

Speech delivered by

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The Problem of refugees, which arose for the first time after the first world war, was set again in 1945, but this time on a scale hitherto unknown. One can have some idea of the immensity of the problem when one considers that the number of these persons is estimated at 11 millions in Europe only according to the figures given by the Council of Europe and to 14 millions according to the report of the Secretariat of the Interparliamentary Union. And this number is increasing every day.

It is, however, sad to realise that in spite of the six years which have gone by since the end of the war, the problem of refugees still constitutes one of the main problems facing the world. As has been said, it has become "a permanent object of preoccupation for the international community."

International organisms, have of course, been set up to deal with the problems born of political upheavals of the second World War, and these have admirably accomplished their work. UNRRA, set up during the war, succeeded with the help of the allied army to repatriate the large majority of displaced persons. Under the banner of the United Nations, the IRO was formed. It replaced UNRRA and the interparliamentary committee for refugees set up before the war. And it has resettled through emigration or repatriation more than a million people. But there is still very much left for it to do.

Side by side with IRO other organs have been created to deal with certain problems of a regional character. In 1948 the "United Nations Aid for Palestine Refugees" UNR was set up, and this was replaced in 1949 by the "United Nations Relief and Works Agency". (UNRWA). The "United Nations Korean relief Agency" (UNKRA) set up in 1950 constitutes the latest example of this.

In addition, the Council of Europe has taken this matter in hand. The problem was raised during the 1950 session of the Council. Since then, there has been much progress in this work. But of course the Council of Europe concerned itself with European refugees alone.

Finally, in order to take over certain of the functions of the IRO, now being liquidated, the United Nations in December 1950 set up the office of the High-Commissioner for Refugees and called a Conference of plenipotentiaries in order to draw up the Statutes of Refugees.

As concerns the Convention on the Statutes of refugees, this was signed on the 28 of July last by about a dozen states and constitutes an important achievement in the humanitarian field. It seeks to ensure for refugees, the minimum standards of living necessary to a human being in conformity with the Rights of Man. The office of the High Commissioner for Refugees will watch over the application of this convention. We hope that this instrument will carry benefits to all those who suffer through the lack of a legal status.

The office of the High Commissioner opens its doors at the beginning of this year and is now getting organised. But it only has at its disposal a modest administrative budget. It has no funds to provide for the needs of refugees, and its function seems for the moment to be confined to that of legal protection only.

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And further, it will only take an interest in persons who were refugees up to the beginning of 1951, in spite of the fact that since that date a continuous flood of people are seeking refuge everyday in various countries.

From what we have just stated, two essential points emerge clearly which are the lacking elements in the efforts to solve the question of refugees.

1. The lack of a world-wide organisation to deal with the problem as a whole for all refugees, whatever the part of the globe they belong to.
2. The lack of necessary funds for the working of existing organisations and such as might have to be set up.

To deal with each one of these problems, I ask the Assembly to call upon all democratic governments of the world,

- a) in order to invite them to set up a General Conference aiming at a creation of a unique organisation dealing with the problems of refugees throughout the world,
- b) in order to ask all democratic governments to put aside every year a minimum percentage of their budget at the disposal of the international organisation to be set up.

Meanwhile, these sums could be placed at the disposal of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, until such time as the question of refugees is finally settled.

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In the meantime, these funds could be entrusted to the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, until such time as the question of Refugees is totally settled. On the other hand, one of the most painful faces of the problem of the Refugees is doubtless the state of the poor, hardcore ill, cripple and old persons. Some of the countries which harbour refugees sometimes eliminate these, unfortunately. However some countries have accepted these unfortunates as well, in 1950. But there are still thousands who are awaiting, in their misery, a country that will harbour them. Their number is not too high. We, the members of the Interparliamentary Union, must appeal to all democratic governments having welfare Institutions, to receive all these unfortunates.

Where Turkey is concerned, she has never, since the end of the second world war, failed to respond to the appeals of the United Nations on the questions of the Refugees. Turkey is neither an immigration, nor an emigration country. However, true to the traditions of her history, many examples of which are still famous, she has never closed her doors to those fleeing persecution. She has given hospitality to thousands of foreigners. Unfortunately these figures are not mentioned in the report of the Secretariat of the Interparliamentary Union. She has collaborated with the OIR in the reception and settling in Turkey of thousands of refugees. She has actively collaborated in all the phases of the elaboration of the Convention on the Statute of Refugees, which she has just signed a few days ago.

But for Turkey, the problem of refugees actually presents a different aspect. Turkey must today meet masses of immigrants of Turkish origin chased from Bulgaria.

In the report of the Secretariat of the Interparliamentary Union, which you have all consulted no doubt, no mention is made of the question of the refugees faced by Turkey, since one year. Turkey is obliged, since one year, to receive nearly one million refugees, that is, a number of refugees corresponding to the twentieth of her population.

These are persons of Turkish culture and ethnological origin who have lived in Bulgaria since the XIVth century and acquired the Bulgarian nationality at that country's independence. They have not taken any interest in questions related to Bulgarian internal politics. In spite of their attitude always conform to the laws, their wish to live in peace, they have always been subjected to more or less serious persecutions. But never was their position as bad as it is today. The number of the minorities in question is largely more than 900,000 on a total population of 7 millions.

The position of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria makes the subject of the Protocole annexed to the Turkish-Bulgarian Friendship Treaty of 1925 and of the Settlement Convention between these two countries, of the same year.

