

THE HOLY FATHER AND DISPLACED PERSONS

On several occasions the Holy Father has emphasized the responsibility of the Catholics throughout the world to do their part in promoting the reception and settlement of the Displaced Persons now in the camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. ✓

The establishment of the Vatican Migration Bureau is an added evidence of the interest of the Holy Father in this great Christian work. The Vatican Migration Bureau has been lending its cooperation to the Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization in promoting the resettlement of Displaced Persons. It has established an office in Geneva which is the center of contact between all Catholic world organizations throughout the world and the International Refugee Organization. ✓

Through its central office in Rome, the Vatican Migration Bureau, working through the Nuncios in the various countries, maintains contact with all Catholic organizations throughout the world for the purpose of stimulating the interest of the Universal Church in the Displaced Persons. ✓ Recently the Vatican Migration Bureau sent a special mission to Latin America for the purpose of interesting various countries in this area in the reception and settlement of Displaced Persons. The work of the Vatican Migration Bureau in various countries is now becoming quite evident. We find that the Church in Canada is becoming very much interested in the program; the same is true with the Church in Australia and New Zealand and in many of the Latin American countries.

WAR RELIEF SERVICES - N.C.W.C. and DISPLACED PERSONS

For more than two years War Relief Services - National Catholic Welfare Conference, as part of its relief program, has been giving assistance to the Displaced Persons in and out of the camps in Germany, Austria and Italy. In cooperation with the Holy See it has succeeded in stimulating the interest of a number of Latin American countries in providing homes and opportunities for the Displaced Persons. It has had a very important part in the resettlement of a considerable number of people from the camps in Italy, in Argentina, Brazil and Chile. When the President's Executive Order, providing for the admission of a limited number of Displaced Persons into the United States, took effect in March 1946, War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. developed a special program to assist the Displaced Persons in Germany and Austria in securing visas for the admission to the United States. It worked with the Catholic Committee for Refugees in securing visas for a considerable number of these people. In appraising what has been done by War Relief Services - N.C.W.C., working in cooperation with the Catholic Committee for the admission of Displaced Persons into the United States, it is well to keep in mind the limitations under which both War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. and The Catholic Committee for Refugees operated under the President's Executive Order. The number of different national groups to be admitted was covered by the quotas in the respective countries of their origin. With the exception of the Polish quota of a maximum of 6,400 per year, the quotas from the other countries were decidedly small. Moreover the Polish quota was spread out over the world so that Polish refugees everywhere might have an equal opportunity. This meant certainly not over 3,000 Polish refugees from the Displaced Persons Camps could be admitted in any one year.

During the past year War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. has been very active in promoting a program for the admission of Displaced Persons to the United States. Its representatives appeared before the Committee of the House of Representatives holding hearings on the Stratton Bill. The War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. has also published a number of pamphlets as part of its educational program for the admission of Displaced Persons into this country.

WHO ARE THE DISPLACED PERSONS?

Briefly the Displaced Persons are those that are included in the program of the International Refugee Organization. This program is an instrument of the United Nations and has brought together some twenty-one countries as signatories to its constitution. Eleven of these countries have formally ratified their acceptance of the International Refugee Organization program. The total number of those Displaced Persons who have registered and are included in the IRO program at the present time is a little over 700,000. These are entitled to protection, support and resettlement opportunities from the IRO. They are being taken care of in camps in Germany, Austria and Italy at the present time. These camps are supported through the funds placed at the disposal of the IRO by the different governments that have ratified its constitution. Of the total of \$114,000,000.00 which constitutes the budget of the IRO for this year, \$73,000,000.00 has been provided by the United States.

