

# INTERNATIONAL LABOUR REVIEW

VOL. LXIV, Nos. 5-6

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1951

## Role of Non-governmental Organisations in the Assistance of Migrants

by

Miss Suzanne FERRIÈRE

*International Social Service*

*In its work of co-ordinating and encouraging national action for the welfare of migrant workers the International Labour Organisation has naturally been associated with the numerous voluntary organisations which were often in earlier times the only source of aid to migrants. The unprecedented scale of migratory and allied problems since the second world war has necessitated the creation of much new governmental and international machinery, but a large number of voluntary organisations providing assistance to migrants still exist and continue their work.*

*The following article contributed by the General Secretary of the International Social Service, which was chosen by the United Nations to prepare the first conference of non-governmental organisations interested in migration, attempts to show the particular spheres in which these bodies can make a useful contribution in the future.*

THE problems of international migration are not new. In every generation enterprising men have sought their fortunes or better conditions in distant countries. In every century disasters have overwhelmed peoples whose only resource was flight. And the victors in war have often deported slave labour needed for their economies.

In the past, migratory movements did not normally raise particular problems. They were regarded as the normal consequence of war or economic development. Most countries had no migration policy, no special laws on aliens and no social services for migrants. The particular problems arising in each country were dealt with as they arose, when a peace treaty was signed or by commercial agreements; and in many cases, there was no governmental action at all. Social difficulties (poverty, unemployment, disease, etc.) were dealt with by emergency measures or by the ordinary charities.

But during the past few decades migration has been on such a scale and has raised such complex problems that it can no longer be treated as an incident of war or economic development. The movements affect the entire world and their manifold demographic, economic, political and social repercussions can no longer be treated independently of each other. Migration questions are likely in future to be dealt with directly by specialised governmental or intergovernmental institutions endowed with considerable funds. It is of interest to note, for example, that the budget of the International Refugee Organisation for 1949 was four times as great as that of the United Nations.

On studying the problem more closely it becomes obvious that no single international organisation can carry out unaided the whole complex task of migrant assistance. Since the first world war, many non-governmental organisations have given help to hundreds of thousands of migrants; immediate action was required, and the needs were so pressing and complex that each organisation set to work where and as it could.

But now that the huge volume of migration caused by the last war is beginning to die down and the good results of closer acquaintance and co-operation between non-governmental organisations have been experienced, these organisations are attempting, with the help of the United Nations and the International Labour Office, to co-ordinate their efforts for the future. More specifically, they are engaged in making a survey of the tasks to be done and in assigning responsibility to each organisation.

The official bodies, recognising the complementary role of the non-governmental organisations concerned with migration problems, asked them to collaborate more closely and to

co-ordinate their efforts. In August 1948 the Seventh Session of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations adopted a resolution instructing the Secretary-General to enter into contact with the non-governmental organisations concerned with migration problems and to ask them to co-ordinate their voluntary activities.

In pursuance of this resolution the International Social Service was made responsible for preparing a conference of non-governmental organisations<sup>1</sup>, which took place in Geneva in January 1950. A second conference was held in March 1951.<sup>2</sup> At these conferences the non-governmental organisations had an opportunity of comparing notes on the current situation of migrants, and in so doing to reach a clearer understanding of their particular tasks and of their future work in collaboration with the official organisations. The proceedings revealed new spheres of action and a desire for ever greater efficiency. Apart from practical decisions to ensure that migrants receive the greatest possible measure of protection and assistance by the most efficient means, the anticipated contribution of the non-governmental organisations towards the improvement of migration procedure is very considerable.

#### MIGRATION BEFORE AND AFTER 1914

Systematic action by specialised private bodies in the field of migrant assistance is of relatively recent origin. Voluntary bodies sprang up from time to time when the fate of migrants aroused public feeling, while the more clear-sighted observers were conscious of the economic and political difficulties likely to follow in their day from hardships inflicted on migrants.

Prior to this century, the circumstances in which migration took place were quite different. It is true that the roughest work and the most primitive living conditions awaited the immigrant, but he could normally cope with the difficulties in a country where there was as yet no hostility to aliens.

This has no longer been the case since the upheavals that accompanied the first world war. A brief comparison of the situation of migrants before and after 1914 will make it easier

---

<sup>1</sup> A list of the organisations concerned is given in Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> A third conference is to be held in New York in the spring of 1952.

to determine the present sphere of action of the non-governmental organisations.

Before 1914 migration was essentially a movement of individuals in response to pressure of population, rapid economic advance, political crises or national tradition.

