

## THE WORLD REFUGEE YEAR 1959-1960 \*

by JAMES P. RICE, MOSES A. LEAVITT, MOST REVEREND  
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*Background*, by JAMES P. RICE, Executive Director, United Hias Service, New York, N. Y.

**E**ARLY in 1959, there was a movement, particularly from the Protestant Churches in England, as well as from many Catholic leaders, to restimulate the interest of the free peoples of the world in the problems of the refugees. They were concerned about the refugees in Europe, those who remained homeless after the war, a great unsolved problem of World War II and its aftermath. They were concerned about refugees from Iron Curtain countries, the Algerian refugees in North Africa, the Arab refugees in the Middle East, Jewish refugees from Egypt and other Moslem lands, Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, Pakistanian refugees, Korean refugees, more recently the Tibetan refugees—adding up to an estimate of close to 15 million refugees, whose unsolved problems require action by the free world.

This provided the impetus for the decision of the United Nations General Assembly to set up World Refugee Year with the cooperation of the governments, members of the United Nations, private organizations and the general public.

The United States Committee for Ref-

ugees, an organization composed of Americans from many walks of life and of representatives of voluntary agencies of all faiths, centralized many of the activities devoted to the observance of World Refugee Year. Similar committees were established overseas to stimulate and coordinate programs in more than 60 nations throughout the world, which endorsed this event.

The United States Committee for Refugees recommended to the White House that America show its leadership by adopting a concrete program embracing the following four points:

1. A Federal appropriation of \$10 million over and above current outlays for refugee programs.
2. Generous government allocation of additional surplus commodities.
3. New legislation permitting the annual immigration of 20,000 refugees beyond those authorized by existing quotas.
4. Intensified action by voluntary agencies in their continuing programs and in their efforts to raise from the American people during the year at least \$20 million over their normal campaign goals for refugee aid.

It was recognized, of course, that the aims and objectives of World Refugee Year would require action and implementation even beyond the twelve-month period of the official observance. The problems of refugees are so complex,

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their needs are of such magnitude, the world situation constantly creating so many new refugees, that even the most wide-eyed visionary could not hope to see these problems resolved within the span of any given year.

*An Overview of the World Refugee Problem*, by MOSES A. LEAVITT, Executive Vice-Chairman and Secretary, American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, New York, N. Y.

The second World War and its aftermath created about 45 million refugees—probably the largest number ever to have been displaced in the history of civilization. As a result of the mass repatriations that took place after the war and the integration of many people into new countries, there remained a residue of about 15 million men, women and children. Most of these are found on no official lists of refugees; although we call them refugees, they are not recognized by the world as refugees. It is a distinction without difference, however.

One group of these 15 million consists of what we call the *mandated refugees*, coming under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. They constitute about two and a half million people. Part of this group is refugees who technically ought not to be in this mandate. However, by common consent it was decided that the Chinese refugees in Hong Kong, for example, should be placed under the mandate of the High Commissioner.

The second group, the larger and probably the more difficult group, as well as the group that suffers the most, is the group of *ethnic refugees*. In the Far East there are about one million Chinese refugees in Hong Kong. They keep coming from the mainland into Hong Kong. About 70,000 to 80,000 children are born to the refugees every year, so that there are about 150,000 people added each year to the refugees

in Hong Kong, over and above the many who die.

The problem in Hong Kong is a growing one. Ten years ago there were three-quarters of a million people in Hong Kong, today there are over three million. Hong Kong is a very, very small place, and if there is any impression that sticks with you in a visit to Hong Kong, it is the feeling of people, of crowded masses of people.

I saw four families living in a room, 12 by 10 feet square. I don't believe it any more, although I saw it, that you can have four families living in 125 square feet. The way they do it is to build shelves out from the middle of the walls in tiers, in layers, for people to sleep on.

Then there are the Arab refugees, who are technically under the High Commissioner, under a special United Nations agency, the UNRWA. This is the group of refugees that fled from Palestine when the Arabs invaded Israel. They are scattered—half of them in Jordan, several hundred thousands in the Gaza strip, in Syria and in Lebanon.