HOW DISPLACED PERSONS REACHED THEIR PRESENT STATUS

A very large number of the Displaced Persons, and especially the

Polish Displaced Persons, were employed as slave laborers in Germany during the war. They were captured during the course of the German invasion of Poland. The so-called Balts, consisting of Lithuanians, Estonians and Latvians were driven west from their own countries by the Russian army. The same is true of the Ukrainians. The Yugoslavians, among the Displaced Persons, were compelled to flee from that country when it was taken over by the present Communist dominated government. Among the Displaced Persons the Poles number about 275,000, Ukrainians about 200,000, the Lithuanians about 75,000, the Yugoslavians and Estonians and Latvians have smaller numbers.

WHY THE DISPLACED PERSONS CANNOT RETURN TO THEIR OWN COUNTRIES

The governments that have banded together under the International Refugee Organization, including the government of the United States, have announced a policy that the Displaced Persons should be compelled to return to countries under whose governments they would not enjoy political or religious freedom. The governments that are supporting the program of the IRO have agreed to give these Displaced Persons every opportunity for resettlement. Many of the Displaced Persons, and especially the Poles, have already returned to their own countries, but it is the general conviction of those who are acquainted with the Displaced Persons, including the officials of our Government and those of Great Britain, that we have reached the "hard core" in the repatriation of Displaced Persons and that this no longer offers any outlet for them. So far as most of the Displaced Persons are concerned, returning to their own countries means facing immediate death or imprisonment.

A very considerable number of the Displaced Persons at the present time are being provided with work opportunities outside of the camps and are being paid in German marks. This has led some people to suggest the possibility of having the Displaced Persons incorporated into the German economy. Careful study, however, shows that western Germany is already over-populated, that there will be no continuing opportunities for the Displaced Persons in the German economy, that their removal would be one important step in re-building the German economy, that the antagonisms between the Germans and the Displaced Persons are so great as to make it really impossible to have them absorbed by western Germany.

PROGRESS IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF DISPLACED PERSONS

Some progress has already been made in the resettlement of the Displaced Persons. Belgium has already accepted 17,500 of them; Holland has accepted about 2,000; England has taken about 17,000; Canada has accepted 2,000 members of Anders' Army from England; (it is in process of settling 25,000 Displaced Persons from camps who have relatives in Canada); approximately 7,000 have been settled in Brazil; approximately 5,000 have been settled in Argentina; 4,000 have been settled in Venezuela.

When we exclude those settled in nearby Belgium the total resettled does not bulk very large in the 700,000 that have been waiting for resettlement for a period of more than two years. The number settled this year is not over 55,000. Without a clear accelerated program of resettlement for the Displaced Persons in the camps, their future is very dark indeed.

Those eligible for resettlement do not constitute all Displaced Persons. Those for whom the International Refugee organization and the voluntary organizations, working in cooperation with the IRO, are planning resettlement

do not constitute all of the Displaced Persons in Germany, Austria and Italy. There are at least 6,000,000 people of German extraction in western Germany who can be regarded as Displaced Persons. These six million were expelled from East Prussia, Silesia, and the Sudetan Land under the Potsdam Agreement. Over and above the so-called legal expellees there is a very considerable number of people of German extraction from Eastern Europe who found their way into western Germany.

It is estimated that over and above the persons eligible for resettlement Austria has 150,000 Displaced Persons most of them persons of German extraction who have been drive out of the other countries in eastern Europe. It is estimated that Italy has between 100,000 and 150,000 Displaced Persons over and above the 30,000 that are eligible for resettlement. One might ask why should not all these Displaced Persons be included in the program. The answer is, in part, that plans have already been made for the resettlement of those who were engaged as slave laborers under the Nazi regime, or have been driven westward by the Russian army, or driven out by the Communist government of Yugoslavia. Plans have been made for their resettlement by the setting up of the International Refugee Organization. If the group for whose resettlement some provision has been made can be settled successfully, plans can then be made for the resettlement of the other groups who cannot be resettled in Europe. It should be noted moreover that the plans that are being made by our Government for the rebuilding of German economy provide for the incorporation into that economy of six million Germans who have been expelled from East Prussia, Silesia and the Sudetenland.