Even at that time there were movements of labour from overpopulated to underpopulated territories; the main flow of migrants was from Central and Southern Europe to the new countries in South America and, after 1820, to North America. At this period population pressure was heaviest in Germany; later it was greatest in Italy, a country with a high birth rate.

Economic emigration was also on a considerable scale, consisting mainly of middle-class persons with means, artists and specialists. Thus, in France, a country with a high rate of immigration, Italian silk weavers and bankers settled in Lyons, Dutch peasants were brought in for the draining of the Poitou marshes, and Scandinavian merchants and ship-owners came to the Atlantic ports. More recently, from the time of the Napoleonic Empire until 1870, a steady stream of German immigrants from the Rhineland and in some cases from Prussia entered France. These were mainly skilled workers brought into Champagne and Lorraine by industrialists of German origin. A typical example is that of a Prussian citizen called Werli, a champagne merchant and mayor of Rhéims during the reign of Napoleon III, who encouraged the recruitment of labour from across the Rhine by subsidising certain definitely German groups.

Emigration from Poland is a typical example of political emigration. At every turn in their country's history—the revival under Napoleon and the risings of 1830-31, 1848 and 1863—many Poles left the country. Most of them belonged to the nobility, the army or the intelligentsia.

Finally, a fourth important aspect of pre-1914 emigration must be mentioned, namely, traditional emigration, a type of emigration peculiar to certain countries such as Great Britain and the Rhineland states, which were neither overpopulated nor poor. In Alsace, for example, certain merchant and peasant families regarded emigration to the United States as a business venture, which would enable them to increase their capital tenfold.

Thus, before 1914, many people emigrated voluntarily—to improve their standard of living, to carry on the fight against a hostile political regime, or simply by tradition. They had little need of help or protection. And those who were driven from their homes by unemployment or persecution generally found it easy to settle in a friendly country. The economy of the Western world was expanding, labour was warmly welcomed in the new countries, and there were as yet no “old” countries. There was less division of society into rigid compartments; an immigrant who started as a crossing-sweeper could still hope to make a fortune. Moreover, the immigrant was not necessarily treated as an alien in his new environment. Frontiers were easy to cross and the mass of the people were certainly more internationally minded than today.

Since 1918 the movements have increasingly taken on the character of forced migration; they nearly always involve suffering and often downright misery.

Economic distress has grown and, though some of the former aspects remain, migration is mainly the result of material necessity, population pressure and political upheavals. Progress in hygiene and industrialisation has reduced mortality rates and the population has increased in countries such as Italy, Spain, North Africa, Japan, Germany and Poland. Would-be emigrants are no longer pioneers seeking their fortunes, but economic refugees in the true sense of the word, fleeing from unemployment and poverty. In addition, political upheavals are causing vast movements of refugees driven from their homes by war or intolerant regimes—Armenians, Russians, later Spaniards, and later still Germans, Czechs... Then again, the traditional problem of national minorities in Europe is being solved by drastic means; the mass of displaced persons is the result of the policy begun by Germany and followed by the Allies after the Potsdam agreements. Economic refugees, political refugees and displaced persons alike would rapidly degenerate into brute humanity if specialised organisations did not make it their duty to help and protect them.

The outlets for migration have shrunk. The chaos of international politics has forced the nations to erect barricades;

frontiers are closed, understanding between peoples is decreasing, xenophobia is on the increase. The fear of war discourages governments from admitting aliens, among whom there may be doubtful elements. Economic depressions close the door to the arrival of additional manpower. Legal machinery has become rigid and hampers population movements.

The gravity of the situation, where international migration is on the increase while immigration is simultaneously restricted, has forced the non-governmental organisations to establish assistance and welfare services.

#### GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The value of the assistance given by the non-governmental organisations to migrants in their present situation is partly due to the very nature of private organisations. The characteristics of their type of organisation should therefore be described so as to indicate the role of the non-governmental organisations.

Firstly, they are particularly well adapted to the purpose for which they are intended. The non-governmental organisations have arisen, not as a result of a theoretical study or the preparation of a general plan, but as a result of practical experience and to meet a specific need without delay, as no official organisation or system of regulation existed to deal with it. Bodies such as the International Catholic Girls' Society or the International Federation of Friends of Young Women were established because of the difficulties experienced by women and girls when travelling alone and the dangers of the white slave traffic. The International Social Service (the International Migration Service, as it was then called) came into being as a result of the distress of emigrants from Central and Eastern Europe and the Near East immediately after the first world war. Huge numbers of these refugees, impelled by economic and political difficulties, set out for the New World. But to protect themselves against this inrush the immigration countries adopted regulations of ever-increasing severity. Thus, whole families, who had sold all their possessions in their home countries, found themselves

halted in transit ports, unable either to continue their journey or to return.

