

63

THE OBSERVER

·1791·

*The Observer Limited*

22 TUDOR STREET

LONDON, E.C.4

TELEPHONE:

FLEET STREET 9991

1st February, 1957.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter. I did know of the 300,000 refugees in France. I also knew that two-thirds of them were Spanish, but nevertheless I did not feel that they came within the scope of my article because most of them are at least partially "integrated", and provided for. I very much agree that this does not mean that their existence should be ignored, but my immediate concern was with those refugees who are almost or completely destitute. For the same reason, I did not consider the case of the eleven million East German refugees because their problems are gradually being solved by the West German Government.

I am glad that you have written to underline this problem, and I hope that we may find an opportunity to consider it in the paper at some later date.

Yours sincerely,

*John Davy*

John Davy.

M. de Irujo, Esq.,  
Basque Delegation,  
39 Victoria Street,  
London, S.W.1.

# The Unromantic Refugees

By JOHN DAVY

THE great exodus of refugees from Hungary—more than 150,000 have left their country during the past two months—has naturally struck the public imagination as a spectacle at once tragic, dramatic and romantic. But it has been very easy to forget that for each Hungarian refugee there are twenty other refugees in various parts of the world. This is a huge, bleak problem which is not romantic at all.

Hong Kong has 200,000 refugees living on roof-tops and 100,000 more sleeping in the streets. There are nearly a million Arab refugees in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Gaza. There are two-and-a-half million destitute Muslim refugees in Pakistan, and in the last three years three million Hindus have crossed from Pakistan to India. There are hundreds of thousands of refugees in South Korea and Vietnam, in Indonesia, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria and Western Germany.

## All Too Soon

Most of these refugees have excited public sympathy and interest for a while—but there is a depressing sameness about the pattern. Refugees are the backwash of political events, of wars, coups, pogroms. As long as these events are interesting, the refugees are interesting, too; and Governments are easily persuaded to support large and expensive relief operations while there is some political kudos attached. But all too soon the interest wanes and the official purse-strings tighten.

The International Refugee Organisation resettled over a million refugees during its mandate, which ended in 1951—but the immigration countries decided whom they would let in. They took the able-bodied young men, preferably the unmarried ones. They left behind 300,000 others in mouldering camps, barracks, huts and hovels in Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece.

## Bitter Contrast

These people are still there, spinning out the dreary weeks and watching bitterly while the Hungarians are whisked away to the countries they have been trying to enter for ten years. They are debarred from entry because one member of the family has a patch on his lung, or they have no papers or the wrong ones, or no special skill, or are too old or sick or mal-adjusted. They are a poor economic proposition and no longer politically interesting. The public has forgotten about them.

Most of the necessary machinery for helping the world's refugees already exists, but it cannot function properly because it is inadequately

supported by Governments and the public. For instance, the 1955 target of the U.N. Refugee Fund (Unref) was, by international standards, the minute sum of four million dollars. It was to be spent on finding permanent solutions for the 300,000 refugees in Europe. Governments are asked to contribute to this and other U.N. relief agencies in proportion to their U.N. contributions, but few do so; only 52 per cent. of the 1955 target was met.

## Heroic Efforts

The position would have been much worse but for voluntary campaigns and heroic efforts in one or two individual countries. Holland raised one million dollars for the fund in 1955 in a tremendous drive—one quarter of the entire annual budget. The Swedish Government has just produced half a million pounds—quite out of proportion to its United Nations contribution. Sweden has also consistently taken in a proportion of aged, sick and disabled refugees. The Protestant Churches in Belgium have taken and are supporting all the blind refugees from the camps in Europe.

In Britain, the United Nations Association's 1956 campaign raised £250,000 in a year of effort. This has to be spread over 300,000 refugees. The various Hungarian refugee funds have raised ten times as much in two months, to be spent on half the number of refugees.

