

# Migration Miracle

by George Murray

(This is the first of a series of articles written for the Canadian Weekly Newspapers Association by the editor of the Pictou Advocate.)

New York: The sun came out this afternoon. That was big news. The Queen Elizabeth and other ships which had been standing off under a blanket of fog for hours began to move into the harbour. One of the ships was the United States Army Transport General J. H. McCrae and for the 1186 refugees aboard the sun had come out in more ways than one.

As these displaced persons disembarked their faces reflected hope for new homes and new opportunities in a land of the free. Hundreds of relatives and friends crowded the pier to greet many of them, but there was a warm welcome for all the newcomers as they were met by representatives of the National Catholic Welfare Commission, American Joint Distribution Committee, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, Church World Services, National Lutheran Committee, United States New Americans and other organizations. The representatives, distinguished by arm bands, would escort them to their sponsors in various parts of the United States.

But this was the happy ending of only one chapter in the story of the International Refugee Organization, largest of the specialized agencies of the United Nations, commonly known as IRO.

Operating a fleet of 36 ships, using chartered planes and special trains, IRO is directing the greatest peacetime migration in the history of humanity.

Of more than 8,000,000 displaced persons — Hitler's scrap heap of slave labour and racial and religious persecution, approximately 6,500,000 have returned to their surroundings to pick up their war shattered lives. The remaining 1,500,000 were persons who, now on the other side of the "iron curtain" decided not to return to their respective homelands.

During the past two and a half years, since the Preparatory Commission of IRO took over the job of looking after refugees, about 950,000 have been aided by the IRO Care and Maintenance program, mainly in the DP camps. Of these, more than 750,000 have been resettled. The total of refugees assisted by IRO since July 1, 1947, is approximately 1,500,000.

In order to understand this problem, let us first ask ourselves: "What is a DP, and how did the DP problem arise?"

During the nightmare years of the second world war the population of towns and villages, cities and even provinces were torn from their homes and scattered. Some fled before the advancing red army and soviet system, while others were swept away by the brown tide of the Nazi to serve the German war machine as slave laborers. In other words, they were "displaced" from their homelands and became known as displaced persons or DPs for short, not to be confused with the German refugees who also streamed into the Western Zones of Germany in their thousands from East Prussia, Silesia, and Germany's other eastern provinces.

In concentration camps and slave labor camps amid the ruins of Hitler's Third Reich, in Austria and in Italy 8,000,000 D.P.'s were found by the Allied armies. The problem was immense. These people had to be fed, clothed, housed, provided with medical care, administration, and legal protection, and all this was done in the early days by the Allied armies, and the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) financed by the United Nations. The

whole emphasis in those days was on repatriation and while they waited their turn the people continued to live in the old concentration camps, slave labor camps, army barracks and even in private houses, groups of which were formed into assembly centres.

For the most part they were only too keen to get home, especially those people from the western European countries, France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Italy. Others, though by no means all, from Hungary, Jugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece and western Poland, had no qualms about returning. They had never experienced a soviet occupation, and clamored for the home country.

By train, truck and even on foot they went. The highways were congested with masses of DPs struggling homewards. At the end of December, 1946, the number repatriated stood at 2,500,000 but the rate was slowing down. It was already apparent that some had no desire to return under the conditions prevailing in their homelands.

Why would these persons not return? That is what Allied and UNRRA officials were asking themselves at the advent of 1946.

For the answer, let us consider the Balts, citizens of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and delve a little into their background story.

Lying midway between East and West, the Baltic states have had a turbulent history. From the earliest times they have resisted the German "drive to the east" and have acted as Europe's shield against Russia. For a hundred years before they gained their independence they chafed uneasily at the chains which bound them to Tsarist Russia. Then came the Bolshevik revolution in October, 1917, and the proclamation that the will of the people must decide the future of States, even to the point of separation from Russia. That offered the Balts the opportunity of realizing their long-cherished dream of freedom. It was not before that proclaimed freedom had been decided by force of arms and their determination had been sorely tested that independence did indeed become a fact. All three states achieved in 20-odd years a high standard of living and culture, comparable with only the most progressive of European countries and proved themselves fit for freedom.

This happy era was brought to an abrupt end by the signing of the infamous "Ribbentrop-Molotov" Pact in 1939, when Hitler, to obtain a free hand against Poland, declared the Baltic states to belong to Russia's sphere of influence. In 1940 the Red Army moved in, and framed elections backed by Red bayonets brought the unanimous demand from the Baltic states to be included in the USSR as Soviet Socialist Republics. Their incorporation into soviet Russia has never, to this day been recognized by the United States of America or by Great Britain.