A bond of affinity and sympathy usually exists between the non-governmental organisations and the persons appealing to them, as a result of the field—religious, professional, trade union or ethnic—with which the organisation is associated. This leads to an ease of understanding and feeling of confidence, which are so desirable when helping homeless persons.

Around the voluntary organisations with their many contacts and helpers, there is a parallel development of the sense of responsibility for others and human fellowship, which is not without value. And the beneficial effect on the many helpers from an educational point of view is without question; they acquire a wide knowledge of general and international problems and of the problems facing migrants, of the methods and techniques used to solve the problems, and a fuller understanding of individuals and the difficulties which each experiences.

Respect of the individual can only be safeguarded if he keeps his freedom of action. The existence of many different non-governmental organisations with varying approaches and fields of action guarantees freedom of choice. Moreover, in such a complex matter as that of migrant assistance it is a good thing that the organisations should be equally independent of governments, that migrants should not be dealt with exclusively by a public monopoly and that there should also be active witnesses engaged in the same work.

Lastly, the private organisations with their varied structure are able to associate new funds as well as new persons in the improvement of migrant protection. The money for many of their activities is provided by voluntary efforts. The proportion may vary from country to country (it is particularly high in the Anglo-Saxon countries) and from organisation to organisation, but the significance of this factor should not be forgotten.

After this description of the particular characteristics of the non-governmental organisations, we must now define the relative importance of their role.

At a time when migratory movements are on an international scale, leading to consultations between the Inter-

national Labour Organisation, the United Nations, the specialised agencies and the governments, and concrete plans and international agreements are being drafted, it should be remembered that the role of the non-governmental organisations is not to promote migration but to give assistance to the different types of migrants. Non-governmental bodies cannot undertake the organisation of and responsibility for population movements unless the primary interest of the individuals is to leave their country of residence on account of persecution or profound and lasting changes. Certain Jewish organisations have had to cope with such a situation, but it is not the normal work of the non-governmental organisations.

However, before considering the common purpose of the organisations, namely, aid to the different types of migrants, the word "migrant" must be defined. The notion of emigration is departure from one country to settle in another; it presupposes a country of origin, which is the natural home, and a country of settlement. This notion is applicable to a worker who goes to a foreign country, alone or with his family, hoping to find better living conditions or work which he cannot find in his own country.

But the word "migrant" must be interpreted in a broader sense, as it includes other categories. There are cases where the notion of emigration is not appropriate because, as a result of upheavals, changes of frontiers and revolutions, the homeland may no longer exist. Political attachment to a country may have become uncertain or have been renounced. This is the situation of *de facto* stateless persons.

The political refugee, on the other hand, does not enter a country because he wishes to settle there. He has little choice in the matter; he is fleeing from persecution or a political regime which seems to threaten his safety. Some of them—statutory refugees<sup>1</sup>—are protected by international conventions; others have not yet been given such protection.

---

<sup>1</sup> Russians, Armenians, Turks, Assyrians, Assyro-Chaldeans and assimilated groups covered by the Geneva Convention of 28 October 1933. Refugees from the Saar (Arrangement of 30 July 1935). Refugees from Germany and Austria (Convention of 10 February 1938 and Additional Protocol of 14 September 1939). Spanish refugees (not the subject of any international Convention but in their case an existing Convention was extended by unilateral action to a group of refugees in a given country—France, 16 March 1945).



To these migrants must be added another group of persons who are neither emigrants nor immigrants, since they chose neither the time of their departure nor their destination. These are the displaced persons<sup>1</sup>, who cannot or will not return to the territory where they formerly resided and do not know where to go.

### PRESENT ROLE OF THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

The scope of action of the non-governmental organisations concerned with migration problems is extremely wide. An examination of the statements communicated to the Secretary-General of the United Nations by the non-governmental organisations in reply to a questionnaire on their activities sent out in November 1948, reveals the difficulty of classifying them according to the work they do. However, their interest in migration questions can be reduced to two main spheres: direct and immediate assistance to migrants, and studies and activities of a general nature as a contribution to migration policy. Problems relating to the organisation of mass movements, however, are almost exclusively the concern of governments and intergovernmental organisations, which are the only organisations capable of dealing with such problems. The essential task of the non-governmental organisations is to discover the problems of those persons to whom general measures are not easy to apply, and to smooth out the many difficulties experienced by emigrants when their normal pattern of existence, habits and family ties are broken and they find themselves with or without work in a country whose laws, customs, spirit and language they generally do not know.

Direct assistance given by non-governmental organisations to migrants takes many forms. For purposes of clarity the various kinds of assistance given will be divided into four main groups: practical help; economic aid; psychological and moral help; legal aid.

