

SPECIAL SESSION - 22nd PARLIAMENT

THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY

Following is the text of a statement in the House of Commons by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Hon. J. W. Pickersgill, on Monday, November 26, 1956.

"I am going to try, as objectively and dispassionately as I can, to explain the situation as it has been reported to me and as I understand it what is the precise problem. I shall try as precisely as I can to indicate what the government of Canada has so far done about it.

As hon. members know, the Russians moved against Hungary on Sunday, November 4, and they began shooting down people in a frightful manner, not only in Budapest but all over Hungary. Almost immediately there was a stream of refugees across the Austrian border, a stream which has not ceased to flow, a stream which with every day that passes is creating more difficult problems for the government of Austria. Austria has improvised camps for the temporary relief of these refugees, and it is their desire to get the people out of those camps and moved to some other country just as quickly as possible. It is not that they are not hospitable, it is simply that they want to use their limited resources in order to take care of the new people who are crossing the border.

On the morning of November 6 I issued instructions to our office in Vienna that priority was to be given to applications from these Hungarian refugees, that any such applications were to be processed at once, and that if there were other things the Austrian government wanted us to do in order to help in this matter our officers were to let us know what they were. They were to advise as quickly as they could how much extra staff would be required, and they were given full authority to engage any local help that was necessary. They were told that we would transfer staff from any other office in Europe without delay, and regardless of whether it impeded other operations, in order to cope with whatever flow of refugees there might be.