POSITION OF THE UNITED STATES

The Government of the United States has really committed itself to the making of effective plans for the resettlement of Displaced Persons. It has contributed the largest part of the cost of maintaining them in camps. While a number of other countries have agreed to accepting their fair share of the Displaced Persons the United States has not yet agreed to accept any large number of them into this country. A very important task, therefore, remains for those who are interested in the settlement of the Displaced Persons, namely, the convincing of the people of the United States that it is their duty to accept their fair quota of the Displaced Persons. It is generally assumed that with proper interpretation the people of the United States would do their part. Their attitude towards persons who have been compelled to flee their own countries by religious and political persecution has always been very generous. ✓

CATHOLIC PROGRAM NEEDED TO PROMOTE RECEPTION AND SETTLEMENT OF DISPLACED PERSONS

At their meeting in Washington in November the Bishops of the United States reached the conclusion that definite national and diocesan organizations were needed to interest the people of the United States in the problems of the Displaced Persons and to analyze the opportunities for Displaced Persons in this country and to sponsor their immigration. The Bishops authorized War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. to assume a leadership in setting up a National Catholic Resettlement Council that would bring together various Catholic organizations including the National Catholic Welfare Conference, National Conference of Catholic Charities, National Catholic Rural Life Conference,

The Catholic Committee for Refugees and the various National groups represented among the Displaced Persons. War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. already brought these groups together and the new National Catholic Resettlement Council has been established. The Bishops have been notified by the Chairman of the Administrative Board in regard to the establishment of the new National Council. They have been advised moreover that plans have been made for the setting up of Diocesan Resettlement Committees in each and every one of the dioceses in the United States. They have been advised also of plans for the immediate organization of Diocesan Committees in twelve dioceses. Suggestions have also been made to them about the set-up and functions of Diocesan Committees. They have been advised that through War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. they would receive certain types of assistance needed in setting up the Diocesan Resettlement Committees.

COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC RESETTLEMENT COUNCIL

The National Catholic Resettlement Council consists of representatives of War Relief Services - N.C.W.C., National Conference of Catholic Charities, National Catholic Rural Life Conference, The Catholic Committee for Refugees, The Immigration Bureau of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, St. Vincent de Paul Society, National Council of Catholic Women together with representatives of the following National groups: Poles, Lithuanians, Estonians, and Latvians, Croats, Slovaks, Ukrainians, Slovenes, and also a number of prominent leaders at large. The National Council will serve as an advisory body to War Relief Services in regard to policies in the administration of the over-all Catholic program for Displaced Persons.

ORGANIZATION AND FUNCTIONS OF DIOCESAN RESETTLEMENT COMMITTEES

The basic responsibility in the program for Displaced Persons will be assumed by the Diocesan Resettlement Committees. They will include members of the various Catholic organizations included in the National groups. The first step to be taken in setting up a Diocesan Committee is the appointment of a Director. It may also be necessary to appoint an Associate Director. Some Bishops have already appointed their Catholic Charities Director and their Rural Life Director to assume a joint responsibility for the program.

The Diocesan Director while having the advice of a Diocesan Committee must operate through Deaneries or districts. It will be necessary to bring together representatives of various parishes on a Deanery or district basis. Both at the Diocesan meet and at the Deanery meeting it will be necessary to explain in great detail all the elements in a program for Displaced Persons. Those who attend the meeting will have to be given a good understanding of the general problems of the Displaced Persons. They will have to be given a picture of the skills that the Displaced Persons represent. It should be pointed out to those in attendance that the Displaced Persons represent all sorts of skills. They represent a considerable number of people, probably about a third, who have had definite experience in agriculture; people who have had experience in forestry; there are large numbers of skilled mechanics; there are domestic workers; there are many people with a definite intellectual background; there are many who have attained prominence in their own countries but who recognize that it may be impossible for them to continue their professions in the countries in which they are settled and that, therefore, they must be ready to accept such opportunities as may be made available to them. It should be pointed

out that the Displaced Persons represent a cross-section of the populations of the countries from which they came; that on the whole they represent a rather high type of people; that they are like the people who came to this country in the large immigration tide of the 40's and 50's.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM ON DISPLACED PERSONS