---

<sup>1</sup> Persons who as a result of the 1939-45 war were deported or obliged to leave the countries of which they were nationals or in which they were normally resident, and were taken to Germany, Austria or Italy (persons deported for forced labour or on racial, religious, political or ethnic grounds).

### *Practical Help*

*Migrant workers.* Although they are the best protected group, migrant workers need assistance. Firstly, they need information on the countries to which they are going and on the differences in national customs, for ignorance of these may give rise to serious misunderstandings and involve the immigrant in disputes as soon as he arrives, particularly if he comes from a distant country. They must be informed of working conditions and wages, otherwise they will be misled by descriptions of a standard of living that only experienced and efficient workers can achieve.

Housing is a delicate problem if the employer does not provide it. In some countries the regulations do not allow the worker to bring his family until he has found a place to live. This separation may cause serious disturbance of the family.

Linguistic differences are always a source of material and occupational difficulties. Dealings with officials are difficult, vocational training is hampered and assimilation is retarded. Language teaching is an important task of the non-governmental organisations; it does not take long to teach a worker before his departure the words which will enable him to practise his trade.

*Refugees.* In some cases refugees are more educated than immigrant workers; but more often they are almost incapable of organising their lives, having fallen into the habit of living from hand to mouth and always hoping to return to their homes. The assimilation of refugees is likely to be slow and difficult.

*Displaced persons.* The needs of the displaced persons are immense, while they are still in the camp, during the journeys, on arrival and during the first few months (or even years). They need lodging, food, clothes, medical care, and the task of the non-governmental organisations in this field is enormous. In receiving countries they must pay particular attention to health problems, as the hard camp life, the nervous strain of waiting and constant movement cause weaknesses (tuberculosis, chronic anxiety, mental disorders) which make

readaptation to normal life difficult. The non-governmental organisations also facilitate resettlement journeys; they speed up administrative formalities, bring families together and obtain the necessary documents—all functions which can usefully be performed by organisations more flexible than the responsible administrative bodies.

### *Economic Aid*

Assistance of this kind is nearly always given in conjunction with practical assistance. It can be subdivided into two types: financial aid and the finding of work.

*Financial aid.* As a general rule the worker has neither savings nor a family able to help him in the country to which he goes. Moreover, even if he succeeds in earning his living like the nationals of the country, he is bound to spend more than they do. His rent is usually higher, particularly in the towns. As he has no furniture he often lives in a hotel. When he is sick he only rarely receives the assistance given to nationals, and social security legislation, where it exists, does not apply to him during the first few months of his residence. In times of unemployment the emigrant worker is always the first to be dismissed, and when this happens he is in danger of losing his social insurance rights as an employed person. Lastly, his ignorance of the law often deprives him later of the benefit of allowances, disability and retirement pensions, and scholarships for his children.

In addition to these workers—whose rights under the social insurance laws extended to migrants by bilateral agreements or international Conventions must constantly be safeguarded—there are other categories in respect of whom certain tasks (such as the distribution of money and clothing) have been delegated to the non-governmental organisations by governments or by the International Refugee Organisation.

Lastly, there are a number of charities of a religious or national character which provide aid to lonely *émigrés* who are without work and not eligible for assistance by the International Refugee Organisation, to aged independent workers without retirement pensions, and to women with family responsibilities who are unable to find employment.

*Finding of work.* This is the essential factor in the economic (and also psychological) adjustment of the immigrant. It is often the most difficult kind of assistance to give, and the flexibility and drive of the non-governmental organisations is needed to solve each problem within the framework of existing labour legislation.

In almost all countries the immigrant worker runs up against restrictive legislation to protect domestic labour. These complex laws are very variable and the immigrant may easily break them without knowing it. Some means must be found of providing him with information. At the outset he is nearly always obliged to accept a hard job in which there is a labour shortage and which is new to him. He must be helped to fit himself for the work or to change jobs if the work is unsuitable. In many cases the worker does not know the local customs of the trade ; for instance, he may not know that in a given country the miner is expected to own his tools ; in this case, tools must be provided for him.

If the worker is unable to find employment or is dismissed he may decide over-hastily to return to his own country ; but if he has family responsibilities and if he sold all his possessions before emigrating, his position will be a serious one.

It is more difficult to find work for refugees. They are more unstable and sometimes cannot decide whether to settle down, to go elsewhere or to return to their own countries. What is to be done with elderly intellectuals in countries whose language they do not know ? The non-governmental organisations are constantly concerned with such problems, and are using their connections in all classes of society in the attempt to adapt recent immigrants and to teach them their obligations as well as their rights.

