

PAX INTERNATIONAL

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This number of "Pax" deals exclusively with the Autumn Meeting of the Executive Committee in Geneva, September 6th-12th, 1938

THE PROBLEM OF REFUGEES AND STATELESSNESS

After a report from Gertrud Baer on the Evian Conference and up-to-date information from Miss Pye, the Committee accepted the following statement, as an embodiment of its findings:—

THE RIGHT OF ASYLUM

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom has, ever since the end of the World War, repeatedly drawn the attention of the public and of governments to the international problem of the Stateless and Refugees.

The Intergovernmental Conferences of Evian and London in July/August, 1938, have again awakened hope among countless numbers that, at last, practical steps are about to be taken resolutely and with well-directed energy to ensure a legal and civil status for the homeless, and to ensure their future.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom thanks President Roosevelt for his initiative to bring about a generous solution of the whole problem. It urges that the plans for the solution of the problem shall be put into effect without further delay. It hopes that there will be no new reasons which would offer to the Governments of European States and their police administrations new pretexts to close their frontiers even more rigorously than hitherto, or as at present, to place foreigners under supervision, to hunt them like deer between the boundaries or even to return them to dictator countries.

In alarming numbers shocking illustrations of such inhuman procedure multiply daily which, in addition to the devastating consequences for the victims, completely reverse normal thought and feeling in others. Supporters and defenders of a liberal conviction, members of a certain race, confessional or political minorities, who by the law of democratic countries are free and equal citizens, are often treated by the police of these very countries as common criminals without rights, if, when chased from their homes because of their *opinions*, because of their *relationships*, they seek asylum in the democratic countries.

Is it *their* fault that they are put on the boundaries as beggars and often completely exhausted? Those who maltreat them, not they the tortured, are those who have committed the offence. He who reverses cause and effect, he who makes right wrong and wrong right by legalizing an unrestrained rule of terror, while throwing suspicion groundlessly on the homeless and innocent victims of their convictions and abasing them to the position of outlaws, is undermining the legal basis of his own State and with this its future.

The right to asylum is one of the fundamental human rights.

Nothing can free a State from the moral obligation of according this right.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is fully aware of the growing difficulties which the authorities have taken over, with this obligation. It appreciates fully the generous hospitality which the refugees have enjoyed in certain countries. On the other hand, it makes the strongest protest against allowing the admission and treatment of innocent Refugees and Stateless people to be more and more conditioned by political considerations inspired by the very dictatorship which outlaws them.

The needs alone of these victims of undeserved persecution should determine the conditions under which asylum is granted. This is no "merciful concession" but protection of a moral and political claim, granting of which has more than once in history brought to the countries giving asylum, important cultural and economic gain as its reward.

Letter to His Holiness, The Pope

"Le Comité Exécutif de la Ligue Internationale de Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté, réuni à Genève du 6-11 septembre, 1938, exprime à Sa Sainteté, Pie IX, sa profonde et respectueuse gratitude pour les nobles paroles qu'il a prononcées en condamnation de l'idéologie raciste et des persécutions actuelles contre les juifs, rappelant ainsi à l'humanité ces principes de fraternité et d'amour sans lesquels elle est vouée à la destruction."

THE SITUATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The crisis on the Czech frontier inevitably occupied a great deal of attention during the Executive Committee Meeting. The difficulty of pacifists in finding anything immediately constructive to say, when methods of violence, threats and sword-rattling have created such a situation was acutely felt, but agreement was unanimous to send two telegrams, one to President Roosevelt and one to Lord Halifax, and a letter to President Benes. These sum up the conclusions of earnest discussion and deliberation, and we give them verbatim.

Telegram to President Roosevelt

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Executive, Geneva, remembering United States largely responsible creation Czechoslovakia urges President Roosevelt appeal publicly against further pressure on Czechoslovakia, to use influence to preserve unity and independence of Czechoslovakia and peace of Europe.

Telegram to Lord Halifax

Responsibility for maintenance of unity and independence of Czechoslovakia and peace of Europe lies with Great Britain. Appeal to you to state publicly that no further concessions be forced upon Czechoslovakia.

