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Dag Hammarskjöld's saml.

Hungary - 1956

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4 U. N. Press Releases and Note to correspondents.
about Hungarian Refugee Relief.

UNITED NATIONS
Department of Public Information
Press and Publications Division
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(For use of information media--not an official record)

Press Release REF/102
20 December 1956

UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES ARRIVES IN VIENNA

Inform Government of \$2,000,000 Contribution for Hungarian Refugee Relief

(The following was received here from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Geneva.)

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Auguste R. Lindt, arrived in Vienna last night on an official visit to Austria at the invitation of the Austrian Government.

Mr. Lindt was immediately received by Federal Chancellor Julius Raab and the Foreign Minister, Leopold Figl, in the Federal Chancellery. The High Commissioner formally handed a letter to the Chancellor, informing the government of a contribution of two million dollars from the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees to assist Hungarian refugee relief.

The High Commissioner said he hoped this contribution would be seen as an indication of his earnest wish to do everything within his power to help the Austrian Government in its admirable efforts to solve the difficult refugee problem.

It is understood that these funds will be used to make camps and barracks now housing Hungarian refugees habitable for a longer-term period, say six months or one year. Until now, the camps have been organized strictly on an emergency basis, with primitive facilities and over-crowding.

It now appears certain, the High Commissioner's Office says, that a considerable number of Hungarian refugees will be obliged to remain in Austria for a prolonged period, and therefore it is necessary to arrange better accommodation for them. New camps have to be opened and made ready to receive the overflow from the emergency camps, which will be converted to camps with normal facilities permitting the refugees some family life and privacy.

The camp buildings available in Austria are mainly barracks where USSR troops were stationed during the occupation, and they are in a bad state of disrepair. Their renovation will be undertaken as rapidly as possible.

The High Commissioner's contribution of two million dollars has been allocated from funds made available by the United States Government in response to a joint appeal for Hungarian refugee relief by the UN Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Refugees.

(more)

The High Commissioner and his staff are now giving priority consideration to further measures needed for the care and maintenance of Hungarian refugees for which help must be sought from organizations such as the Red Cross and voluntary agencies. It will be recalled that an arrangement has already been made whereby the League of Red Cross Societies will care for 25,000 Hungarian refugees from the League's resources and an additional 10,000 refugees through a contribution of \$413,000 from the High Commissioner for Refugees.

Plans to be financed from the remaining two million dollars of the United States contribution are expected to be announced soon.

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Press Release REF/101
17 December 1956

UNITED STATES GIVES FURTHER \$4,000,000 TO
SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUNGARIAN REFUGEES

Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr., Permanent Representative of the United States to the United Nations, today presented a check for \$4,000,000 to Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold in response to the appeal for aid to the Hungarian refugees issued jointly by the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

The presentation took place in the presence of Ambassador Franz Matsch, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations.

In presenting the check, Mr. Lodge drew attention to the statement made by President Eisenhower expressing his admiration for the work done by the Austrian Government and the various humanitarian organizations aiding refugees.

Mr. Hammarskjold stated that he intended to transmit without delay through the appropriate channels a very substantial part of this contribution to the Austrian Government in order to meet current pressing needs.

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Press Release H/1365
20 December 1956

WHO TEAM REPORTS ON HEALTH CONDITIONS AMONG HUNGARIAN REFUGEES

(The following is based on information received here from WHO, Geneva.)

The health situation among Hungarian refugees in Austria has been found to be "not unfavorable" by a team of specialists sent by the World Health Organization, a United Nations specialized agency, from its Geneva headquarters.

The team, sent to Austria on 18 November to assist the authorities in health questions arising out of the influx of refugees from Hungary, has now returned to Geneva. Its members were Dr. Alexandro Mochi of Italy (epidemiology), Dr. Maria Pfister of Switzerland, Dr. D. Buckle of Australia (mental health), and Harold R. Shipman of the United States (public health engineering).

Pointing out that refugee populations are particularly exposed to epidemics because of physical privations and poor hygiene, the WHO team reported that the over-all situation in this respect was not unfavorable. Apart from cold and hunger -- immediate effects of their journey -- refugees arriving in Austrian camps were, generally speaking, in good physical health.

Precautions were being taken against outbreaks of typhus, the team found. Vaccination programs in Hungary appeared to have been consistently and effectively carried out, particularly against smallpox and diphtheria.

Further, the WHO team in Austria assumed that, through appropriate action, the dangers to the mental health of refugees could be reduced.

Announcing the return of the team to Geneva, the World Health Organization called attention to the general problem of mental health among refugees. WHO commented that a typical refugee reaction, after the triumph of at last reaching his or her destination, is to become completely exhausted, to make no effort at all after the tremendous effort of flight. This should be regarded as a normal reaction, the statement noted.

Inexperienced social workers or camp personnel have on occasion been misled into believing that these "lazy" refugees who show such lack of initiative are in some way inferior, WHO observed. However, their inactivity is the result of energy spent, hopes disappointed and roots lost. What they need is human contact and warmth; anything that binds the refugee to society should be encouraged.

(more)

It follows, WHO stated, that refugee families should never be separated and that refugees should never be "sent" to work but ought to decide themselves where they want to go. Every facility should be given so that congenial, acceptable work can be found. Investigations based on the harsh experiences of the last world war have shown that, after years of uprooted existence, some refugees have suffered, and others are in danger of suffering serious mental breakdown. Measures based on an understanding of their needs will overcome this danger, WHO believes.

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Note No. 1497
20 December 1956

NOTE TO CORRESPONDENTS

The stations WSM-Radio and WSM-TV in Nashville, Tennessee, have sent a check for \$3,500 to Philippe de Seynes, Under-Secretary in charge of Relief to the Hungarian People, with the request that it be turned over to the International Committee of the Red Cross and used for the relief of people in Hungary.

The stations, which are owned and operated by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company, have informed Mr. de Seynes that, ordinarily, this money would have been spent on approximately 180 Christmas gifts for friends in the radio and television industry. "We have notified those individuals of our intention to give the money to the Hungarian cause," says the letter. "We are sure that our use of the money will be far more appreciated by them than any gift we could have sent this year."

From Istanbul, Turkey, a cable addressed to Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold by the newspaper Milliyet announces that, in accordance with the General Assembly resolution calling for assistance from non-governmental organizations on behalf of Hungarian refugees, the newspaper has launched a fund-raising campaign among its readers which ended on 17 December. Contributions have been received totalling 35,000 Turkish pounds, which sum the newspaper places at the disposal of the Secretary-General. It represents the equivalent of approximately \$1,250.

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