### *Psychological and Moral Help*

In this field the brunt of the work falls on the shoulders of private organisations. The job of contacting and being at hand to help immigrants is one on which social workers and their voluntary helpers should concentrate. The non-governmental organisations, whose activities are often of a cultural or religious nature, are best equipped for this task.

The foreign worker is not always welcomed in the country in which he settles ; other workers regard him as a competitor,

the employer regards him as easily satisfied labour, the taxpayer is ready to believe that he is a burden on the country, and political propagandists spread stories about fifth columnists. The migrant, often badly clothed and housed and with the inevitable difficulties of communication, feels left out and inferior. If he is separated from his family and his normal surroundings, his distress is often so great that he may be plunged into depression or driven to desperate acts. Isolation may also lead to the establishment of irregular households and this raises delicate moral and economic problems for the families who remain behind.

Where there has been a mass exodus of refugees or a transfer of minorities, the result (in Western Europe at least) is to swell a population already over-numerous, impoverished by war, underfed and sometimes without housing, where there is already insufficient work. The new arrival inevitably feels the effect, even if he manages to provide for his material needs.

The displaced persons are nearly always demoralised as a result of long periods of idleness in camps, the uncertainty of the future, and the gradual loss of their professional skill and powers of initiative and responsibility. Some have not lost heart (such as the groups of war injured formed for joint farming) but how many there are who have lost all interest and courage. In some cases an excess of suffering has made them touchy and discontented. The nervous and psychological balance of these men, overwhelmed by one disaster after another, is often extremely precarious.

In the immigration country where the D. P. becomes a "new citizen", government departments are generally ill-fitted for the work of reawakening interest in a free and useful life of activity. It is the voluntary organisations which help the newcomer, put him in touch with earlier settlers from his own country, and find him clubs, schools and friends. The process of adaptation can often be carried out through the children, who are more easily influenced; a month in a holiday camp with local children is of more value than efforts over a long period. Spiritual factors cannot be overstressed, and the principal churches are doing everything to help their members to return to a normal life.

*Legal Aid*

The First Conference of Non-governmental Organisations Interested in Migration noted the fundamental difference between legal protection and legal aid.

Legal protection is a matter for government departments and intergovernmental bodies or organisations appointed by them. It is, however, the duty of the non-governmental organisations to ensure that all migrants are always given legal protection and to see that the powers of the intergovernmental organisations are wide enough to cover all categories of refugees.

Legal aid, on the other hand, is within the province of the non-governmental organisations. Great difficulties face migrants in this field. Many of them, particularly refugees and stateless persons, have difficulty in obtaining the documents they need in order to comply with the law (birth certificates for marriage, the recognition of children, certificates of all kinds).

The law on aliens is so complex and so varied in the different countries that only a few specialists can be fully acquainted with it. Sometimes laws in one country are contradictory and their application leads to inextricable tangles. Finally, as regards many categories of migrants there is no complete legislation and they sometimes have to spend years without proper legal status.

The giving of legal aid is far from easy, for a single consultation is not enough; the migrant often does not know what sort of difficulty is involved in his case. Thus, the patience of the social worker, using case-work methods, is required in order to discover what problems can be solved by legal means.

In view of these factors, it is clearly impossible for government departments to study each particular case, and the migrant without means must be able to obtain legal aid free of charge. Such aid must be provided by the voluntary organisations, which know from experience what human dramas lie behind the forbidding and abstract legal terms.

The organisations must collaborate very closely in this field. They already do so to a certain extent; but in view of the specialised and perpetually changing nature of the work

and its effect on the welfare and safety of migrants, it is desirable that collaboration should be even closer.

While most of the non-governmental organisations are in direct contact with migrants and give immediate assistance, there are others with more general objects, which are only concerned with research, information and matters of over-all policy.<sup>1</sup> Some organisations carry out work of both kinds<sup>2</sup>, as the non-governmental organisations are always aware of the value of assistance of a general nature.

It is not enough to assist the migrant to adapt himself to his new country; the population must also be persuaded to adopt the new citizen. In every country the non-governmental organisations can influence a large section of public opinion; a glance at the list of non-governmental organisations concerned with migration problems will bear out this fact. Through their periodicals, lectures and example, these organisations can reach a wide public.

The non-governmental organisations can also inform governments of particular situations and gaps in existing legislation, and suggest general measures by which a law may be modified or made more flexible. The following example of one such intervention by the International Social Service, the organisation with which the author is best acquainted, may be cited as an illustration of the work of the organisations in this field.

