighty million people in Europe will soon start walking home and at least twelve million more will wait for official aid. "Unorganized trekkers" is the official word for the walkers, who are expected to clog the roads, go hungry, and enormously complicate the official program. The task of helping them will be primarily the army's. Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, does not approve of unorganized trekkers. It regards them as

a certain interference with transportation, a probable menace to health, and a possible police problem. Its Civil Affairs Department, headed by the able Major General Allen Gullion, U. S. A., with a joint Anglo-American staff, intends to assume immediate control of the problem; when the United Relief and Rehabilitation Administration will get into the picture, if at all, is anybody's guess. UNRRA has liaison officers with the army but no direct authority, and it is believed that the army will retain control for a minimum of six months.

The army has assembled all available studies of displacements of the population of Europe, tabulated and charted them, and printed twenty-five million each of two types of registration cards—three hundred tons of cards alone—for what, fond of alphabetic symbols, it calls "DPs"—displaced persons.

According to these studies at least eight million foreigners are now in Germany doing semi-slave labor in factories and on farms. About half of these are in the eastern region, for which presumably Russia will be primarily responsible. In the territory which Britain and America are likely to control there are, the army reckons, 700,000 Belgians, one-tenth of the entire population of the country and close to half the adult male population; also about 150,000 Dutch, 650,000 Frenchmen, 200,000 Italians, 130,000 Yugoslavs, 110,000 Greeks, 700,000 Czechs, 1,500,000 Poles, more than 1,250,000 Russians, and small numbers of Hungarians, Rumanians, Bulgars, Danes, and Norwegians. Also there are more millions in the satellite countries, some of whom may have been withdrawn into Germany before it collapses.

Some DPs, working close to the borders, will get somewhere under their own steam. The army program, however, is not to permit mass migrations along roads which the military will need but to collect and concentrate DPs of Allied nationalities into assembly centers, whence they may be transferred after screening to reception centers, where they will become the responsibility of their own governments.

At the assembly centers DPs will be registered, their previous homes and desired destinations recorded. They will be medically examined, checked for military security, and, if in order, given visas for return home. They will be given pre-numbered identification cards about the size of Social Security cards, and when transportation is available will be sent to the reception centers in their own countries.

A small try-out has already been made in parts of

France, where the refugees were collected by our army in assembly centers and promptly transferred to dispersal centers operated by French officials. But the army differentiates such "refugees" displaced within the borders of their own countries from "DPs" who will try to cross the frontiers.

The army belief is that its organization, fresh from its experience with the greatest logistics operation in history, is infinitely better prepared to deal with a gigantic movement of peoples than any civilian organization, official or unofficial, could be.

UNRRA had developed a large program of its own but the army has definitely assumed the responsibility for the first stage. The Czechs have formally agreed to cooperate with the army system of registration and transfer. The other exile governments have indicated their approval. Enormous supplies will be needed—if registration cards weigh three hundred tons, the tonnage of food required will be astronomic—but the army believes it has sufficient reserves. Initial supplies may be lifted by air, as has been done with the advancing armies.

The army does not regard Spanish refugees who were in France before the war, and are still there, as a military responsibility; it will leave their care to the French government and to private agencies.

While millions of Germans have been "displaced" to satellite countries during the war, the army believes that most of these will have been withdrawn close to the German borders before the war ends. Civilian Germans will be assembled and returned to Germany by a similar process and then will become the responsibility of whatever German authorities may exist.

After six months the army believes the bulk of the job will be done and mopping-up operations can be transferred to UNRRA, which likewise has a six-month relief and rehabilitation plan, presumably on a far smaller scale than that envisaged in the earlier stages of its existence before the army clarified its views of civilian operations in the military zone. What UNRRA can do will depend on what the army does first. Its planning problem is obviously extremely difficult. The army is likely to turn to it as soon as individual problems differentiate themselves from mass movements, as in the case of a couple whose former home in Poland was burned, whose passports were lost, who cannot prove their nationality, who have cousins in Palestine, children in the United States, and no jobs anywhere.

The Intergovernmental Committee comes back into the picture after the army and UNRRA have done the preliminary jobs. Although the army's registration cards provide for optional registration of religion, the army does not regard Jews as a separate problem. Its job is a mass-production one of returning people to the countries of their origin. UNRRA will do a further sifting, but there will remain a desperate residue of hundreds of thou-

sands, possibly more, who don't want or will not be permitted to return to their pre-war homes. General assurances have been given by most exile governments that they will accept former residents regardless of nationality, but some have different ideas as to what constitutes residence; also, many people who in the course of Hitler's mad careening became almost professional refugees, fleeing from one land to another and then still another, may be stranded without recognized homes. New frontiers will further complicate the picture, notably for those Poles who were displaced westward during the war and may not wish to return under Russian sovereignty. Millions of Jews forcibly transferred to new ghettos by the Nazi regime and others who have found temporary haven in North Africa will have nothing to return to that they can call homes.

Here will be the major sphere of the Intergovernmental Committee. Its recent plenary session formed a technical sub-committee to study a new form of passports for "stateless" persons, a problem complicated enough but simple in comparison with the problem of finding homes for them.

The ultimate destination of the stateless is a delicate, difficult, probably endless problem. In some circles there has been sharp criticism of the Intergovernmental Committee because it included no representative of any Jewish group. It invited some thirty Jewish bodies, including relief committees as well as the Jewish Agency for Palestine, to attend the session without the right to participate. Nobody was asked to present the ideas of the Jews at its sessions. Palestine wasn't mentioned. The answer is that the Intergovernmental Committee is an intergovernmental committee. Its success is dependent on the cooperation of member governments. It cannot have a policy of its own. It can only explore possibilities, suggest, and administer when national policies are clear.

