

STATEMENT CONCERNING SETTLEMENT OF REFUGEES

(Delegation of the Dominican Republic)

Made by Dr. Porfirio Herrera-Baez, at the 10th Meeting of the Special Committee on Refugees and Displaced Persons in London on 16 April 1946.

Those who have followed the deliberations of Committee 3 of the General Assembly of the United Nations are perhaps familiar with the position of the Dominican Republic with regard to the refugee problem. At that time the Dominican Delegation stated that the Government of the Dominican Republic proposes to continue its policy of open door for Jewish refugees initiated as far back as 1938.

The Dominican Republic shall stand in the same position in the deliberations of this Special Committee on Refugees and Displaced Persons which has been entrusted with the task of examining the problem in all its aspects.

In the paper circulated by the Dominican Delegation in Committee 3 of the General Assembly it was stated that our Government is willing to welcome to our country those Jewish refugees or displaced persons who may wish to settle their lives in foreign countries. We take, therefore, the opportunity afforded by the meeting of the Special Committee to renew our proposals to admit Jewish refugees or displaced persons for settlement in the Dominican Republic.

Although in the past and at present the immigration policy of the Dominican Republic with regard to the refugee problem is chiefly orientated towards the settlement of homeless Jews, it should be understood that our offer is open to non-Jewish refugees or displaced persons as well.

To them we offer the various possibilities of agricultural and industrial enterprise of a country which shows a definite trend towards the ever increasing development of all its potentialities. We offer the inducement provided by the mere fact of the successful experience that we have had in the colonization of refugees since 1938. We offer, above all, the understanding, and the real sympathy shown by our people to the refugee so that he may prosper in a social climate free from compulsion or discrimination of any kind.

As an idea of the class of business which the country is capable of supporting, mention may be made of hydro-electric works, the expansion of the goods and passenger transport service by lorry and motor-bus between the distant parts of the country, and which is now in the embryo stage. The expansion by private enterprise of the small railway system of the state, the creation of steel foundries and heavy and other industries, the large-scale industrialization of agricultural products and by-products, the cultivation of various plantations and especially of citreous fruits for which there is a large demand in the United States and England, an enterprise which would be favoured by the fertility of the soil and the low costs of labour; the expansion of the cattle-breeding industry, the creation of shipping lines between the ports of the Republic and the United States and the Caribbean Islands, having regard to the fact that this country is a large supplier of the last mentioned, as has been demonstrated during the war years; the installation of hospitals possessing extra-territorial rights, to enable Jewish physicians and surgeons to carry on their professions; trade in general.

The question of the organized migration of refugees or displaced persons presents roughly two possible angles of approach. One is the mass movement and settlement of such persons and the other is the settlement by small groups.

The efforts of the Dominican Government since it embarked on its policy of settlement of Jewish refugees in our country, were aimed towards the immigration on a large scale. These efforts have been to a certain degree hampered by the difficulties imposed by war and by the lack of capital required of necessity for such a scheme. As a result a trend towards settlement by small groups followed although we still think that the first procedure makes for a more effective and real solution of the problem.

At this juncture we must state that the Dominican Government is always mindful of promoting the re-union, as far as conditions permit, of such refugees whose relatives have already been settled in the Dominican Republic. This is a sentimental or humanitarian aspect of the refugee problem which the Dominican Government has been giving adequate attention within the framework of its policy in favour of refugees.

But again it must be brought to attention that until ways can be found to organize the financing of immigration schemes for refugees, their settlement on a large scale, which appears to be, from our point of view, the preferable procedure, will give way, in the meantime, to the gradual settlement by small groups. This is what is being done at present by our Government. However, the Dominican Government, through its National Committee for Jewish Immigration which was created last December, is carefully studying plans to settle in our country the largest possible number of European refugees. To this end it is our Government's intention to enter negotiations with governmental or other responsible organizations interested in the refugee problem which might wish to co-operate with us in working out plans for the mass settlement of Jewish or other refugees.

Therefore, we think that it might be appropriate for us to insist that if instead of providing direct subsidies for the maintenance of

large numbers of Jewish refugees in Europe (as is being done by certain private organizations) this capital were invested in enterprises to be founded by Jews and endowed with the necessary freedom of action and facilities, such investment would prove to be a sound and permanent foundation for promoting the immigration and establishment of an ever increasing number of individuals of that race.

The Dominican Delegation further thinks that this aim should be pursued and encouraged by whatever international body may be set up as a result of the deliberations of the Special Committee. It would appear to be far better for the individual advancement and prosperity of the refugees if they were helped to give good account of their personal abilities and ingenuity in their new place of settlement, thus putting an end in due time to a state of uncertainty and unproductive existence.

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