The Baltic peoples remained where they were almost to a man during the first soviet occupation of 1940-1941, and also during the later German occupation. They had nowhere else to go for one thing, and had no idea of the real nature of the impending changes. They were therefore very favorably placed to observe the process of the sovietization of their homelands, and are in a position now, having fled their countries in 1944, to give a detailed account of what went on in every sphere of life under the soviet domination. They all testify that only by such excesses as terror, concentration camps, typhus, scurvy, starvation and forced collectivization, only by renewing such medieval processes asquisition carried out by the dreaded MVD, only by the absolute suppression of all liberty, turning the population into unthinking cogs in the agricultural or industrial machine, was the USSR able to realize its experiments in the Baltic states.

When Hitler attacked Russia in June, 1941, the soviets retreated too rapidly to cover up all traces of their guilt. Unable to evacuate the inmates of all prisons and concentration camps, they executed them in nearby forests and interred them in mass graves. They did not kill the prisoners outright but first tortured them. They cut strips out of their backs, tore out their tongues, gouged out their eyes, cut off their ears and noses. Photographs of mutilated bodies with the findings of the doctors who examined them give proof of an insane beastliness which is impossible to describe. If surpasses anything that the Dark Ages produced, and this was done to Baltic patriots in their own country by a foreign invader.

Small wonder, therefore, that the Germans were treated as liberators at first. Some Balts who perhaps found a wife in the mass graves, could not settle down to a normal life, but joined the Germans with one thought in mind, revenge — as long as they could draw breath. Understandable as this is however, these persons in Germany are not DPs, as under the eligibility clause, a person who voluntarily assisted the enemy against the United Nations is not granted DP status. The German occupation lasted

until 1944 and it was soon learned that one form of totalitarianism does not differ much from another, and that their "liberators" were not German peoples but the Nazis, indoctrinated with race theories which automatically classified their Baltic victims as members of "inferior races" and whose policy was the colonization of the Baltic states as vassal states of Germany.

Resistance movements rapidly grew up, especially against the recruitment for compulsory labour. At first the Germans called for volunteers, the call being garnished with inducements of every kind, but there were few simple enough to put themselves forward. Then a labor mobilization was proclaimed. When that also was of no avail the Baltic police were ordered to hunt down the youth of the land, but these orders leaked out so that the people in the areas in which the man-hunts were to take place were "not available" at the scheduled time. The Gestapo then organized its own press-gangs which

surrounded cinemas, theatres, schools and even churches. Men, women and children were dragged off to Germany as slave laborers with no opportunity of taking leave of their families, and these were the slave laborers released in 1945 to become DPs. Even in Germany, resistance went on and they escaped from their places of work at the first opportunity. It cannot be said that the Baltic people, with very few exceptions, collaborated with the Germans or worked of their own free will in German war industries.

Mobilization, too, was a similar failure. It was not until the Red army was again on the borders of the Baltic states that volunteers came forward, and then only to take up arms against their direct enemy, communism. They did not doubt for a moment that their course was just. They knew that the USA and Britain had never recognized the annexation of the Baltic countries by the Soviet Union, and they were familiar with the contents of the Atlantic Charter which promised justice to small nations. They believed that the Baltic states would escape a second Soviet occupation if they managed to hold back the Russians until the armistice between the allies and Germany was signed. They could not possibly know that their countries had already been sacrificed to Russia at the Allied Conference and consequently they fought with great bravery and resolution.

Abandoned by the allies, all was in vain, and those who could fled to Germany and Sweden. In Germany they too are denied DP status, only those who were forcibly conscripted into the German forces being granted this privilege.

All other Baltic people who could fled before the soviet terror, their only hope now being in a push to the west where they hoped to contact the western Allies.

Thus, with the slave laborers, they were liberated and classified as DPs, and will in no circumstances, return behind the iron curtain.

The story of the Ukrainians is similar. Having suffered bolshevist doctrines for 20 years, the German occupation gave them the opportunity for escape, and their forcible deportation by the Germans. They, too, will not return. The remainder of the DP population is made up of Poles who came largely from that part of Poland which was occupied from 1939 to 1941 and slave laborers from all parts of Poland, by Hungarians, Czechs, Rumanians, Bulgarians and many stateless people from eastern Europe. None will return as long as the Russians continue to wall in their countries against the progressive west.

(continued next week)

"Oh father, I could never marry him. He's got red hair." "I know my child, but haven't you noticed that it's beginning to fall out?"



OFFICIAL INSPECTION: Donald Gordon, chairman and president of the Canadian-National System, examines the radar equipment aboard R.M.S. Lady Rodney, during his first official inspection of the C.N.S. fleet. The Lady Rodney sailed from Montreal on her 25th voyage to Bermuda, the West Indies and British Guiana, with calls en route at Halifax and Boston. Left to right are: Capt. E. A. Clarke, general manager, C.N.S.; Mr. Gordon, and Capt. Anatol LeBlanc, master of the Lady Rodney.

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