## Two Clear Needs

A very large proportion of the actual relief work with refugees is done by various voluntary agencies—particularly the big religious organisations. What they do is quite admirable. But they cannot raise sufficient funds themselves. They desperately need the money which the U.N. agencies spend through them. So far, this money has been consistently insufficient.

Two clear needs emerge from this mess. First, Governments all over the world should accept as a humanitarian responsibility a definite commitment to supply adequate regular relief funds to the U.N.: that is, to Unref, Unwra (for the Palestine Arabs), and Unkra (for Korea). These moneys should be available without political strings attached, irrespective of the political context which produces a particular set of refugees. There is here an opportunity for true, disinterested charity.

The other need is that countries should commit themselves to taking in a proportion of sick, aged and disabled refugees, along with the able-bodied ones.

There have always been refugees, and there will certainly be more in the future. There are devoted

voluntary workers all over the world prepared to devote their lives to these problems; it may sound crude, but it is true that the amount of help they can give depends on the amount of money which they can spend. To provide this money is—or should be—a public responsibility. What is important is that we should not forget refugees once they cease to be exciting, or because (like many of the Hungarians) they don't want to live here.

If citizens do not forget the unromantic refugees, Governments will have to remember them. This is a New Year resolution we should like to urge upon the Governments and citizens of this and all nations.

*Copyright of the articles on this page is reserved in all countries.*

White...  
any, and, finally, the Con-  
tion of Shipbuilding and  
eering Unions.  
Percy seems to have been  
f those Horatio Alger boys  
never lost an opportunity,

... a great help to him;  
they have a grown-up son and  
daughter.  
Six full years in Government  
service in the last war, however,  
not only introduced Sir Percy  
to Mr. Macmillan — then

... earning, in two senses, his Ger-  
man nickname of "Man of  
Steel."  
Sir Percy is proud of this,  
and his favourite story of these  
times is about the Russian dele-  
gate—no softy himself—who

... But neither that, n  
that, politically, Si  
appointment may cau  
of trouble, is likely to  
very greatly—nor to  
perceptibly from th  
hand.—Copyright.



## D-day + 13 ... 'A T

Times of crisis are times for greatness. In this co  
power must play its part in meeting the critic  
fuel, and therefore, the building of a nuclear  
becomes an urgent as well as a thrilling task.

Work began on the nuclear power station  
Gloucestershire on January 7th and was plann  
care of a military operation. Last week the pre  
foundations for the first reactor had already be  
the site from the air looked like a Normanc  
Men and heavy vehicles were moving everyw  
this great nuclear power station.

1957

# Letters to the

## Refugees

SIR,—How true is John Davy's description of the refugees, in his last Sunday's article, as "the backwash of political events"!

The responsibility of helping the 300,000 refugees in Europe to become useful members of the community has been vested in the High Commissioner for Refugees by the United Nations General Assembly. However—as Mr. Davy mentioned—the numerous favourable votes in the Assembly have so far failed to produce the appropriate contributions from the Governments towards our fund, Unref.

The new High Commissioner, Mr. Auguste Lindt, of Switzerland, was elected by acclamation at the United Nations General Assembly last December. During the next two years—the term of Mr. Lindt's mandate—we shall have an opportunity to see whether this acclamation was merely a courteous invitation to take on a difficult job, or whether it signified a readiness to provide the High Commissioner with the means to deal with the tragic and urgent problem which still burdens the international conscience. — Yours faithfully,  
N. WYROUBOFF.

Representative in the United Kingdom of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

\*

Sir,—John Davy's arithmetic is at fault. For each Hungarian refugee

there are two hundred, not twenty, other refugees in various parts of the world.

It should be mentioned that the position in Hong Kong, probably the worst area—and a British colony—is different from that in other areas, since the refugees are not yet recognised as such by the United Nations, and the crushing burden of their support rests with the Hong Kong Government and the voluntary organisations.—Yours faithfully,  
Windermere.

JOHN WYATT.

