

3. PROBLEM OF THE BALTIC PEOPLES

It is clear that no Balts can or should be permitted to return to their country now under U.S.S.R. rule. As they were first overrun by Russia (with 30,000 Latvians suddenly removed by force and never heard of again) and then occupied by Germany, when Russia invaded their countries for the second time they naturally fled to Germany which, however, had partly forcibly and partly by insidious means made many Balts enlist in the so-called Baltic guard legions which were assimilated to the S.S. The Balts are now paying for their Hobson's choice made during their terrible ^{predicament} predicament, and apparently quite inadequate "screening parties" - particularly in the American Zone - are today segregating Balts who served with those German legions.

In July two Soviet Officers with a British Military Government Officer entered the Balt village camp of Merbach; great nervousness and excitement prevailed. The Russians told the Refugees that they should return to their Soviet-held homes. The exiles began to shout at him "Why did the Russians carry off my Father? Why did you kill my Mother? etc."

Finally the two Soviet Officers made off.

But the D.Ps. still tremble at the remembrance of the visit, and what it might portend.

During the second flight in 1944 - the 1941 experience of Russian domination had forewarned them - many of the professional classes among the Balts escaped in time to the safety of Germany (The Riga Opera House performers now form the Latvian Musical Centre at Blomberg). Such facts explain in part the higher level of culture to be found normally among the Baltic exiles.

The figures for Refugees to Germany and Austria are given as : Latvians 100,000, Lithuanians 60,000, Estonians 30,000.

Overseas there are one million of Lithuanian stock in the U.S.A., and Canada, mostly in the States; 250,000 Latvian - in U.S.A., Canada and Brazil, and 20,000 Estonian in the U.S.A.

They have proved excellent and loyal citizens in their new countries; Baltic exiles in Europe are up to the same high standard. They should be to the fore in any Emigration Priority List.

In view of their predicament between the German and Russian invaders, a plea can be made for them that only those who, after the most careful judicial scrutiny and enquiry, are proved to have spontaneously served German interests, should in any way be penalized, and then never, unless a convicted War Criminal, be handed over to the Soviet for punishment.

4. THE PROBLEMS OF THE POLES

The Poles present the most discussed issue in Germany. Should they return or not? The answers depend on whether one takes a short-term or long-term view. On the short-term view Poland is still a country not communized although under a practically absolutist Government which in turn is under the shadow of Moscow (with Russian N.K.V.D. and Polish U.B. and Russians holding quite a number of key posts). It was urged and believed by the Western Allies that the presence even of further ignorant peasant labourers might help in democratizing Poland.

The Polish intelligentsia outside Poland decided, partly at the request of the Western Powers, to remain neutral in this issue and do nothing to discourage would-be repatriates. U.N.R.R.A. by its Resolution 71 of the 26th February 1946 followed a policy of definite encouragement to return (a policy which certain officials in their zeal interpreted by vexatious treatment of D.Ps. and undue influence to persuade them to return). Today U.N.R.R.A. under the Director General, Mr. LaGuardia's impulse, are offering inducements in the way of sixty days' rations for repatriates to take with them to Poland. Colonel Mickelson in charge of the D.P. Division in the American Zone, stated that the number of those returning from Poland (infiltrates) back into Germany was not far short of the numbers returning to Poland. The wisdom of the policy of returning home is sharply disputed even on this short-term basis.

On the long-term basis the whole balance is against return. As a very senior Polish officer said "Russia has imprisoned, exiled and liquidated many millions of her own subjects. If she fell out with Poland later the fate of the Poles she regarded as enemies might well be far-off exile to Siberia or liquidation. Furthermore, if Poland declared herself at some future date "the Polish Soviet Republic" and was therefore communized and collectivized, the very individualistic Pole would, as a race, undergo intense suffering. On the other hand, if in a few years time Poland was clear of the iron curtain and became a real Democracy, a very large proportion of those who had remained outside and emigrated would return as healthy democratic citizens to strengthen their Fatherland.

On the long view, it is wrong to persuade Poles to return today to Poland; the movement back to Poland should be wholly voluntary.

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Poles in Germany remained neutral in this important repatriation question because conditions in the Reich were so dismal and re-settlement prospects non-existent, they considered Warsaw newspapers the best anti-return agent. They realize that some 50% will find their way back out of Poland and that most who contemplated return, have already gone back.

They consider the 60 days ration "bait" immoral and only likely to influence those with shallow convictions.

The "work in Germany" issue is another delicate problem.

Poles feel such profound bitterness and hatred for the Germans that they, more than any other racial group, recoil from the very idea of doing work which may aid in rehabilitating Germany.

They are the proudest of all Germany's enemies, and more prone than others to express their emotions violently. Unless therefore the Occupation Authorities worked carefully and skilfully on the Polish leaders to dispel and overcome this reluctance, which harms the Poles themselves more than the Germans the employment issue will remain unsolved and become a festering sore, for it is essential that there should be wide-spread employment.