According to the above mentioned Protocole:

"The two governments promise to each other to allow the moslem minorities in Bulgaria of all the dispositions relative to the protection of minorities stipulated in the Treaty of Neuilly, and the Bulgarian minorities in Turkey of all the dispositions relative to the protection of minorities stipulated in the Treaty of Lausanne.

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and to point 2 of the Settlement Convention:

"The contracting parties agree that no obstacle shall be made to the voluntary emigration of Turks from Bulgaria and Bulgarians from Turkey. The emigrants will have the right to take with them their movable goods and cattle, and to liquidate their immovable goods in all liberty. Those who would not wish to liquidate their immovable goods before their final departure must do it within two years of their emigration."

Starting with the conclusion of these Conventions until 1938, the number of Turkish emigrees from Bulgaria has varied between a maximum of 12,000 and a minimum of about 900.

Since 1938, we see an increase in the number of annual emigrees (more than 16,000 in 1939). Then, this number goes decreasing until 98 in 1948.

As from 1944, the Bulgarian terrorist régime makes itself felt more and more on the minorities: those who dare express their wish to emigrate are being persecuted. Those who comit the impudence of contacting the Turkish Legation or Consulates in Bulgaria are subjected to nameless vexations.

Then came the surprise of the 10th August 1950: the Government of Sofia, in a note to the Turkish Government, declares having "authorised" 250,000 Bulgarian subjects of Turkish origin to migrate to Turkey within a period of three months, while accusing the Turkish Government of not having observed the dispositions of the 1925 Convention.

In acting thus, the Bulgarian Government was trying to mislead the public opinion by giving the impression that Turkey was guilty of failing to the principles of free immigration. It was also trying to embarass the Turkish Government economically, by forcing it to receive a considerable number of refugees within a very limited period of time.

Bulgaria has acted thus just on the morrow of the Turkish decision to send troops to Korea. In doing this, she wanted to embarass us, hoping to create troubles in Turkey. That was the Reds' answer to Turkey's democratic action.

The exodus reached its climax in full Balkanic winter. Tens of thousands Turks from Bulgaria were massed on the frontier under snow and rain, without the possibility of finding a refuge. The deaths were unfortunately numerous, mainly among children and old people.

That was a measure taken in violation of the Rights of Man and disregarding the rights of minorities. It was a measure of mass deportation in the guise of voluntary emigration.

One should take note that Turkey has been above acting in the same way against Bulgarian minorities living on its territory and enjoying every kind of liberty.

The Turkish Government has brought this problem before the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which unanimously adopted a protest against Bulgaria. This decision was approved by the General Assembly of the Council of Europe. Thus, European solidarity on the one hand, and on the other hand the firm decision of the Turkish Government which declared categorically that it could not remain indifferent to the infliction of such suffering, obliged the Bulgarians to bring some logic in the formulation of their demands. And following a verbal agreement, 800 to a 1000 refugees per day have been and are, actually being sent into Turkey.

These emigrants arrive in Turkey in a state of complete indigence, the Bulgarian authorities having confiscated the greater part of their belongings under the pretext of collecting taxes improvised for the occasion. The emigrants are only authorised to take with them certain articles of primary necessity in spite of the clauses of the 1925 convention, which, as has been shown provides for the transfer of the whole of the belongings of emigrants.

The number of refugees having come in since 1950, now exceeds 150.000. I must add at once that almost 75% of them is composed of children and mothers, while the rest mostly consist of old people - men and women. Such is the sad balance-sheet of this exodus of Turks from Bulgaria.

In spite of its economic difficulties, Turkey has absorbed in the relatively short time of 12 months, nearly 150.000 refugees.

Whereas, according to the reports of the Interparliamentary Union covering the period from the 1st of July 1947 to the 31st December 1950, i.e. some three and a half years, the United States of America received only 238.000 refugees, Australia 170.000, Israel 120.000 and Canada 94.000. None of the other countries who are happily present here have even reached the figure of 50.000 for refugees received.

If we know wish to settle this question of refugees, we should act in solidarity. If one could share out equitably the refugees between the democratic countries, bearing in mind their populations, their national incomes and their economic situation, this painful question could be settled immediately.

All present here to-day belong to a free country. But we do not know what fate is in store for us to-morrow. If we lay the foundations of a mutual humanitarian help at once, to-morrow, should misfortune occur, the sufferings of our populations will be alleviated the more easily. I will put before you once again, the example of Turkey, which has in twenty years received a number of refugees amounting to some 30% of her population.

I call upon the Inter-parliamentary Union to ask all democratic countries to be prepared to receive refugees according to a fixed percentage based on their population and their economic situation. A draft resolution has been put down at the Bureau.

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We have learned with satisfaction that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, by means of a subvention from the Rockefeller foundation, is now carrying on an independant inquiry into the actual condition of refugees in general. I am convinced, that such a study will put into focus the situation of he refugees from Bulgaria among other categories of refugges of our time, unfortunately so numerous. It will permit to contemplate once more what measures are required by international solidarity.

It is my duty here to thank all governmental and non-governmental institutions, both national and international which have, within their limitaions, been kind enough to help us in these difficult moments.

But the question of refugees of Turkish origin from Bulgaria is far from being solved.

As for the proposals mentioned in the draft resolution presented by Mr. Holmback, I declare that the Turkish Group is completely in agreement as concerns the humanitarian spirit of his reports, but in order to help in the solution of this problem, our delegation has drawn up amendments which will be put before you by my colleague Prof. Çelikbaş.

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