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LEAGUE OF NATIONS

**INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES**

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT**

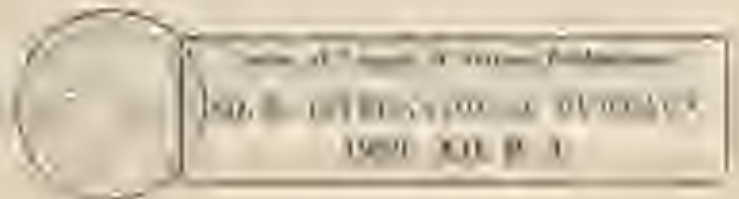
**SUBMITTED TO THE TWENTIETH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE ASSEMBLY OF  
THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS BY SIR HERBERT EMERSON, G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., C.B.E.  
HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES**

1. Since the war must cause many changes in the problem of refugees, it is desirable to supplement my report dated July 24th, 1939, by an appreciation of the new conditions. It is, however, only possible at the present time to make a very provisional estimate of how the war may affect the activities of the League regarding those refugees already under its protection. It is impossible to forecast, except in general terms, the new categories which the war will create, and the new problems which will arise in regard to them.

2. The refugees now under the protection of the League of Nations consist of two main classes—namely, those previously under the Nansen Office and those from Greater Germany. Of the former, it is necessary for the present purpose only to consider the Russians and Armenians. Subject to developments which at present cannot be foreseen, it may be assumed that the war will have little effect on their political position, and that the Governments concerned will wish to continue their previous policy towards them. The economic position of many, however, is likely to deteriorate, and this is particularly the case as regards the poorer classes of Russians. More cases of distress are likely to arise, and a greater strain will be put on the resources of the private organisations. Already the evacuation of children from Paris, and their maintenance in outside settlements, has increased the necessity for relief. The disturbance of social life inseparable from a war will add to the difficulties of individuals and is likely to increase the number of applications for legal assistance. Generally, however, and in the absence of unfavourable developments, the work of the High Commissioner seems likely to continue along much the same lines—namely, to secure political and legal protection of refugees, to facilitate the co-ordination of humanitarian assistance and to co-operate closely with the Governments concerned. On the humanitarian side, it will be necessary to use the resources of the Humanitarian Fund to the best possible advantage, to discourage schemes which require capital expenditure, and to give prompt assistance so far as this is possible to urgent cases requiring relief.

3. The problem of refugees from Greater Germany requires fuller examination, and in order to appreciate the present position, it will be relevant to give certain facts and figures relating to the problem as it existed just before the outbreak of hostilities, and which, owing to later information, are more reliable than those contained in my original report to the Assembly.

(a) It is estimated that at the end of August 1939 the number of confessional Jews in Germany was 250,000 and in Austria 63,000, making a total of 313,000. Had the war not occurred, it would have been necessary to emigrate 167,000 of these from Germany and 42,000 from Austria.



(b) The total number of non-Aryan Christians in Greater Germany was 190,000, at a rough estimate, of whom 127,000 would have had to be evacuated.

(c) According to an estimate made by the Council for German Jewry, the total emigration of confessional Jews from Greater Germany between April 1933 and July 1st, 1939, was as follows :

From Germany. . . . .	215,000
From Austria . . . . .	97,000
From Czecho-Slovakia . . . . .	<u>17,000</u>
Total . . . . .	329,000

Those evacuated from Czecho-Slovakia consisted almost entirely of Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. On the assumption that the emigration of non-Aryan Christians has been roughly one-fifth of that of full Jews, and allowing for emigration since the Council for German Jewry made this estimate, it may be assumed that 400,000 refugees have emigrated from Greater Germany since 1933.

(d) It has been estimated that, of the number of full Jews who had emigrated from Germany up to July 1st, 1939, 150,000 were in European countries, that, of these, 50,000 could be considered as settled, and that not less than 100,000 were awaiting re-emigration. To these may be added 20,000 non-Aryan Christians and about the same number of Czechs and political refugees from the Sudetenland. Further, of those who had found refuge in countries outside Europe, 16,000 would have to be re-emigrated.

Had there been no war, the problem of emigration of refugees from Greater Germany would have been as follows :

(1) To be emigrated from Germany (confessional Jews) . . . . .	167,000
(2) To be emigrated from Austria (confessional Jews) . . . . .	42,000
(3) To be emigrated from Greater Germany (non-Aryan Christians) . . . . .	127,000
(4) To be re-emigrated from European countries of temporary refuge . . . . .	140,000
(5) To be re-emigrated from non-European countries of temporary refuge . . . . .	16,000

(e) While the number of persons to be evacuated from Germany was continuously decreasing, the number of Jews to be re-emigrated from countries of temporary refuge was continuously increasing. The number of these at the end of August was 156,000, of whom 140,000 were in European countries. This latter number was not the total in those countries, which was nearer 200,000. Of the total, at least 60,000 were dependent for maintenance on charitable organisations, and this was also the case with the majority of the 16,000 who would have to be re-emigrated from non-European countries of temporary refuge. On the other hand, had there been no war, a considerable number of those in European countries would have been able to finance their own emigration, had openings been available, and the Council for German Jewry put the number of these as high as 50,000.