There are about 230,000 new refugees, Algerian, in Morocco and in Tunisia. They are the victims of the revolt of the Algerians against the French.

In Europe, there remains a hard core of about 150,000 refugees. Of that number, some 25,000 to 28,000 are in camps and the balance is outside of camps, but they are all people who are not integrated and who still have the status of refugees. Some of them have been refugees for 15 years.

The latest group of refugees is the Tibetans, estimated at from 13,000 to close to 20,000. Finally we have an old European group of refugees in China, mostly White Russian, of about 8,500.

If you added all the foregoing groups there would be about two and a half million.

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For some of them, much is being done. For many of them little is being done. And that is not because there isn't the wish to do it, but because there aren't enough people who are interested. The problem is so great that it is impossible really to make a change in the situation unless tremendous amounts of money are forthcoming.

Moreover, with the exception of the European refugees, the others are refugees from political situations. This is basic to the problem. Because of political situations, a job either of integration or of resettlement cannot be done unless legal problems are solved. That is true for the refugees in Hong Kong, in Morocco, in the Middle East, and of the Tibetans.

The ethnic refugees pose even more difficult problems. There still remain in West Germany—of the 12 million East Germans who were expelled to West Germany or escaped into West Germany—about two and a half million who need help. About a million refugees came down to South Vietnam from North Vietnam and still require help. In South Korea there are North Korean refugees; and there remain in India and in Pakistan a total of about five million refugees from an original 15 million who migrated during the exchange of population that took place when India was partitioned into India and Pakistan.

The refugees in the Calcutta area of India as well as in Pakistan are in an indescribable state. I have seen much of destitution and poverty around the world, but I do not think anything can equal what I saw in India.

What about Jewish refugees? There are none in camps. After World War II there was a large Jewish refugee population that equalled in its magnitude the figures that I have given you on other groups of refugees. The State of Israel solved, by and large, the prob-

lem of homelessness for Jewish refugees. There is hope for every Jew, for every refugee who wants to find a roof he would like to call his own.

There still remain non-Jewish refugees in European camps and they number probably 10,000, so classified. The problem of determining who is a refugee and who is not is very difficult. There is in Western Europe a residual caseload for the Joint Distribution Committee of about 25,000 people who are on relief rolls, are aged, sick, mutilated, and whom we will have to support for the rest of their lives.

Some of them are refugees. We do not think of them as refugees any more, since most of them have the right to reside in the countries in which they live and have the protection of those governments. This is the important feature of the status of ethnic refugees, whereas a mandated refugee is a person who has no legal governmental protection, except that of the High Commissioner for Refugees. However, even this is not technically true for the Chinese refugees, because these are refugees from Communist China who presumably will accept the protection of the Nationalist Chinese on Formosa. Formosa itself is so crowded that there is no possibility of bringing a million refugees into that area, but the Chinese Nationalists feel that they are the protectors of that group. Actually, however, they are under the protection of the British, the government of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong, and the High Commissioner himself takes an interest in them as well.

World Refugee Year, from our point of view, did stimulate an awareness of the problem in America and the world.

The voluntary agencies raise over one hundred million dollars a year for the relief of needy people, most of them refugees. This has been an ongoing

program year in, year out, some years more, some years a little less. When World Refugee Year came, the feeling prevailed that we were already securing almost the maximum funds for the people overseas. But there also was a feeling that there were people in the United States who, if properly aroused, would make a contribution toward the refugee problem. However, we were not able to arouse a sufficient additional financial response through the U. S. Committee, possibly because so much was already being done.

The opposite is true in England. In England, which has a campaign for overseas relief in the same way as American voluntary agencies did, the World Refugee Year campaign was extraordinarily successful. They raised a little over five million dollars for this purpose. Other countries raised proportionately less. Norway did very well.

However, it is well to note that many of these countries were not raising funds regularly for the purpose for which World Refugee Year was established. We did accomplish something in getting the problem before the public of the United States.