The first task of both the National, Diocesan and Deanery organizations is to interpret to the people the very great importance of having this country do its part in the resettlement of the Displaced Persons. Once the people understand what the acceptance by the United States of its fair quota of Displaced Persons will mean in our world position; the Congress and the Administration will be ready to do their part. Other countries are influenced very greatly by the leadership of the United States in this and other fields. The world is looking to the United States at the present time. People all over the world who are interested in Displaced Persons are anxious to see what we are going to do to solve this problem and look to every move that is made in the United States in a program for Displaced Persons.

SECURING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISPLACED PERSONS

Many people in the United States have been wondering how far it would be possible for us in the United States to secure employment for Displaced Persons. We have general information on hand in regard to employment opportunities for them at the present time. We know there are labor shortages here and there throughout the country. We do not have exact information

in regard to available employment opportunities. This information can be secured through the Diocesan and Deanery or District Committees. Information in regard to opportunities should be brought together on standard forms provided by the national office of War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. An effort should be made to catalog all sorts of opportunities. For instance, it has been said that there are many opportunities for skilled workers in the small towns throughout the country; that there are many opportunities in domestic services. There are many women in the camps with one to three children who would make excellent housekeepers. It has been said that there are shortages in the dairying sections of our country. In the camps there are many people who have had all types of experience in dairying.

SPONSORSHIP

This is probably the most difficult problem that confronts those who are interested in the resettlement of the Displaced Persons. Many of them now could be settled in other countries if costs of transportation were available. In securing sponsors we naturally first think of relatives. It is estimated that 40% of the people in the camps have relatives in this country. Everything possible must be done to contact these relatives. In many instances they could advance part or all of the cost of transportation. The advance would naturally be in the form of a loan repayable by the Displaced Persons once they are working. It will be possible to find individual Catholics in many dioceses throughout the country who would be willing to sponsor Displaced Persons on an individual basis. Diocesan Conferences of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the different parishes may be willing to sponsor individual persons. Many St. Vincent de Paul Societies in parishes

have funds in their treasury now. There are some 4,000 parish conferences of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the United States. In many instances the parish as a whole might be willing to sponsor one Displaced Person. The local parishes of the various Nationality groups will undoubtedly be willing to do their part in sponsoring Displaced Persons.

SETTLEMENT BY FAMILY GROUPS

In planning for the resettlement of the Displaced Persons we must think of settling them as families. The ^{ordinary} ~~only~~ Displaced Person is the head of a family. There is a considerable number of widows whose husbands have been lost in the war or have perished in Siberia. The International Refugee Organization has been anxious to adhere to the policy of settling the Displaced Persons by families. The Church would naturally be interested in the same program. Many people become very much excited about unaccompanied children and about orphans, but practically all of the children are attached to families even if they have lost their own parents. They have attached themselves to other families who have practically become their guardians.

RESETTLEMENT OF DISPLACED PERSONS IS A GREAT CHALLENGE TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The development of a program for the reception and settlement of Displaced Persons is probably the greatest challenge that has ever been made to the Catholic Church in the United States. No work of its magnitude has ever been undertaken by the Church on a National basis and the only way it can be solved is by breaking it down on a Diocesan and parish level. From the discussions on the Diocesan and parish level will come many suggestions in regard to practical approaches to this problem. There will be many suggestions

in regard to employment opportunities and in regard to ways and means of sponsoring the Displaced Persons and their families. All the practical experience of Diocesan, Deanery and parish groups will naturally flow into the central clearing house of War Relief Services - N.C.W.C. and will be relayed to other dioceses and the various local units throughout the country.