Women's International League Peace Freedom, Geneva.

Letter to Mr. Edward Benes, President of the Czechoslovak Republic

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, meeting in Geneva from September 6-11, expresses to you, Mr. President, its thanks for the spirit of co-operation in which the negotiations between your Government and its partner have been carried on. The calm, the self-possession and the dignity which have been displayed are an example to all.

"The concessions made by the Czechoslovak Republic, have given proof that the Government is striving for a peaceful solution of the difficulties. We are convinced that you will be successful further in avoiding concessions which would endanger the unity and independence of the State.

"Stand firm, Mr. President, for the possibility of avoiding a war depends on the moral strength to show conviction, foresight and a resolute will for the preservation of Freedom and Peace.

"The democratic Liberties and Peace of Czechoslovakia are the Democratic Liberties and Peace of Europe."

The Problem of Boycott

In a discussion in the Executive, reference was made to a statement of Mahatma Gandhi's on boycott. We think all will be interested to have it:

"My idea of boycott is that it can be a perfectly non-violent measure. When it is that, it becomes a duty. Hence boycott of Japanese goods does become a duty for those who consider Japan to be wholly in the wrong. And when it becomes a duty it takes no count of consequences. And duty has to be performed whether one has companions or not."

JOTTINGS ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

New Members. We were glad to welcome at the Executive Committee eight new members. Mrs. Hommel came for the first time from U.S.A. and with Mrs. Olmsted, helped greatly in our understanding of the point of view of our American Section. From England came Mrs. McGregor Wood, and from Sweden, Mrs. Graff Holmen and Mrs. Hojer as Consultative members, and Mrs. Engvist for the first time as an elected member. Especially valuable, because of the critical situation, was the contribution of Frau Rudinger from Czechoslovakia, who was a Consultative member. Finland was represented by Mrs. Saarnio.

Besides these we had the pleasure of having with us from time to time, several visitors from foreign countries, including Mrs. Bose from India, Dr. Enthoven, a Dutch lawyer, and Mrs. Clay, from Czechoslovakia.

Afternoon Reception. At the close of the Committee Meetings, a tea-reception was given at the Maison to delegates to the League Assembly and other visitors to, and residents in, Geneva. A large number came and it was a very interesting gathering. Among the acceptances were:—a Danish delegate, Mrs. Bodil Begetrup; a Swiss delegate, Mlle. S. Ferrière; Miss Hesselgren, from Sweden; Miss Ward, Great Britain; Mme. Huici, Spain; Mme. Klyuyver, Holland; Miss Bage, Australia; Mr. de Valera, Mr. Cremins and Mr. Hearne, Ireland; Mr. Maisky and Mrs. Kollontai, U.S.S.R.; Mlle. Reutz, Norway; Mlle. Palma Guillen, Mexico, and the Director of the Permanent Delegation of Czechoslovakia, Mr. Kopecky. From the League of Nations Secretariat: Mr. Eckstrand, Princess Radziwill, Mme. Rieber Mohn, and from the International Labour Office, Mr. Childs, Miss Hage, Mme. Thibert.

Other acceptances included Mme. Maisky, and Mme. Kopecky, M. Robinet de Clery, formerly in Berlin on the Reparations Commission and now Secretary of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Dr. Girod, Geneva representative of the International Council of Women; Mlle. Nobs, Secretary of the Union for International Concord; Miss Courtney, Chairman of the Women's Peace Crusade; Miss Dingman, President of the Committee of Women's International Organisations for Peace and Disarmament; Mesdames Cattaneo and DUBY, Secretaries of the World Committee of Women Against War and Fascism; Miss M. Butts, of the International Bureau of Education; Mrs. Forsythe, Warden of the Quaker Hostel; Mrs. Corbet Ashby, President, and Mlle. Gourd, Secretary, of the International Suffrage Alliance; Mrs. Puffer Morgan, U.S.A.; Mlle. Manus, Holland; Mr. Poznanski, Editor of the *Journal des Nations*; and Mr. R. Dell, of the *Manchester Guardian*.