(f) Even before the war, the problem of refugees in countries of temporary refuge was a serious one. It was an embarrassment to the Governments concerned, it was viewed with suspicion by organised labour, and, although much of this suspicion was founded on false economics, it none the less increased the danger of anti-Semitism. Further, it placed a tremendous strain on the resources of the private organisations, which were finding themselves unable to furnish the funds for maintenance and at the same time to finance emigration. In the Netherlands and Belgium, the State had been obliged to come to the assistance of the organisations in maintaining the refugees.

4. The above are the main facts and figures relating to the past. An attempt may now be made to estimate the changes in the problem caused by the war.

(a) For various reasons, it does not seem possible under present circumstances for the Organisms of the League of Nations to concern itself with any of the categories (1), (2) or (3) mentioned in paragraph 3 (d) above.

(b) There will then remain those who have already left Greater Germany and who have not found permanent homes elsewhere. Their position may be considered with reference to whether the country of temporary refuge is (1) a belligerent country, (2) a neutral European country or (3) a neutral non-European country.

(c) The belligerent countries of temporary refuge are the United Kingdom and France. The policy adopted by the British Government is to regard Czech refugees as friendly aliens, and German and Austrian refugees as *technically* enemy aliens, with an initial presumption that they are friendly disposed. There is at present no intention to follow a policy of general internment. While the safety of the State is the first consideration, and individuals are liable to internment, the intention is to allow as many as can be safely allowed to take up employment as opportunities occur, and even to do some forms of national service. A number of tribunals have been established, which will classify the refugees according to their reliability. It is too early to give more than an indication of how this policy is likely to work in practice. An uncertain factor is the attitude of the public towards persons of German origin or nationality, even although these persons are the victims of Nazi oppression. Public opinion on the whole has so far been favourable, and, if there is no serious change in this respect, a large number of refugees now in Great Britain should be absorbed in remunerative employment, but there will be a time lag of several months before employment is general, and, during this period, there will be a severe strain on the resources of the private organisations for maintenance and support.

It is unlikely that the United Kingdom will be able to admit more refugees of enemy origin, except in very special cases.

(d) No official information has been received regarding the policy of the French Government towards refugees in France. It appears from private sources, however, that, in the first place, male Austrian and German refugees have been interned, but that their cases will be examined by Commissions, and that, following this examination, use will be made in various forms of employment, including national service, of those in regard to whose reliability there is no doubt. It is not known whether the French Government will desire to emigrate some of the refugees if openings and facilities are available.

(e) Little information is at present available regarding the position in the neutral countries of Europe. The three countries mainly affected are the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland, but there is practically no neutral country which has not got refugees, either legally admitted or through illegal entry. As already mentioned, their presence, even before the war, was the cause of much embarrassment to the Governments, and was placing a very heavy strain on the private organisations. The common desire was to emigrate as many as possible, and as quickly as possible. The war cannot fail to increase the difficulties of the Governments and of private bodies, who may be expected to urge that the emigration of refugees be pressed forward.

(f) Before the war, the position of refugees in non-European countries of temporary refuge—*e.g.*, Shanghai—was deplorable. They were dependent for support on private charity, and the opportunities for re-emigration were small. The problem in their case will be to continue private relief and to find permanent means of livelihood.

5. So far, then, as refugees from Greater Germany are concerned, the problem of finding new homes will now be reduced to the re-emigration of a certain number of persons from countries of temporary refuge. At the end of August 1939, the total number of these was approximately 156,000, of whom 140,000 were in European countries. It is as yet impossible to say how far the war will modify this number. Much depends on the policy of Great Britain and France, and the demand for labour both during and after the war in these countries. All that can be predicted at present is that the problem of emigrating refugees now in neutral countries of refuge will be as urgent as before the war.

It is very difficult at this stage to forecast how the war will affect the problem of finding permanent homes for refugees of German origin or nationality by re-emigration. It seems inevitable, however, that it will reduce the number of openings previously available. The belligerent countries will now have to give first and foremost consideration to political factors, and to determine questions of immigration into their territories with primary reference to the effect it may have on the general situation. In so far as immigration may still be possible, considerations of safety may be expected to prevail, and it may be anticipated that the selection of immigrants of German origin or nationality will have to be carried out far more rigorously than before the war. So far as neutral countries of permanent settlement are concerned, it may be hoped that circumstances will not arise which will make it necessary to restrict the generous policy which they have hitherto pursued, and that they may be able even to extend the openings previously available. Should this prove to be the case, a large measure of success can be achieved in finding at least a war-time solution of the problem of refugees from Greater Germany as it has been modified by a state of war.