Employment of Poles during this interim period of their stay in Europe. Several very keen officers stressed the fact that the deterioration in morale among refugees is especially marked among the Poles. They argued that first the Polish people were deported into Germany in large hordes, that their life of forced labour and in concentration camps had lasted for five to six years and that the Germans had changed many of them from human beings into sub-humans, physically, mentally and culturally; that large numbers had lost faith in themselves and were only concerned with the material things of life and how best to live by their wits.

Add to this the German dislike of them and their hatred of the Germans and the fact that through impatience at their defects some of the Allied military authorities are particularly hostile to these "inferior Poles" and it will be realized that what is needed for them is a pre-emigration phase of intensive rehabilitation. This can best be achieved by finding employment for them on a large scale and by encouraging to the utmost the formation of self-governing communities among the Poles with central councils for each zone.

Actually the policy has been almost the reverse of this and at present the Polish Union in Germany (P.U.G.) is not officially recognized.

It is but fair to state that the percentage of intelligentsia among the Poles is less than among the Balts, but there is still scope for well-organized self-governing communities if the occupation authorities would view their constitution with favour and sympathy.

Numerically small (including ex-military personnel -say 25,000 in Germany, the same in Italy, and rather fewer in Austria) the Yugoslavs present special peculiarities. First, the proportion of men to women and children is much greater than among the other racial groups. Then though the Yugoslavs are a fine fighting race with a great sense of military discipline, whether Serbs, Croatians, Slovenes or other, there is intense hatred between the Croatian Ustachis and the Serbs. Lastly the fact that some 20,000 or more of these Yugoslav exiles are ex-fighting men who dread the day when they will lose their military character, aggravates the difficulty of their employment or utilization elsewhere during the interim period of waiting in Europe.

For example, at Voerdo, near Hagen, in the south east of the Ruhr, as a result of accusations by Belgrade of alleged political activity by the isolated group there (some 200 officers including several Generals and 3,000 men) the British authorities decided to separate the officers from the non. This was countered by a threat of hunger strike by all concerned. The incident will probably be satisfactorily settled but it indicates the political difficulties surrounding the problem of the Yugoslavs owing to the extreme tenacity with which they hold to their loyalties.

Here again as with the Poles, the best solution for the Yugoslavs is that work be found for them. They will be willing to separate for this purpose if the case is presented sympathetically to them.

Several times the Belgrade Government has sent Liaison Officers to canvass the exiles and offer them a welcome if they return.

Last year some of King Peter's patriots were returned to Yugoslavia in error, a few escaped back of the frontier relating the dire happenings that had befallen the others.

Of the Liaison Officers' invitation, the Yugoslavs ballots showed less than 5% acceptances. The Belgrade Government's reaction was to deprive the recalcitrants of their Yugoslav citizenship. Technically therefore the Yugoslav Authorities have no further bond with the Refugees, actually they still call for their return.

Clearly a few will yet consent to be repatriated, so strong is the lure of the homeland among all peoples of the Balkans, and nearly all have left their families in Yugoslavia. But all realize by now that return at this late date carries with it the seeds of danger.

They also know that when peace has been signed with Austria (and with Italy), and their fate is left to those countries, the risk of them being handed back to Yugoslavia is very real.

The Yugoslavs, whether Tito's followers or his opponents are renowned for their hardiness and fine spirit, and they will as individuals make sturdy immigrants.

As has been shown, there are very urgent reasons for according them a high priority in any emigration schemes.

6. THE PROBLEM OF THE UKRAINIANS

The Ukrainians do not appear as such in the official statistice but are partly under the heading "undetermined nationality" and partly under the heading "Poland". The Ukrainians, most of them, came to Germany quite voluntarily, such was their hatred of Soviet Russia, and none can be returned safely to the U.S.S.R., this they all realize very acutely, but as they do not fit in with all the conditions laid down for qualifying for protection, and as some have in the past unfortunately been surrendered to the Russians, they live in distinct fear of the futuro. They have proved, however, to be an excellent element, sober, industrious and law-abiding, and all those who have worked for and among them are warm in their praise.

Their chief requirements therefore are, like those of the Balts, a sure and adequate protection against any attempt to send or inveigle them back to territories controlled by the Soviets (in this connection Poland must be included), and secondly, every facility for full employment and development of their national culture, and opportunities for local self-government.

It may be found possible to organize the Ukrainians in the States and Canada to offer homes to their fellow-countrymen and send off a first party of "invited settlers" to North America. For this purpose the full coeoperation of the U.S.A. and Canadian Governments would naturally be a pre-requisite.

The Ukrainians claim to have had the highest percentage of volunteers in the Canadian army in this war of any racial group and they are liked.

Among the D.Ps. there are some political hotheads, what more natural! But they are the exceptions. The Vice-President of the Refugee Camp at Rogensburg declared that by a 1945 Pact all Ukrainians in Poland are surrendered to the Soviet, most of 600,000 have been so moved already. Ukrainians living outside Russia are considered as enemies of the people. The informant's own sister had been sent to Siboria because her brother had been guilty of living outside the U.S.S.R.

The general line taken by the Ukrainians in the Camps was: Life here is largely a blank, but we hope at least we are safe here. Neither Russia nor Poland would spare us if we returned - Poland would surrender us. We look to the U.S.A. or Canada.