DISARMAMENT

Opportunity was taken of the fact that the Bureau of the Disarmament Conference was to meet during the League Assembly, to urge on all delegations, support for the convoking of the Air Commission to consider plans for the internationalisation of civil aviation and the abolition of military and naval aircraft, as a step towards total disarmament by mutual agreement.

THE INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE

September, 1938

Little by little Geneva has become the town of the international organisations. Here they have their offices and committees, and from this place they spread out all over the world their decisions and material for work.

In this beautiful town, in a venerable old house where the vines with heavy fruit now decorate the entrance the W.I.L.P.F. has for many years had its head office.

On the 6th of September this autumn the rooms and corridors of the quiet old house in Rue du Vieux College were again crowded. The International Executive and consultative members, 36 in number, from 12 different European countries and from U.S.A., met here in order to discuss which work ought to be done just now for the sake of peace.

In spite of the Austrian Section having been closed down since the last Executive at Basle, we had hoped to be able to meet the Austrian member of the Executive, whom we all love and appreciate because of her great, big heart, the wonderful humorous glimpse in her eyes and her never resting work for peace. But alas, as no permission for leaving the country was to be obtained she had to stay and wait. And we could do nothing but send her and all our other friends and co-workers in Austria our warmest thoughts and sympathy, hoping that better times will bring us together, help us in our work, and make justice once more heard.

For the first time the Norwegian Section had a fuller representation than the other Northern Sections,—sending three representatives, one member of the Executive and two consultatives.

The tense international situation, the wars in Spain and China and the problem of refugees impressed all our negotiations. But more than anything else this question was in the forefront in or behind every discussion: What will happen in Central Europe in the coming days? Will Germany invade Czechoslovakia? Or will President Benes, having given the whole world an example of high, cultured statesmanship, through peaceful negotiations succeed in stopping an aggressor at the frontier?

World politics of to-day cannot but fill us with pessimism as long as the statesmen forget the unity of the world, the necessity of unselfish co-operation and as long as they do not proclaim and apply the same morality between states as between human beings.

But with regard to our work for peace we know we are on the right path. Our League started in the terrible times of war, as the peoples in Europe were much more

opposed to one another than now. And as time has passed on we have still more clearly seen that our principles are the right ones: Peace on earth cannot be secured by the heaping up of guns but by abolishing them. Yet this point of view was put forth even by one of those who has always belonged to the absolute pacifists: As the world has been allowed to develop the only means of keeping violators quiet seems to be the threat of using violence against them.

But this statement does not give any solution of the problem. It can only give a delay, therefore we will have to intensify our work according to our League principles.

We must spread knowledge about the political and economic circumstances which can lead to war; we must try to help refugees and others who suffer under terrorism and violence. And we must keep in mind that public opinion nowadays is regarded as an important deciding factor in the question: War or Peace?

No people on earth wants war, neither the Japanese nor the Italian nor the German people. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen public opinion in all democratic countries, that the peoples' voices may be heard and echoed in the dictator States.

Nowadays oil is indispensable for every belligerent country. The world's fuel supply is almost all in the hands of democratic States. Could we get those States to put an embargo on oil, war would be forced to stop.

'Rapports' from the different Sections struck the same note: The fear of war raises armaments to enormous heights, though all intelligent people agree that international disputes have never been solved by war and never will be.

Some will probably think it of no use that women go to Geneva to discuss the question of peace when the whole world seems to prepare war. And perhaps some of us had the same feeling on arriving.

But during our stay together with equal-minded friends, the discussions showing great insight into national and international questions, the decisions agreed upon made it once more clear that we are on the right way.

Even the Czech friends went home strengthened, convinced that whatever may come, it is our duty to carry on the work which Jane Addams and others started in 1915.

MARIE LOUS-MOHR.

TEXT OF RESOLUTIONS

As will be gathered from the record on these pages, the interest of our Executive Meeting was reflected rather in action decided upon and in the discussions than in the resolutions. We give the text of the few that were put forward and accepted.

Czechoslovakia

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is dismayed by the criminal propoganda of misrepresentation and defamation against Czechoslovakia.

"It urges the Czechoslovakian Government through the radio stations and by all other means at its disposal, to promote the spreading of the truth as widely as possible."

