

CHAPTER XI

REFUGEES

In addition to giving international protection to refugees and carrying out the programme of the United Nations Refugee Fund (UNREF) for permanent solutions of the refugee problems and emergency aid, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was faced with an emergency situation in 1956 arising out of the need for aiding refugees from Hungary. (For further details about assistance for Hungarian refugees see CHAPTER II under POLITICAL AND SECURITY QUESTIONS, above.)

By 31 December, it became evident that the UNREF programme, then in its second year, could not be carried out by the end of 1958 without additional contributions from Governments to make up the deficit of \$2,696,303 on the \$5,946,303 contributions target for 1956 and enable the Refugee Fund to reach its four-year contributions target of \$16 million. It proved necessary to increase the \$4,400,000 fixed as the target for 1957 to a combined target of \$7,096,303 to permit the projects which could not be implemented in 1956 being placed in the revised plan of operations for 1957.

UNREF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

At its second session, in January 1956, the Executive Committee considered a revised plan of operations for 1956 and approved projects costing \$2,359,747, to be implemented as funds became available. At its third session, in May 1956, it authorized the execution of projects

costing \$3,586,086. It adopted a resolution urging Governments and the voluntary agencies to continue to give their full co-operation to the Office of the High Commissioner in its efforts to help those refugees who had little or no chance of overseas resettlement to find acceptable opportunities within the projects approved by the UNREF Executive Committee. It also requested the High Commissioner to consult with the governments of the countries in which refugees were presently living on the additional measures required during the remaining period of the UNREF programme to promote a systematic closure of the refugee camps and at the same time find adequate solutions for their inmates.

The Committee also considered the question of Chinese refugees in Hong Kong as a result of requests received from non-governmental organizations directly concerned with this problem. It recommended that a report be submitted to it at its fourth session on the question of eligibility for UNHCR protection for these refugees, indicating whether the United Kingdom considered that the refugees needed special assistance and whether any funds were available from UNREF to provide such assistance.

At the May session of the Executive Committee, it was made known that there were about 8,300 refugees in the so-called unofficial refugee camps in Austria.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED

The UNREF programme for permanent solu-

tions and emergency aid, started at the beginning of 1955, was in full operation in 1956. Despite the shortfall in governmental contributions to the Refugee Fund, projects costing UNREF \$3,240,395 were put into effect. This amount included \$2,321,632 for permanent solutions, \$98,318 for emergency aid, \$533,244 for difficult cases and \$287,381 for the Shanghai operation. The latter is undertaken jointly with the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration for the resettlement in other countries of the 14,000 refugees on the mainland of China who fall under the High Commissioner's mandate. These refugees, of European origin, are concentrated in the Shanghai and Harbin areas.

By 31 December 1956, 24,598 refugees were benefiting from projects for 1955 and 1956, including 6,813 refugees from camps and 17,785 refugees outside camps. Of these, 13,187 had been included in projects for permanent solutions in Austria, Belgium, France, Greece and Italy. By the end of the year, 8,115 could be regarded as firmly settled. Arrangements had been made for the permanent care of 420 refugees in the category of difficult cases, most of whom were placed in institutions. Some 4,000 refugees evacuated from China had benefited under the Shanghai operation and 6,860 had benefited from projects for emergency aid in Greece, Italy, Turkey, several countries in the Middle East and a few other countries.

The execution of the UNREF programme in various countries stimulated private persons and organizations to contribute to the solution of the problem. The total number of refugees requiring assistance under the programme in the countries in which it is in operation decreased from approximately 203,000 on 1 January 1955 to approximately 150,000 on 1 January 1957, excluding newly arrived refugees from Hungary.

GENERAL ACTIVITIES

CONVENTION

In 1956, four more Governments became parties to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees: the Holy See on 15 March 1956, the Netherlands on 3 May 1956, Morocco on 7 November 1956, and Ireland on 30 November 1956. This brought the number of States parties to the Convention up to 20.

TRAVEL FACILITIES

Travel documents under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees were being issued at the end of 1956 by: Austria, Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom—all signatories to the Convention. A general undertaking to recognize all travel documents issued in accordance with the Convention was given by the following States non-parties to the Convention: Argentina, Ceylon, Colombia, Cuba (for transit only), Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Lebanon, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Portugal and Venezuela. A number of other Governments signified their recognition of the documents so far issued.

VOLUNTARY REPATRIATION

The Office of the High Commissioner made arrangements with the Governments of the chief countries of residence of refugees whereby its Branch Offices in those countries were notified of visits of repatriation missions and were invited by the Governments concerned to send representatives with these missions to be present as neutral observers whenever refugees were being interviewed.

RESETTLEMENT

During 1956, the number of refugees within the mandate of UNHCR moved by the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, excluding Hungarian refugees who arrived since 28 October 1956, amounted to 36,531.

CAMP ADOPTION SCHEME

The camp adoption scheme continued during the year and, in addition to the United Kingdom and Denmark, was extended to other countries, notably Canada and Sweden. Sixty camps were adopted by the end of 1956.