In 1945 the French Ministry of the Interior issued newly arrived immigrants with residence permits for six months only. They had been informed in the D.P. camps by labour recruiting agents that they would be entitled to family allowances, but family allowances could in fact only be paid to aliens with residence permits for one year. This anomaly was pointed out, an inter-ministerial committee was convened and aliens with residence permits for six months were allowed to receive family allowances.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Consultative Council of Jewish Organisations, the International League for the Rights of Man, the Interparliamentary Union, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, the World Jewish Congress, etc., are examples of organisations interested in the more general aspects of migration.

<sup>2</sup> For instance, Caritas Internationalis, the Lutheran World Federation, the United Service for New Americans, the World Council of Churches, etc.

The relaxation of the extremely strict French exchange control regulations to permit transfers to Germany for the payment of maintenance allowances for illegitimate children was also due to the intervention of the International Social Service.

The following are further recent examples of repeated representations by a non-governmental organisation, which may be expected to result in measures to free a particular category of migrants from unjustified restrictions. They are taken from the report of the last annual congress of departmental social workers in the *Service Social de la Main-d'œuvre Etrangère* of the International Social Service (French section).

In the Rhone department in France the main labour problem is that of unemployment. During 1950 the total number of registered unemployed was 24,181, the peak months being January, February, October and December. The average number of assisted unemployed varied between 1,100 and 1,400, the peak months being April, May, June and July.

This economic situation makes the position of the alien much more difficult, particularly in the case of newly arrived refugees—especially those from Central Europe. The refugee obtains a provisional residence permit for ten days or so in order to find work and carry out the formalities at the office of the director of foreign labour for the *département*. This permit is often valid for the Lyons district only, and it is easy to imagine what a feat is required of a man who knows nothing of the opportunities in the town (which, moreover, is extremely hostile to foreign elements) and cannot even make himself understood.

As, unless he is exceptionally lucky, the refugee is unlikely to get fixed up in such a short time, the prefecture will extend his permit once. This rarely happens a second time, and he may find that he has committed a breach of the aliens regulations, with all the dangers that this implies—imprisonment, unhappiness, bitterness, and the problem still unsolved at the end of the term of imprisonment.

But suppose that the refugee finds work, the employer may refuse to engage him because he has no work card. The employer may also refuse to give him the certificate of engagement that he needs to comply with the regulations, through a mistaken fear of laying himself open to trouble with the director of foreign labour.

Our organisation has often interceded with employers in such situations. It is only a small detail quickly dealt with, but the refugee left to his own devices might well have gone to one factory after another without finding work.

Another example is that of the alien worker who is entitled to register as unemployed, for the purpose of drawing the allowance (if he fulfils the conditions) or of maintaining his social security rights. This registration is not always a straightforward matter. The worker may be unemployed at the moment when his voucher and work card expire. He cannot have the voucher extended as he



has no employer; and he cannot register as unemployed, as his labour permit has expired and cannot be extended unless he has a job and a valid voucher. He has thus lost all his rights. Such situations can be dealt with by making representations at the prefecture and at the office of the director of foreign labour for the *département*.

In 1944 enquiries were carried out in Switzerland and the United States into the problem of repatriation and resettlement of refugees in camps in the two countries.

The main purpose of the enquiries was to show the need for information on the refugees so that the possibility of repatriating or resettling them would be examined according to the circumstances of each individual. The findings were submitted to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, which acknowledged their importance. The Swiss enquiry was closely studied by the Federal authorities and led to the holding of a congress at Montreux in 1945, when the future of these refugees was studied jointly by the Swiss authorities, the private bodies dealing with refugees and the refugees themselves. The results of the enquiry at the Oswego refugee camp in the United States likewise received close attention from the American authorities, and references were made to it during the debates of the United States Congress.

Declarations of general principle, prescribing standards of treatment for migrants, may be useful as guides in the preparation of international agreements on the subject.<sup>1</sup> The non-governmental organisations can also give very valuable advice to the intergovernmental bodies with which, in fact, many of the non-governmental organisations have consultative status.

Lastly, the experience acquired in dealing with the varied situations of countless migrants enables the non-governmental organisations to carry out detailed research and studies on the causes of success or failure in migration and thus on migration policy itself. The following table, for instance, is based on an analysis of 4,000 files, covering the years 1926 to 1938, selected at random from the archives of the *Service Social d'Aide aux Emigrants*.<sup>2</sup> A similar study is being made of the current period.

---

<sup>1</sup> See for example the "General Principles Concerning the Protection of Migrants", adopted, on the initiative of Caritas Internationalis, by the Second Conference of Non-governmental Organisations Interested in Migration (Geneva, March 1951) and reproduced in Appendix II.

<sup>2</sup> The French section of the International Social Service.