Dictatorship

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom makes the following statement concerning its attitude to dictatorship:

"We want to emphasise that the sense of the words 'Peace and Freedom' in itself excludes a sympathetic attitude toward Dictatorship, in whatever country it may be practised. We are against oppression, violence and terror whether it is practised in fascist, national socialist or bolshevist countries, or in countries where subject peoples or minorities are oppressed. And we protest strongly against every threat to human rights in countries in which it is taking place."

Abolition of Air Warfare

"This Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, meeting in Geneva, September 6 to 11, 1938, representing women in twenty-four countries, welcomes the pronouncement of the British Prime Minister that his Government would not allow the practice of police bombing on the N.W. Frontier of India to stand in the way of any international agreement for the abolition of air warfare.

"The bombing of civilian populations is barbaric and inexcusable, and we urge the British Government in this period of widespread extension in the use of this cruel weapon in China and Spain not to wait for general agreement to be reached but to give the lead itself by abandoning forthwith the method of bombing in its own outlying territories.

French India

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom draws the attention of the French Government to the suppression of the Indian workers' movement by the Governor of Pondicherry in spite of the promises of the Popular Front Government and the promulgation of the Labour code. It deplores the denial of the right of assembly; the recent suspension of workers' paper; the arrest and imprisonment of trade-unionists; and the provocation caused by bringing in military detachments from French Indo-China, which led to firing by the troops, among the injured being young boys and children.

World Federation

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, meeting in Geneva, September 6 to 11, 1938, resolves:

"This Committee approves work for an all-inclusive non-military democratic Federation of Nations."

Message to President Roosevelt

"The Executive Committee of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, meeting in Geneva, September 6 to 11, 1938, representing twenty-four countries, wish to express to you, Mr. President, their appreciation of your initiative in calling the Evian Conference which we feel to be a most valuable contribution towards a reawakening of the conscience of mankind to the desperate problem of refugees.

"We want to express the sincere hope that your efforts may be carried forward to a successful issue."

Message to Mr. Bullitt

"Resolved that we, the International Executive of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, send our thanks to His Excellency Mr. C. Bullitt, American Ambassador to France, for his heartening address at the dedication of the monument at Grave on September 4th, in which he stressed the necessity for the organisation of peace, and we ask him to transmit our thanks to his Government."

REPORT ON THE REFUGEE SITUATION

Presented to the Executive by Edith M. Pye

Since the last meeting of the Executive Committee of the W.I.L.P.F. certain measures have been taken which indicate the growing concern of States for the refugee problem, which becomes more and more complicated by new waves of refugees from political, religious or racial persecution.

Convention of February, 1938

The first of these is the International Conference of Government representatives held in February, 1938, the outcome of which is the Convention of February, 1938, to give at least a measure of legal protection to refugees from Germany. Though this Convention does not contain all the modification of the original draft desired, if it is liberally interpreted it is capable of affording considerable security to the refugees. It was signed by Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, Spain, France, Norway and the Netherlands but has not yet been ratified by any State. Considerable reservations were made to certain clauses by several governments, but in general it is being liberally applied at any rate by some States.

Decisions at the Council Meeting in May

Two important decisions were taken at the May meeting of the Council of the League of Nations.

The High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany was authorised to interpret his mandate as applying to refugees coming from Austria, thus making applicable to them the provisions of the Convention of February, 1938.

The Council also approved the report of the Committee of Three (representatives of Bolivia, Great Britain and

France) appointed by the January Council to draw up a plan for the future of the work now carried on by the Nansen Office, and the High Commissioner for Refugees coming from Germany. This report recommends the setting up of a single organisation for a limited period, to take the place of the Nansen Office and that of the High Commission for Refugees coming from Germany (now to include Austria). This organisation to be directed by a High Commissioner for Refugees under the protection of the League of Nations. With the consent of the governments concerned, the High Commission would be assisted by representatives in the principal countries of refuge.

These two points are those for which Committees dealing with refugees have been pressing for years, and if the right High Commissioner can be secured will mean an immense increase in the sense of security and protection for those unfortunate enough to become refugees.