6. In my original report to the Assembly, I said that the financial position gave cause for anxiety, and that, unless new sources of finance became available, it was difficult to see how the various schemes of large-scale settlement could be financed. Subsequent to the preparation

of that report, the representative of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, at the meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee in London in July last, made the following declaration :

“ His Majesty's Government are, for their part, examining the manner and extent to which private subscription to an international fund to assist in defraying the expenses of overseas emigration of refugees might be encouraged by Government participation, possibly on a basis proportionate to the amount of private subscription, and I would earnestly invite my colleagues to lay these considerations before their Governments and to communicate their views to me without delay. If other Governments are prepared to agree to this change of principle, and to co-operate in such participation, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will take the initiative in proposing a scheme for the purpose.”

It is understood that, in view of the war, the British Government finds it impossible to contemplate any new financial commitments which are not directly related to its prosecution, and that therefore it cannot usefully proceed at present with the formulation of the scheme for financial assistance above mentioned. In these circumstances, it seems unlikely that governmental financial assistance will be forthcoming in excess of that already given, except is so far as the internment of refugees may involve a charge on the Governments concerned.

In belligerent countries, and particularly in Great Britain and France, the war cannot fail to have the most serious effect on the extent to which private resources will be available for assisting the refugee problem. The natural inclination of the public in those countries, including the Jews of British and French nationality, will be to regard it as their first duty to assist with their resources towards the prosecution of the war and to take the view that they are not justified in accepting new commitments unless these can be shown to be directly relevant to the furtherance of the war. The flow of private charity will be directed towards objects inseparably connected with the war, such as Red Cross activities, and there will be little, if any, disposition to divert assistance to other channels. Little information has been received of the effect of the war on the private contributions in neutral European countries of temporary refuge. The countries mainly affected are the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. It is to be apprehended that the private organisations of those countries will find it more difficult to raise the funds necessary for maintenance and support, that they will have to seek greater help from external bodies such as the Joint Distribution Committee, the well-known American organisation, and, at the same time, to seek relief through emigration to countries of permanent settlement. It may be hoped that, in addition to the United States of America, the neutral countries, and, in particular, the Scandinavian countries, will maintain the splendid humanitarian traditions of the past.

7. While the conditions of the problem have changed, and will continue to change, the duties of the High Commissioner will remain the same as defined by the Assembly in the course of its nineteenth ordinary session, held in September 1938. In particular, it will be desirable for him to work in the closest co-operation with the Governments concerned and the private organisations. It will also be essential that he should maintain intimate contact with the Intergovernmental Committee. It is of importance in this connection that President Roosevelt has decided, notwithstanding the war, to proceed with the Conference on refugee problems which was arranged previous to the war. The Conference will be held at Washington on October 16th and 17th, and invitations have been issued to the Chairmen of the Committee as representative of the British Government, and to the Vice-Chairman of the Committee as representatives of the United States of America, France, the Netherlands, and the Republics of the Argentine and Brazil. The High Commissioner of the League of Nations will attend in his capacity as Honorary Director of the Intergovernmental Committee. The various problems relating to refugees from Greater Germany will be discussed, and it may be expected that, as a result of the discussion, the present problems will be more clearly defined and the means and facilities for solving them fully explored.

8. So far, I have confined attention to the categories of refugees in existence before the war, and who were included in the protection of the League of Nations. It is already apparent that the war will create new categories, and that there will be very large numbers of persons who, for political, racial or religious reasons, are unable to live in their own countries. Thousands have already fled from Poland into neighbouring countries, and, although at the time of writing (September 23rd, 1939) the position is too confused for an appreciation to be made, it appears inevitable that the necessity for relief will be on a huge scale. It will be for the Assembly to consider, if proposals to this effect are made by any Member, how far it should extend its protection, and how far the assistance it may be able to give can be effective. It may be assumed that private organisations will seek to pursue on similar lines the magnificent humanitarian work they did during the great war, and that such bodies as the International Red Cross, the Save the Children Fund, and the Joint Distribution Committee of the United States of America will be able to organise relief measures on a large scale. Since these will be directly connected with the war, they are likely to make a greater appeal to private charity

than the problem of pre-war refugees. It may be that some Governments may be prepared to give financial assistance, although at present there is no indication of this.

Private organisations, however, will be able to do little towards the political and legal protection of the refugees.

The extent to which the League of Nations could give effective assistance would appear to be conditioned by the following considerations : (1) the agreement and active co-operation of the Governments of the countries of refuge ; (2) the acceptance in principle, though not necessarily by formal convention, of certain provisions for the protection of the refugees ; (3) the presence in the countries concerned of an active and influential representation of the High Commissioner, who could co-operate on the spot with the Government and with the private organisations.

If these conditions were satisfied, the League would be able to give assistance of the same character as, previous to the war, was being given to refugees under its protection. This would involve an increase, though not necessarily large, to the administrative budget. On the other hand, if the League is to take an effective and direct part in measures of relief, the provision of large humanitarian funds must be made.

London, September 23rd, 1939.

H. W. EMERSON.