AWARD OF THE NANSEN MEDAL

The Nansen Medal, instituted by the late High Commissioner, Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart, for outstanding services on behalf of refugees, was awarded for 1956 to Mrs. Dorothy D. Houghton, a United States citizen who had played a leading role in many humanitarian and international programmes from which refugees had benefited. A special Nansen

Medal was also awarded posthumously to Dr. van Heuven Goedhart.

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

The task of closing the refugee centre on the Greek island of Tinos with the aid of the \$33,000 Nobel Peace Prize, with supplementary contributions of \$10,000 each from the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Swiss Aid to Europe, continued throughout 1956. By the end of the year, 25 families, out of a total of 42, had left the centre. Approximately half

sembly's eleventh session. Addressing the Assembly's Third Committee, the Deputy High Commissioner said that permanent solutions had been found in Austria, Germany, Italy and Greece for some 15,000 to 20,000 refugees from camps. The camp population in these countries had fallen from 84,000 at the beginning of 1955 to 57,000 at the beginning of 1956. He also said that the office in Shanghai, which had been concerned with some 14,000 European refugees in China, had been closed, the director and the staff of that office being transferred to the China People's Relief Association.

Referring to the grave financial situation facing UNREF, the Deputy High Commissioner appealed to all governments to contribute generously to UNREF in order that the contributions targets for 1956 and 1957 might be reached.

He also gave an account of the activities undertaken by the Office to alleviate the plight of the Hungarian refugees who had fled to Austria and Yugoslavia. He stressed the fact that, in spite of the response by governments to the appeal made by the Office, the problem had grown to such proportions that there was a sense of the greatest urgency and it was hoped that governments and agencies would continue their efforts in facing up to the emergency.

In the course of the debate, many representatives called for further contributions to carry out the UNREF programme. The plight of the refugees who had been living for many years in camps, it was stressed, should not be forgotten as a result of the impact of the influx of the new Hungarian refugees. Some delegations thought that voluntary repatriation should be the main solution of the refugee problem.

One delegation doubted whether the Hungarian refugees fell within the mandate of the High Commissioner. Many other delegations, however, disagreed and considered that the High Commissioner's Office was well qualified to deal with this matter. They believed that concerted action and efforts for the relief of these refugees should be channelled through the High Commissioner's Office.

Czechoslovakia submitted a draft resolution to instruct the Office of the High Commissioner to inform displaced persons and refugees of

the laws and measures adopted in the various countries of origin to facilitate their return. It asked the Office of the High Commissioner and all States concerned to facilitate the departure of refugees who had decided, and might in the future decide, to return to their countries of origin, and it emphasized repatriation as a solution.

Several representatives opposed the draft resolution because it stressed only repatriation as a solution and made no mention of the other two possibilities, resettlement and integration.

The draft resolution was rejected by 43 votes to 10, with 15 abstentions.

Another draft resolution was submitted jointly by Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, the Dominican Republic, France, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. By this, the General Assembly would ask the High Commissioner to continue his efforts to effect solutions in accordance with the UNREF programme, with due safeguards and in accordance with the responsibility and statute of his Office to provide international protection to refugees within his mandate. It would also ask the High Commissioner, in consultation with the Governments concerned, to develop a comprehensive assessment of the needs, both material and financial, of the Hungarian refugees, to be submitted to the UNREF Executive Committee for its approval at the earliest possible date. In addition, the draft resolution urged all Members of the United Nations or specialized agencies to give early and serious consideration to making contributions to UNREF in order that the target for 1956/57 might be reached and the High Commissioner enabled to implement fully the programme planned under the Fund.

This draft resolution, with amendments suggested by Syria, was adopted by a roll-call vote of 49 to 0, with 19 abstentions.

By yet another resolution, submitted by the Dominican Republic and amended by Afghanistan and Greece, the Assembly would decide that a plaque to the memory of the late High Commissioner should be placed in the Palais des Nations, and urged Governments actively to support the work on behalf of refugees in the spirit of the United Nations Charter. The

Third Committee's vote for this resolution, by roll-call, was 57 to 0, with 9 abstentions.

These two draft resolutions, approved by the Third Committee, were subsequently adopted by the General Assembly, at a plenary meeting on 23 January 1957, by 60 votes to

0, with 12 abstentions, and 68 votes to 0, with 8 abstentions, respectively.

Earlier, on 10 December 1956, the General Assembly elected Mr. Auguste R. Lindt by acclamation as the new United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

DOCUMENTARY REFERENCES

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL — 22ND SESSION
PLENARY MEETINGS, 932, 933, 946.

E/2887 and Add.1. Covering note by Secretary-General, transmitting annual report of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to Economic and Social Council.

E/L.729. Norway and United States draft resolution.

E/L.737. Communication of 7 August 1956 to President of Economic and Social Council by delegation of United States on Council.

RESOLUTION 628(XXII), as submitted by Norway and United States, E/L.729, adopted by Council on 13 July 1956, meeting 933, by 15 votes to 0, with 3 abstentions.