German and Austrian Refugees

Since our January meeting of the International Executive the shadows have deepened over Germany and the country that once was Austria. The policy of the German Reich towards its Jewish population has there been intensified, and cruelties and humiliations almost unbelievable are being perpetrated. By the withdrawal of every possibility of existence, whole classes such as those of doctors and lawyers, with their wives and dependent children, are forced either to emigrate or to commit suicide, which is openly suggested by authorities to individuals in despair. "Is not the Danube large enough?" has actually been said by such. Robbery and confiscation of personal belongings render the would-be refugee destitute and therefore unacceptable to other countries, and the refugee organisations are almost overwhelmed with the effort to find shelter and some possibility of livelihood for the few who are able to escape.

The great obstacle to the acceptance of refugees in the various countries is the attitude of the professional and trades unions. Much education must be done to make evident the facts, which are that often such refugees are definitely an asset and not a liability.

There is one aspect of the refugee problem as it concerns Germany and Austria which needs a special emphasis at this time. Many of those who through no desire of their own are forced to leave these countries are persons in whom civilization and culture has been brought to its highest development. They are leaders and prospective leaders in the world of science and learning; they have great gifts to be used in the service of humanity. And even those whose attainments are modest have at least a great tradition to hand on. In the countries which are prepared to give them shelter we may see a renaissance comparable to that of the Middle Ages.

As the tide of scientific and cultural attainment ebbs from Germany and Austria it may rise to new levels in the countries of adoption of the Refugees, thanks to the intellectual and spiritual development they have brought with them.

Meeting Convened by the President of the U.S.A.

The meeting of some representatives of some twenty-six governments in July at the invitation of the President of the United States has had the welcome result of

bringing America into the group of Nations who are seeking some solution of a problem that threatens to be overwhelming. It is now openly recognised that if by a process of robbery and blackmail any country can get rid of a minority that it does not want, and send it with empty hands to be a charge upon other countries the process will result in complete chaos. A permanent organisation has been created, with Mr. Rublee, an American, as director, with the express purpose of assisting with the emigration and immigration of victims of persecution in Greater Germany, and it is hoped that by negotiation and regulation some at least of the present suffering may be mitigated and a future secured to the thousands whose only offence is the possession of Jewish ancestry.

Refugees in Spain

The International Commission whose formation was reported in January began work on May 1st.

Twelve governments, those of Great Britain, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, New Zealand, Belgium, South Africa, Switzerland, Australia, France, Italy, India, have made small contributions to the fund which is only sufficient to feed for a short time 40,000 children out of the 400,000 reported by its Commissioner, Mr. de Lilliehook, as needing help. 14,000 of these are in Catalonia and 26,000 in Central and Southern Spain.

The process of giving relief is complicated by the absence of any possible communication between the two areas. The increasing food shortage everywhere is an added complication, since at least a portion of the inhabitants are as badly off as the refugees, and it is hard for them to know that refugee children are getting milk where there is none available for the local children. The picture of the lifeless, white-faced, silent children, repeating the tale of what had happened in Germany and Austria in 1919 and 1920, is an eloquent testimony to the inhumanity that will allow the children to suffer and make so little effort to avert at least from them the awful consequences of war. In Nationalist Spain there are not many refugees, but until more reports are received it is difficult to know exactly what their condition is.

China

The conditions among thousands if not millions of refugees are those of terrible suffering and deprivation. The Missionaries are co-operating with the Chinese themselves in making every effort to keep some kind of decency of living in the huge camps into which they are crowded everywhere. Fortunately rice is reported to have been cheap lately so that the minimum on which human beings can live has been able to be provided more easily. Thanks to the very large supplies of vaccines the epidemics of cholera and typhoid do not seem to have spread as widely as was feared at one time.

Preliminary Report of the R.I.I.A. Refugee Survey

Finally the issue of the preliminary report of the survey of the Refugee Problem by the Royal Institute for International Affairs gives the essence of the situation, as well as the necessary documents.

N.B.—To the German and Austrian Refugees must now be added the Jewish refugees from Italy, driven out by the Italian Anti-Semitic Decrees promulgated since this report was drawn up.