This is the refugee story, a story of millions of people, helpless and homeless, 14 million, 15 million, 16 million. This is the world in which we live. It has been said that this is the century of the homeless man. But something is being done, and I saw what was being done, both in India and in Hong Kong. And what is being done is really an extraordinary tribute to the Catholic Relief Services, to the Church World Service, and to the work of many, many voluntary agencies. But even more it is a tribute to the people of conscience and warmheartedness who stand behind these voluntary agencies—as they do behind the work of the Joint Distribution Committee—and who have appointed themselves the conscience of the world.

*Voluntary Agency Effort and Asian Refugee Problems*, by MOST REVEREND EDWARD E. SWANSTROM, Executive Director, Catholic Relief Services, National Catholic Welfare Conference, New York, N. Y.

The more I see of refugees around the world, the more I see them as victims of history which they have no part in making. No matter what the character of the individual refugee may be, he is innocent to the relation of the plight of exile which has befallen him.

I would like to bring out certain aspects of the refugee situation in Asia—specifically in three areas, Vietnam, Korea and Hong Kong. In each of these three areas we have a massive influx of those we call national refugees, since they have fled from one section to another of their own homeland. Even Hong Kong, though it developed into a British Crown Colony, was traditionally a part of China.

In South Korea there are approximately four million people whose homes and assets were north of the 38th parallel. In Vietnam there are nine hundred thousand Vietnamese villagers who left everything to flee southward in what has been called the swiftest migration in history. In Hong Kong about a million refugees from the mainland of China cling desperately to a tiny area as to a life raft in a perilous sea. As you know, the divisions of Korea and Vietnam into two almost hermetically sealed departments were made through international agreements in which Koreans and Vietnamese had no say at all. The invasion, occupation, and successive upheavals in China have resulted in changing the face of that ancient nation in so revolutionary a manner that the face of the whole world may be altered as a result.

Voluntary refugee agencies express the corporate concern of various segments of the American people who work for the welfare of those who have be-

come, through no fault of their own, victims of history. It is logical to ask what role a voluntary, non-official society can play in righting the massive wrongs, in assuaging the mental anguish, that have descended upon such groups as the Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean refugees. The answer is that the voluntary agencies can accomplish an amazing amount of practical work in relief, rehabilitation and in shoring up the ruins of a tragically disrupted society.

Very often a voluntary agency can undertake no more than a small pilot project, in order to point out new paths and new methods to governmental and inter-governmental bodies. Before giving an example of relief, rehabilitation and pilot projects undertaken by my agency, the National Catholic Welfare Conference, it must be said that voluntary effort will be forever in debt to those agencies which threw themselves into the work of saving and re-settling the victims of the Hitler period of history.

An example of voluntary agency relief comes to mind in Korea. As the first victim of global war, Korea has a scarred and denuded landscape to show the world. It was into this that the four million refugees came in a tidal wave of misery. As one of the agencies operating in Korea, we began by setting up milk stations in Seoul, Pusan and other centers of burning need. In the shattered city of Seoul, for example, sheds were set up containing nothing but a fireplace and a big iron rice vat. We purchased rice locally and cooked a rice gruel. At mid-day, the Koreans would make their way from their tin and tarpaper shacks to the feeding stations, an oasis of heat in the bone-chilling cold of the Seoul winter. In all sorts and shapes of pots and kettles, the Koreans would carry the hot gruel back to their tiny shacks. After 1955, the feeding stations could draw on

American surplus grains and the gruel often had a cornmeal base. Today, an average of two hundred thousand people receive the hot meal from such feeding stations, primitive if you like, but absolutely necessary in the war against hunger and against tuberculosis, a disease which afflicts more than half of the Korean poor.

Other feeding projects, consisting of the supplying of monthly rations, were a crucial factor in the success of hundreds of assimilation projects. In these projects, homeless and landless Koreans were given help in resettling on the scorched earth of South Korea. During the lean and hungry pre-harvest period, foods imported by Catholic Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference reached over two million of the neediest Koreans.

There is no doubt that despite continued hunger and the ever-present scourge of tuberculosis, voluntary agency effort has made an impact on the massive anguish of Korea. It was not so long ago that Koreans in the famine-stricken Mokpo area were stripping the bark off the trees for food. At that time, we received a report from our representative in the desperately poor off-shore islands of South Korea that said: "We have visited the homes of these people. There are no food stocks in any of them. There is no moss on the rocks around here; the people have eaten it."