\*

## On the Frontier

Sir,—I have been on the Austro-Hungarian frontier for the past two months bringing refugees to one of the busiest forward camps under extremely difficult conditions. I cannot forget the friendly co-operation of the voluntary workers of such organisations as the Knights of Malta, the Caritas, the Samarita Bund and the British Aid to Hungary. Nor shall I forget the individual selflessness and endurance of many young Americans, Austrians, Norwegians, Germans, Swiss and British, who, at considerable sacrifice of their private lives and careers, work night after night to carry exhausted families into the efficient and kindly haven of the "Rettet das Kind," the Austrian "Save the Children Fund." A World Council of Churches canteen has driven night after night to the frontier area, offering hot drinks and dry socks when most needed.—Yours faithfully,  
Vienna.

DEREK COOPER.

## Commonwealth and Foreign Affairs

# 'Now or Never' for Common Market

From NORA BELOFF

BRUSSELS, January 26

**T**HE six Foreign Ministers of Continental "Little Europe" opened a final series of meetings here to-day with the Herculean assignment of eliminating remaining disagreements on the draft treaties for a European Common Market and a European atomic pool.

They still hope to initial and submit the treaties for ratification to their Parliaments within the next few weeks.

Weighing against the complex and controversial nature of the two drafts (each running into almost 100 articles, plus voluminous annexes and appendices), is the overwhelming political pressure to obtain agreement on what the principal Governments consider to be the next phase towards a United States of Europe.

The Ministers are, in fact, confronted with no fewer than three political deadlines, giving the current conference a "now or never" sense of emergency. M. Paul-Henri Spaak has committed himself to obtaining agreement on the drafts and their ratification by the Belgian Parliament before he leaves Brussels to succeed Lord Ismay as Secretary-General of Nat-

the six Ministers were in almost complete agreement on the institutions and voting system for the new international authorities but a French scheme for the conditional entry of the colonies and overseas dependencies had been rejected.

The French have promised to provide a new basis for discussion tomorrow but there is no doubt that the major difficulty now confronting the negotiators is the French condition they will join a European common market only if common European funds are made available on a sufficient scale for developing French overseas possessions.

The initial German reaction was entirely hostile, but within the last 10 days the French have succeeded in persuading Chancellor Adenauer that the price of some German contribution is not too heavy to pay for French entry into the common market; even though the principle is now conceded, the negotiations have

28th January 1957

John Davy Esq.,  
22, Tudor Street, "The Observer",  
London, E.C.4.

Dear Sir,

Please forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you, concerning your article "The Unromantic Refugees", published in "The Observer" of Sunday January 20th.

You refer to the 150,000 Hungarian refugees and retail the 200,000 "living on roof-tops", 100,000 more in the streets of Hong-Kong, "nearly a million" Arabs, two and a half million Muslims, and finally, "hundreds of thousands" in South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, Turkey, Greece, Italy, Austria and Western Germany.

In France today there are 300,000 refugees, documented and controlled by the "Office Francais de Protection des Réfugiés et Apatrides", at 7, Rue Copernic, Paris 16, as dependency of the Quai d'Orsay, and in application of international provisos. The chancellery set up by this Office produces annually some twenty-five million francs. Of these 300,000 refugees, 200,000 are Spanish; and of the twenty-five millions handled by the chancellery, some ~~seventeen to sixteen~~ <sup>fifteen to sixteen</sup> millions are proceeds from those 200,000 Spanish refugees, the veterans in Europe today.

General Franco's Administration is particularly anxious to reduce the number of these refugees, because voluntary exile ("romantic" according to your article,) is a permanent plebiscite, offering to the World the testimony of those who persist in it, at great cost to themselves, against the regime set up in their country. For this reason, the Spanish Consulates make great efforts to attract these refugees, and pass on to the Office the names of those who have succumbed to their persistent blockade.

I am not asking you for help, nor that these refugees should be singled out for publicity. I do not know if I can ask of you "disinterested charity" - as your article says. I believe that you are in any case a Democrat, and that I can ask you not to take part in the campaign of silence which General Franco pursues against us.

Yours faithfully,

(M.de Irujo)