## NATURE OF PROBLEMS RAISED BY EXPATRIATION

Problems dealt with	Nationality														Total
	Polish	Armenian	Czech	Yugoslav	Rumanian	Russian	German	Portuguese	Italian	Spanish	French	American	Various		
	M.	W.													
Settlement of individuals	367	100	36	43	7	3	41	2	4	24				7	634
Settlement of families . .	359		12	33	5	2	20		4	2				23	460
Transit . . . . .	30		109			15	52	10		14				38	268
Research . . . . .														551	551
Separated families . . . .	55		18	19	8	8	37	17	6	17	12	25	64	29	315
Family enquiries . . . . .														90	90
Repatriation . . . . .	66		7	15	6	16		3	4	24	4	28	17	30	220
Repatriation of children .		15		4						29	9			5	62
Documents . . . . .	64		9	7		6	17	13		16	9	10	15	50	216
Identity cards . . . . .	31						10	4		6				9	60
Employment contracts .	18	15	242											6	281
Employment disputes . .	36													8	44
Naturalisation . . . . .	31					5				5				14	55
Unemployment . . . . .	45	8		3	3	6				5				13	83
Refugees . . . . .							24				7			5	36
Sick and assisted persons	40			5	4	9	5			4	10			22	99
Rejections . . . . .	10				6									7	23
Miscellaneous . . . . .	50		7	8	4	3	20	16	4	8		20	20	132	292
Files not studied because of insufficient informa- tion from migrants . .														24	24
Total . . . . .	1,340	440	137	30	66	217	94	22	125	71	92	116	1,250	4,000	

Certain studies submitted to the Second Conference of Non-governmental Organisations—for example, those entitled “Information to be Furnished to Migrants before their Departure from the Country of Emigration” and “Assistance to Indigent Aliens” (Geneva, 1951)—should also be mentioned.

The value of such studies has been realised for a considerable time, as is shown by the fact that in 1925 certain non-governmental organisations joined together under the International Labour Office to form the Permanent International Conference of Private Associations for the Protection of Emigrants, which was responsible for examining migration problems such as the welfare of migrants in seaports, the separation of families, the abolition of fee-charging employ-

ment agencies, the recruitment and placing of foreign workers, etc. This conference held its last session in 1939.

The Conference of Non-governmental Organisations Interested in Migration, referred to at the beginning of this article, is carrying on the work begun 25 years ago.

### CONCLUSIONS

A consideration of possible future extensions of the work of the non-governmental organisations immediately suggests the following major possibilities. In the first place, the scope of the advisory functions of the organisations might well be extended.

Though co-ordination between the non-governmental organisations is likely to take a considerable time, they are becoming more and more aware of their respective tasks within the framework of the Conference, irrespective of the form which such co-operation may take.

In addition, the non-governmental organisations are prepared to undertake certain tasks, which might be delegated to them as private bodies are better fitted than public departments for making direct contact with individuals. They might very successfully deal with the organisation of reception and welfare services<sup>1</sup> to facilitate settlement; they might carry out specific studies at the request of governments or intergovernmental organisations; they might be requested to furnish experts on migration questions for countries requesting technical assistance; they might assist in the supplying of information on departure, in view of the different needs of individual cases.

To sum up, the non-governmental organisations are prepared to give constant support to all international action in the field of migration in so far as they can do so while maintaining the traditional freedom of action which is the best means of preserving their drive and efficiency.

---

<sup>1</sup> The French Government, by a Ministerial Order of 7 April 1939, made the French section of the International Social Service responsible for organising the Social Service for Foreign Labour. By agreement between the French Government and the I.R.O. (Kingsley-Schuman Agreement, November 1950) the same section was also made responsible for the refugee assistance functions of the I.R.O.

## APPENDIX I

LIST OF ORGANISATIONS TAKING PART IN THE FIRST  
AND SECOND CONFERENCES OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL  
ORGANISATIONS INTERESTED IN MIGRATION

- \* Agudas Israel World Organization
- Aide Suisse à l'Europe
- American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee
- Australian Council for International Social Service
- Caritas Internationalis
- \* Catholic International Union of Social Service
- \* Commission of the Churches on International Affairs
- Comité Israelita de Socorros
- \* Co-ordinating Board of Jewish Organizations for Consultation with E.C.O.S.O.C.
- \* Consultative Council of Jewish Organizations
- \* Friends' World Committee for Consultation
- Hebrew Sheltering and Immigrant Aid Society (H.I.A.S.)
- International Bureau for the Unification of Penal Law
- International Catholic Girls Society
- International Catholic Migration Commission
- \* International Committee of the Red Cross
- \*\* International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
- \*\* International Co-operative Alliance
- International Council of Women
- \*\* International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (Permanent Migration Committee)
- \* International Federation of Friends of Young Women
- International Federation of University Women
- \* International League for the Rights of Man
- International Legal Assistance
- \* International Relief Committee for Intellectual Workers
- International Rescue Committee
- \* International Social Service
- International Union of Catholic Women's Leagues
- \* International Union for Child Welfare
- Inter-Parliamentary Union
- League of Red Cross Societies
- Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations
- Pax Romana
- \* Salvation Army
- The Lutheran World Federation
- Union O.S.E.
- United Service for New Americans

---

\* Organisations having consultative status with the United Nations.