Besides the immediate effect of the feeding programs and of general medical aid and anti-leprosy programs, there will be side-effects which will be much more lasting. I refer, of course, to the organizational set-up of our counterpart agencies in Korea whose energies were mobilized to deal with urgent needs in a time of crisis. This organizational set-up is already having its impact on the Korean welfare scene. American voluntary agencies have noted that one

of their chief contributions to social peace and betterment is the impetus they have given to the development of voluntary social welfare systems in overseas areas.

In Vietnam our voluntary agency contribution took a different turn. The transplanting of families and whole villages from North Vietnam could be called an organic transplanting. Families and village units stayed together though they were rendered destitute and homeless. With such intact social groups it was not difficult to set up production and credit cooperatives to put economic life in motion in South Vietnam. Credit cooperatives were found necessary because, in Vietnam as in other Asian areas, the loans needed by the refugees were obtained only at a murderous rate of interest.

A refugee fishing village, for instance, borrowed funds to replace their boats and had to pay 3% per month—or 36% per year on the principal. When we expressed surprise at this, we were told that this was an unusually low rate of interest. Credit cooperatives utilizing the slender resources of the refugees, and pump-primed from the United States, were instrumental in giving many transplanted fishing villages a new lease on life. In line with voluntary agency efforts to make available low interest credit, the Vietnam Government itself is activating a similar scheme entitled *Credit Populaire*, or "People's Credit." Now that the Vietnamese refugees are resettled in close to four hundred villages, our agency is concentrating on unmet medical needs. It is supplying personnel and medical equipment for a new hospital and several new dispensaries in refugee-packed southern areas and is pioneering in anti-leprosy and anti-blindness campaigns that will be of service to the people of South Vietnam as a whole.

Of the million refugees in Hong Kong, a quarter of a million are destitute. Their campaign against hunger is a campaign that is never won. The products of Hong Kong can be seen in emporia around the world because Chinese work from dawn to dark. Even with their phenomenal industry, they are sometimes unable to fill their rice bowls. Supplemental food from United States surplus stocks is channeled to the Chinese refugees from hundreds of welfare centers, schools, medical dispensaries and hospitals.

The cooking of wheat and corn presented a real problem to the poorest of the refugees, since their homes consisted of flimsy shacks, or of wind-breaks on the flat roofs of the "chicken-coop" apartment houses. Our Hong Kong representative, Monsignor John Romaniello, helped devise a food that could easily be cooked on the tiny stoves on which the Chinese boiled their daily rice. This food comes in the form of noodles and is a combination of United States wheat flour, corn meal and powdered milk. Strategically located in Hong Kong are noodle factories from which the refugees draw life-saving rations. Monsignor Romaniello, who is an old China hand, has expressed his delight in being able to introduce noodles to the Chinese. "My ancestors in Italy," he pointed out, "received the gift of spaghetti from the Chinese through Marco Polo and I am glad to do something in return."

You can well imagine that the shacks of tarpaper, tin, and mud which climb the hills around Hong Kong harbor, are a target for fire and typhoons. In one night, a few years ago, sixty thousand people were made homeless when a fire, helped by a typhoon wind, licked its way up and down a refugee-packed hillside. Fireproof housing, however minimal, was of the essence. With an initial grant from our agency, one-room fireproof cottages were provided for ref-

ugees funded from United States foreign aid and intergovernmental sources. The pilot project in housing is only one of the countless pilot projects of United States voluntary agencies, which result in larger programs once the practicability of a scheme is proven.

There is not time to mention the many other aid programs on behalf of Hong Kong's refugees, but you may be sure that medical and rehabilitation programs are in force in an area where more than 80% of the refugees are afflicted with tuberculosis in some form.

The work that American voluntary agencies are performing for refugees on the Asian scene is done against a very fateful background, namely, the destruction of the extended family system. In Asia's ancient societies, charity, sharing of goods, and mutual assistance were focussed on the tribal family whose ties were those of blood. This was the traditional social security system of almost all of Asia. In this time of crisis, the old social security system has been washed away. Among Asia's refugee communities, no government of community social security system has replaced that which was destroyed. It is in this context that American people-to-people agencies play their most crucial role. Through their example, and the example of their counterpart agencies, American organizations are galvanizing disrupted communities into new activities for mutual assistance and self-help.