"The Economic and Social Council,

"Recalling with gratitude the work accomplished by Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

"Mindful of his devoted and untiring efforts to lead the nations to a final solution of the refugee problem,

"Noting with satisfaction the Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees,

"1. Expresses its deep regret at his untimely passing;

"2. Reaffirms its abiding interest in finding as quickly as possible permanent solutions to the refugee problem;

"3. Urges all Governments to do everything in their power to support the work on behalf of refugees in the spirit in which it was carried forward by the late High Commissioner and, as a solemn tribute to his memory, to bring it to a successful conclusion."

GENERAL ASSEMBLY — 11TH SESSION

PLENARY MEETINGS, 613, 643.

THIRD COMMITTEE, meetings 689-697.

A/3123/Rev.1 and Rev.1/Add.1,2. Report of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, including report of second and third sessions of UNREF Executive Committee, and addenda to report.

A/3154. Report of Economic and Social Council to General Assembly, Chapter VI, section IV.

A/3171 and Rev.1. Election of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to fill vacancy caused by death of Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart. Note by Secretary-General, proposing inclusion of item in provisional agenda of General Assembly's eleventh session.

A/3428, A/3429. Notes by Secretary-General on terms

of appointment and nomination of new High Commissioner.

A/C.3/L.508. Czechoslovakia draft resolution.

A/C.3/L.509. Dominican Republic draft resolution, as amended by Afghanistan, A/C.3/L.516, and orally amended by Greece, adopted by Third Committee by roll-call vote of 57 to 0, with 9 abstentions.

A/C.3/L.510 and Add.1 and Rev.1. Belgium, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, France, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States draft resolution, adopted by Third Committee by roll-call vote of 49 to 0, with 19 abstentions.

A/C.3/L.511. Albania amendment to draft resolution of Czechoslovakia.

A/C.3/L.512. Syria draft resolution.

A/C.3/L.514. Syria amendments to joint draft resolution, A/C.3/L.510 and Add.1.

A/C.3/L.515. Chile amendment to joint draft resolution, A/C.3/L.510 and Add.1.

A/C.3/L.516. Afghanistan amendment to draft resolution of Dominican Republic.

A/C.3/L.517. Syria amendment to draft resolution of Dominican Republic.

A/3434. Report of Third Committee, draft resolutions A and B.

RESOLUTION 1039 A and B (XI), as recommended by Third Committee, A/3434, adopted by Assembly on 23 January 1957, meeting 643, as follows: 1039 A (XI), by 60 votes to 0, with 12 abstentions; 1039 B (XI), by 68 votes to 0, with 8 abstentions.

A

"The General Assembly,

"Taking note of the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees covering the activities of his Office between May 1955 and May 1956,

"Taking note in particular of the addendum to his report dealing with the effect of the shortfall in governmental contributions to the United Nations Refugee Fund,

"Bearing in mind that, under the Statute of his Office, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is charged with the duty of seeking solutions for the problems of refugees through voluntary repatriation, resettlement and integration,

"Bearing in mind the provisions of section II of General Assembly resolution 1006(ES-II) of 9 November 1956 and General Assembly resolution 1129 (XI) of 21 November on the problem of Hungarian

refugees, the appeals of the Government of Austria for assistance in dealing with this problem, and the response of Governments to these appeals.

"Taking note of the statement of the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees on the steps so far taken by the Office to deal with the problem of Hungarian refugees and on the impact of this problem on the programme of the United Nations Refugee Fund,

"1. Expresses its appreciation of the efforts of the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees to implement the programme for permanent solutions of the existing refugee problem and to deal with the emergency situation created by the problem of Hungarian refugees;

"2. Expresses its appreciation to the Government of Austria for the part it has played in receiving and assisting the refugees who have entered its territory;

"3. Requests the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to continue his efforts to effect solutions in accordance with the Statute of his Office and the programme of the United Nations Refugee Fund, under due safeguards in accordance with his responsibility under the said Statute to provide international protection to refugees within his mandate;

"4. Requests the High Commissioner, in consultation with the Secretary-General and with the Governments concerned, to develop a comprehensive assessment of the needs, both material and financial, of the Hungarian refugees, to be submitted to the United Nations Refugee Fund Executive Committee for its approval at the earliest possible date;

"5. Expresses grave concern at the shortfall in the governmental contributions to the United Nations Refugee Fund established at \$16 million;

"6. Urges all States Members of the United Nations or members of the specialized agencies to give early and serious consideration to making contributions to the United Nations Refugee Fund in order that the target for 1956 and 1957 may be reached and the High Commissioner enabled fully to implement the programme planned under that Fund;

"7. Requests the High Commissioner to study with the United Nations Refugee Fund Executive Committee the appropriate means to ensure the full implementation of the programme of the Fund."

B

"The General Assembly,

"Noting Economic and Social Council resolution 628(XXII) of 13 July 1956,

"Recalling with gratitude the work accomplished by Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and mindful of his devoted and untiring efforts,

"Recording its deep regret at his untimely death,

"1. Decides that a plaque to the memory of Dr. G. J. van Heuven Goedhart shall be placed in the Palais des Nations in Geneva;

"2. Requests the Secretary-General to make appropriate arrangements for this purpose;

"3. Urges Governments actively to support the work on behalf of refugees in the spirit of the United Nations Charter."