\*\* Organisations having consultative status with the I.L.O.

- War Relief Services—National Catholic Welfare Conference  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
\* World's Alliance of Y.M.C.A.  
\*\* World Federation of Trade Unions  
World Federation of United Nations Associations  
\* World Jewish Congress  
\* World's Young Women's Christian Association

## APPENDIX II

GENERAL PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE PROTECTION  
OF MIGRANTS, BASED ON THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF  
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND ADOPTED ON THE INITIATIVE OF CARITAS  
INTERNATIONALIS BY THE SECOND CONFERENCE OF NON-  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS INTERESTED IN MIGRATION

### I

"The right to leave any country, including his own" being internationally recognised for all human beings, this right shall not be limited by political considerations or legal or administrative provisions, or impeded by prohibitive charges or confiscatory measures.

### II

All States shall frame and interpret their legislation in a truly liberal spirit and without regard to reciprocity, with a view to facilitating the departure, transit, admission, freedom of residence and settlement of migrants.

### III

Migratory movements, in view of their international repercussions, should be planned and carried out rationally and in conformity with the common interest of migrants and States alike, through the broadest collaboration of countries and public and private international bodies.

### IV

Every migrant shall be entitled to receive, free of all charge, complete and unbiased information regarding the conditions of life and work likely to influence his free choice in migrating. He should be protected against all misleading propaganda in this field.

---

\* Organisations having consultative status with the United Nations.

\*\* Organisation having consultative status with the I.L.O.

## V

The migrant who is obliged to have recourse to the right of asylum shall also be entitled to special protection appropriate to his special status, both by the State granting asylum and by an international authority, the cost being borne jointly by all States.

## VI

There shall be no discrimination, *de facto* or *de jure*, against a migrant for reasons such as race, religion, political opinions, financial means, country of origin or status as an alien.

## VII

Every migrant shall have the right in the receiving country to treatment no less favourable than that granted to nationals of that country, especially in all social, educational and religious matters, as well as in the sphere of civil rights.

## VIII

Every migrant shall have the right to do work in accordance with his abilities and within the limits of the laws which apply to the population generally. He shall be entitled to all rights enjoyed by workers who are nationals of the country as regards conditions of employment, wages, freedom of trade union affiliation, public assistance and social security.

## IX

Every migrant, although he should endeavour to become part of the new community, shall be free to retain his cultural and religious heritage so as to stimulate the exchange of those spiritual values which are the common heritage of mankind. He shall be entitled to the free use of his mother tongue and, if need be, to the services of an interpreter.

## X

Every migrant shall have the benefit of suitable assistance during the period of his adjustment to living conditions in the country of settlement.

## XI

Every migrant shall be allowed to acquire citizenship of the country of settlement after a reasonable period of residence in such country.

## XII

No migrant, once admitted into a country, shall be expelled, deported or otherwise removed therefrom, unless such a measure is

justified on grounds of public security and imposed by due process of law.

Indigence, sickness, or unemployment shall in no circumstances be regarded as sufficient grounds for such removal.

Persons entitled to invoke the right of asylum shall not be expelled or sent back to a territory where their lives or liberty would be in danger.

### XIII

Since the family is " the natural and fundamental unit of society ", it shall be protected and migrants shall have the right to preserve its unity. The measures necessary to preserve that unity must be guaranteed.

When the head of a family satisfies the necessary conditions for admission to a country, his dependents shall thereby become eligible for admission.

### XIV

The rights granted to a migrant shall extend to the members of his family.

### XV

Special measures shall be taken for the protection of migrant minors, particularly of parentless children and young girls, especially in the matter of guardianship and adoption.

### XVI

Every migrant shall be entitled at all stages of emigration and settlement to the moral, legal and material assistance of voluntary societies. States and intergovernmental organisations shall encourage and support the efforts of such organisations in every possible way.

### XVII

Every migrant shall bear in mind that all these rights imply a corresponding series of duties to the new community which receives him.

---