Whenever in the past the international conscience has been outraged by the plight of the Jews, the answer has been to reorganize the Intergovernmental Committee, thus suggesting that something is about to be done. The real answer is not a new kind of committee but havens for Jews. From a European perspective America, usually generous with money, always vocal in demanding a modification of the Palestine immigration policy, might show a more realistic generosity by modifying its own immigration policy. A free port for one thousand Jews, who are expected to return to devastated Europe after the war, doesn't seem a large contribution. Pressure for the liberalization of the Palestine policy should help, but it might be more effective if it were accompanied by the recognition of American opportunity. The present likelihood seems to be that a year hence the world, including America, will wake up to the fact that emergency measures are only emergency measures and possibly a million Jews will still be homeless.

## Polls, Propaganda, Politics

### Bias in the Phrasing of Questions

ONE way polls make propaganda is in the selection of what questions are to be asked when. To ask: "Should Candidate Jones return the money he stole from the townspeople?" just before election would obviously help his opponents. Professional pride tends to keep the phrasing of questions and the statistical methods scientifically acceptable most of the time. Questions of the "have-you-stopped-beating-your-wife?" type are rare. A much more difficult kind of bias to cope with is the choice of questions which in terms of the expected response must embarrass one party.

With this problem in mind, we have analyzed the questions raised by two national polls during the months of May, June, and July of this year. The Gallup Poll (American Institute of Public Opinion) published results on twenty-seven questions not directly concerned with candidates, nominations, or voting. Each question was independently evaluated by five public-opinion specialists. They rated sixteen of the twenty-seven as genuinely neutral—those dealing with such issues as beer on navy ships, Germany's plans for another war, the shortage of victory gardens, and the desirability of holding the line on prices and wages. (The omission of profits from that last question is noteworthy and perhaps not wholly neutral.)

Ten of the remaining eleven Gallup questions were judged as probably helpful to the Republican side. Only one question was considered to be the sort of thing the Democrats would like to have publicized to help their campaign. This was, "If a new Council or Union of Nations is formed after the war to take the place of the old League of Nations, should this country join?" (Yes, 72 per cent.)

Ten of the eleven questions might well have been welcomed by the Republican National Committee. The reader may judge for himself whether raising these questions at this time and publicizing the results in headlines would not tend, in effect, to discredit the Roosevelt regime: (1) What do you think of the travels of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt? (Approved, 36 per cent; disapproved, 45 per cent); (2) From what you know about this case, which side are you more inclined to think in the right, Montgomery Ward or the government? (Montgomery Ward, 60 per cent); (3) Do you think there is need for a law to prevent strikes in war industries? (Yes, 70 per cent); (4) Is there any particular plank which you would like your party to include in its platform in the coming Presidential election? (Only the suggestions offered for the Republican Party's platform were published.)

The other questions dealt with recognition of the De Gaulle government, Administration restrictions on hiring power, a two-term Presidency limitation, the effect of CIO support on a candidate's chances, Soviet Russia's trustworthiness, and the South's one-party system. All these were questions presumably embarrassing to the Democrats. Similar questions on the opposite side might be: "Would the fact that isolationists support Mr. Dewey affect your attitude to-

ward him?" "Would the fact that most big-business men support a candidate influence your vote?"

The present analysis does not impugn the Gallup Poll's sincerity or its desire to be fair. It is not Gallup's fault if the government had a publicity problem in the Montgomery Ward case. Criticism of the Administration's action is apt to be more newsworthy than approval. Questions whose import is hostile toward the Democrats might be asked without premeditation.

Questions asked by the *Fortune* (Roper) poll during the same period are not really comparable to Gallup's. They were designed to provide information for *Fortune's* "management" readers rather than to make newspaper headlines. One-third of them were asked only of business men.

Of the eighteen queries *Fortune's* interviewers put to a sample of the general public, fifteen were found by the judges to be helpful to neither side in the election. The other three seemed likely to help the Republicans because of special circumstances. One asked people to name "special groups you feel had too much influence over Congress in the past year or so" at a time when the CIO's Political Action Committee was in the headlines. The second was a question about whether unions ought to "put on campaigns themselves for the election of a particular national candidate." The absence of a parallel question about corporations or business pressure groups makes the poll's fairness doubtful.

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### 50 Years Ago in "The Nation"

THE ELECTION IN ARKANSAS on Monday was the first in which a certificate of the payment of a poll-tax was made a prerequisite to voting. "In consequence," says a despatch from Little Rock, "the Negro was practically eliminated from the contest." . . . If a Mahone ever turns up in Arkansas with a campaign fund of \$25,000 or \$50,000, the Negro vote will not be so thoroughly eliminated as it was on Monday. It may even happen, as it did in Virginia, that the poll-taxes of the blacks are more generally paid than those of the whites, and the Arkansas Democrats may finally feel constrained, as did those of Virginia, to repeal the tax law for the sake of their party.—September 6, 1894.

THE RECORD of railway accidents is humiliating. During the year, 2,727 employees and 299 passengers were killed, and 31,729 employees and 3,229 passengers were injured. Collisions, derailments, and accidents at stations account for the injuries and deaths of passengers. Employees were killed and injured principally by coupling cars and falling from trains, making a seriously large total.—September 6, 1894.

THE REPUBLICAN PLATFORM adopted at Saratoga last week was evidently written by a common scold. It denounces about one thousand facts and tendencies which it observes in the Democratic Party, without saying, however, what the Republicans would do or ought to do if they had the power.—September 27, 1894.