The refugee aid efforts outlined above have particular relevance in World Refugee Year. What World Refugee Year has accomplished above and beyond any achievement of increased material aid has been to bring into the forefront of the conscience of mankind the submerged world of the refugee.

None of us in refugee relief believed that World Refugee Year would resolve the global refugee problem, but we are

very encouraged at the heightened concern for refugees emanating from the world's most settled communities. In the mid-west of our own country, in Norway, in England and Canada, the refugee, as a victim of history, is seen as a burden on our collective conscience. The man who received the Nobel Prize for his work on behalf of refugees chose as the patron of a resettlement village the most innocent, the most winning, the most touching victim of history of our time. I refer to the Anne Frank Village, founded by Dominique Pire. Anne Frank, the brilliant, innocent child, hunted and finally destroyed, can serve to all of us as a symbol of those other millions, who through no fault of their own, have fallen victim to the cruel history of the century in which we live.

*Indian and Pakistani Refugees*, by Dr. RUSSELL STEVENSON, Deputy Director, Church World Service, New York, N. Y.

Calcutta's population today ranks it as the third largest city in the world, numbering about 7½ million souls. Mr. Leavitt already mentioned the partition that divided India from Pakistan 13 years ago. With the long years that went into India's preparation for independence and the final success of that struggle, there was great disappointment that toward the end of that campaign for independence and with the achievement of the goal, there then came to the fore the strong movement of the Muslim nationalists with the plea for a Moslem as well as a Hindu state.

India had never claimed to be preparing for a Hindu state, but rather an independent state that would embrace all Indians, whatever their religion or creed. The Moslems were fearful that their own minority status would not be protected. The result was a negotiation that allowed for the strange partition of this great sub-continent into east and

west Pakistan, the two sectors divided by about a thousand miles of Indian territory. Nearly 15 million people were in movement during the crucial six to eight months immediately before and after the partition: Muslims moving out of India into either the west or east wing of Pakistan and Hindus moving out of Pakistan into India.

There was in a way a difference in the settlement these people made. It has been said with some accuracy that the Punjabi, those dwelling in the Punjab and the northwest frontiers of what is now west Pakistan, coming down into India, more or less landed on their feet. They were an energetic, enterprising group of people. One can travel in and around Delhi or other cities lying there between west Pakistan and India and find very little evidence today of refugees, although there are still some unsettled groups. But as one goes farther east, over into what is known as West Bengal, one finds a tragic problem. Here is a group of not less than 2½ million refugees, largely Hindu. After partition, although west Pakistan had the largest land area, east Pakistan had the largest population. Out of a population of about 40 million, some 15 million were Hindus. Many of them stayed behind, evidently feeling they could make a go of it as minority numbers in this Moslem state. In the period from 1947 to the present, with many of the differences between India and Pakistan unresolved, there were constant irritations, agitation, scares and the like, and frightened people fled on very slight provocation. Thus, there has been a constant flow, not only with partition, but in the years since partition, practically all one way—Hindus getting out of east Pakistan and going down into what is now West Bengal, that is, the Calcutta area. Graphs show how the movement would increase one moment and then die down to a

mere trickle at another time. They came into this crowded city and its environs which had very little facilities at hand into which to receive them.

Many of the refugees were able to care for themselves. Often it was a case of families being rejoined. In other cases they were herded into what were called mass camps. And it was possible, as far back as 1950 and 1951, to visit in and around Calcutta and find literally thousands of refugees herded together in corrugated iron warehouses where the heat was so impossible that a visitor could not stand the temperature or the smell for very long, or could not bear to see thousands of people herded like cattle into these warehouses and to realize that their very continued existence was very precarious.

