

External Affairs
Supplementary Paper

No. 56/7 CANADIAN ASSISTANCE TO HUNGARIAN REFUGEES

Statement by the Hon. Roch Pinard
in the Third Committee on November 27, 1956

Mr. Chairman, Fellow Delegates,

I should first like to express to you, Mr. Chairman, the satisfaction of my delegation upon learning of your decision that it would be appropriate that the problem of Hungarian refugees be discussed in this committee provided that such discussion did not degenerate into a debate on the political issues involved. You were correct in insisting that our interventions be limited to practical suggestions and to proposals on urgent measures to be taken in order that the refugees be provided as soon as possible with lodging, food and a permanent refuge.

I am sure that the former High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. van Hoeven Goedhart, would not have wished it otherwise and those who would attempt to transform this discussion into a political debate would render a disservice to the United Nations and would delay the approval of decisions which are imperative. In any case, the political aspects of the Hungarian problem have already been discussed at length during the debate in plenary, during the course of which the Chairman of the Canadian Delegation has, for his part, made known the position of our government.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I believe that you have shown great realism in deciding that a study by your committee of the Report of the High Commissioner for Refugees would be incomplete if it did not also include an examination of the numerous problems which the Hungarian exodus now raises. However, we should not allow this grave problem to divert our attention entirely from the excellent work done by the High Commissioner's Office in its endeavours to find permanent solutions to the other refugee problems which are of the legacy of the Second World War. Indeed, it is essential that we should not forget the other refugees who still find themselves in camps and who are still seeking a more permanent abode. I will not at this stage take up the time of the Committee in a repetition of the observations on the works of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees which were made by the Canadian Delegation to the Twenty-Second Session of the Economic and Social Council. My delegation may, however, wish to comment at a later stage on the draft resolutions which are before the Committee and on any other resolutions which may be presented which may deal either with the continuing problem of the High Commissioner's office or with the particular problems which have arisen as a result of recent events in Hungary.

Mr. Chairman, my delegation is of the view that our efforts to come to the aid of the Hungarian exiles must be based on the resolution adopted last week by the General Assembly, the text of which is contained in document A/3374. That resolution, sponsored jointly by Argentina, Belgium, Denmark and the United States and which Canada immediately supported, indicates the course of action we should follow together with

the aims we should be pursuing. It is therefore a matter of implementing the Assembly's decision. I believe it would be appropriate for me to mention at this point the various initiatives which must, by all means, be co-ordinated by the High Commissioner's Office and I should like here to express the profound admiration of my government and of the Canadian people for the work done by the authorities and the people of Austria since that country was suddenly faced with an exodus from a neighbouring country which is daily taking greater proportions. We appreciate fully the sacrifices which this devotion to duty imposes on the people of Austria and we hope that these efforts will continue and that the authorities of the Austrian Republic will go on doing everything in their power to come to the aid of their Hungarian brothers. Nor has the International Red Cross, together with the national societies of the Red Cross, hesitated to come forth and assist the refugees. In order to facilitate the work of the Canadian Red Cross, the Canadian Government has already pledged to it \$100,000. Indeed, the Red Cross has always received and will continue to receive the encouragement which it deserves from the Government and the people of Canada.

There are also in my country a number of non-governmental organizations who are at the moment endeavouring to alleviate the miseries of those who could no longer bear to live behind the Iron Curtain. I should like to mention in particular the efforts made by the United Nations Association of Canada and by the various groups of Canadians of Hungarian origin who are doing all they can to assist those whom they left behind when they came to their country of adoption.

I should like to emphasize that the Canadian Government is of the opinion that the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, because of its past experience in this field and because of its highly qualified personnel, is the organization which is best suited to answer the appeals of the refugees with the required rapidity and the least possible amount of administrative formalities. As you know, Canada has already undertaken to deposit with the High Commissioner's Office for the benefit of the Hungarian refugees the sum of \$100,000. Furthermore, my government has decided to give priority of entry to those of the refugees who would like to come to Canada. I might point out that yesterday, in a statement in the Canadian House of Commons, our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Louis S. St. Laurent, recalled that two grants of one hundred thousand dollars each had already been made to the Canadian Red Cross and to the High Commissioner for Refugees respectively. The Prime Minister also announced that the Government of Canada had decided to make the total sum of one million dollars available for the relief of those who have suffered from the recent events in Hungary. In other words, this amount exceeds by \$800,000 the monies previously pledged.

Mr. Chairman, there remains for me to add that my delegation has just learned that the Canadian immigration authorities have decided to provide additional and faster means of transportation from Europe to Canada for Hungarian refugees. Furthermore, it has been decided that those refugees who proceed immediately from Austria to other European countries would not thereby prejudice their chances of entering Canada at a latter date. We believe that this last measure will contribute in easing the very serious problem of lodging the refugees on Austrian territory. The Canadian Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has just announced that the Canadian Government has chartered all

available planes from the two most important Canadian airlines (Trans-Canada Airlines and Canadian Pacific Airlines) for an airlift of Hungarian refugees. In addition, berths for from three to four hundred people have been reserved on the ship "Arosa Star" leaving Bremerhaven for Canada next week-end. Furthermore, efforts are now being made in order that the Canadian immigration regulations will not be allowed to interfere with the speedy processing of applications for immigration to Canada. As of yesterday, 824 such applications had been received by Canadian authorities. These applications are being considered as expeditiously as possible and I am happy to say that a certain number of refugees have already arrived in Canada. In other words, we are doing all we can at the moment to take into Canada as rapidly as possible all those who wish to come to our land.

It is indeed imperative that everything should be done to relax normal immigration formalities so that the flow of refugees will not be stopped and so that as many cases as come along can be dealt with regardless of whether that involves exemption from requirements such as normal medical X-Rays and the filling of forms. Should certain refugees not be admissible by law, the Canadian Minister of Immigration has decided to use the powers that our Parliament has given him under the Immigration Act of Canada. We will therefore be prepared to accept anyone who wished to come to Canada if he is able to make the trip.

In conclusion, I should like to express the hope of my delegation that the efforts being made to alleviate the distress of the refugees will be pursued in such a manner as to ensure that fullest cooperation between the various organizations concerned in order that the best possible results may be achieved. In fact, I wish to emphasize the absolute necessity of concerted action so that our limited resources will not be strained and exhausted unnecessarily. We believe that the best way to proceed would be to channel our efforts through the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees.

I wish to assure you that the Government of Canada will continue to follow very closely the needs of Hungarian refugees. It will continue to give its strong support to the efforts of the High Commissioner for Refugees in easing the suffering and hardship of both the Hungarian and other refugees who come under his protection.