The government of India claims to have spent over 200 million dollars in the last eight years trying to help these refugees in and around Calcutta. Those spending some years in the mass camps were eventually able to move into colonies. And there are now something like 500 official colonies. The tragedy is that the person in the colony, supposedly there because of government assistance, is now considered to have been helped, and therefore to have no further claim on the government's help. It is tragic, too, that you can visit in a colony and visit in a mass camp and find practically no difference. Much of the money that was given to these refugees was supposed to be in the form of small-term business loans. The people were unable to manage the business or make a business go in a city that was already crowded, and so they used the money simply to keep themselves and their families alive.

So there continues today this staggering mass of people, and if the government itself has not been able to solve the problem, it is certain that the voluntary agencies are not going to do so

either. Nevertheless, a voluntary agency or a group of agencies might get some small leverage on the problem.

In the Fall of last year, Church World Service called upon a well-known social scientist, Dr. Herbert Stroup of Brooklyn College, to head a team that was made up also of a doctor from Canada, of several Indians and of a young American who has had years in relief work in India. They travelled to Calcutta and spent the best part of two months engaging in a thorough study. They talked with everyone, government officials, both Indian and American, representatives of various voluntary agencies who had been working in Calcutta, and with the refugees themselves, studying various aspects of the problem.

Their report has now been drawn up and its 170 pages make fascinating reading. It is called Project Daya, *Daya*, being a Bengali word, meaning "mercy."

There is to be what is called a "colony unit." This will be a welfare unit established in each of two or three of the colonies, in the first instance as a pioneer effort. Attached to these various units will be social workers, supplementary feeding programs, and some small efforts at sanitation, food production and the like in certain select colonies.

Alongside the colony welfare unit will go, we hope, the colony training unit. Here the emphasis will be on training, but not, as is so often the case, rug-weaving or basket work, or some nice little thing to keep the refugees busy, but rather a training that will be geared to the economy of the city itself. The effort may be to establish a small factory or factories, or to turn out people trained in certain vocational skills, that are needed in Calcutta itself. It will be something of a long-term effort to take out of the colony those people who are able for it, take them off relief and

dependence on others and into a productive and useful life.

Alongside, there is to be another activity called the Calcutta University unit. In Calcutta University today, there are 92,000 students, of whom over one-half are refugees. Many of them come to classes from the crowded tenement slum areas where they may be living as students together with 10 or 11 people in a room. They are not able to afford textbooks, have no privacy and few facilities for study; they have no way to ward off sickness, and often they can barely secure the funds to pay the fees. A university unit will be started in one or two of the colleges. Here again, there would be a variety of services offered, not least personal counselling with the students themselves, the building up of book banks where they can have the use of textbooks that they cannot afford, perhaps a small canteen, bathing facilities where they can take a shower and go to their classes feeling cleaner from the grime of their own living conditions.

A fourth aspect of Project Daya is to be the Dandakarnya Unit. In the central part of India, some 600 miles from Calcutta, there is a vast 32,000 square mile area called Dandakarnya. This is largely primitive and undeveloped land, sparsely populated, and now being developed by the central government. There are plans to build roads, extract valuable minerals, clear forests, fill in swamps, provide irrigation and electrification. The government has also had in mind the possibility of moving large numbers of the Bengal refugees to Dandakarnya in the hope that they could there make a new life for themselves.

There are serious physical, psychological, and political problems that surround the Dandakarnya scheme. Church World Service hopes that it can work through the various colony and univer-

sity units to prepare the refugees to make the big move from Bengal to the distant and unknown Dandakarnya. And at the other end, in Dandakarnya itself, we hope to have teams of workers engaged, together with government, in the actual work of resettlement.

It has been reported that there has been an astonishing interest and support within many countries around the world in World Refugee Year. In this Calcutta project, for example, most of the financial support will come from Churches in England, in Australia, in New Zealand, in Germany, in Scandinavia, from Japan

and from India itself, so that it will not be a case of just one American agency calling entirely on its resources but joining hands in what we hope will be a truly international effort.

Christopher Fry said, "Now is the time when wrong comes up to face us everywhere, never to leave us, till we have taken the longest stride of soul that man ever took." Not only in this World Refugee Year, but in the years beyond, for all of us, as American citizens, and as people who desire to help others, now is the time to take a "long stride of soul."