

# UNRRA—A Democratic Plan for International Relief

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THE UNITED NATIONS Relief and Rehabilitation Administration represents a bold new conception of international cooperation for mutual aid, born of unprecedented world-wide need. It is blazing new paths for countries to follow in working together for the welfare of the peoples of the world. Its experience has tremendous significance, both for international relations and relief administration in the future. The success of this first operating agency of the United Nations is of crucial importance not only to the relief of millions of suffering people but also to the achievement of a kind of international security that will prevent recurrence of such suffering. In the words of L. B. Pearson, Chairman of the second session of the Council, "UNRRA must not merely do its job well; it must do it so well that it will give heart and courage to the governments who, slowly but steadily, are building up the international structure of peace."

UNRRA is a new venture in democracy in international action. It is a common undertaking in which all the 44 United and Associated Nations, the large and the small, the free and the occupied countries, have joined together to aid entire peoples stricken by war and Axis occupation. All these nations—the supplying and the receiving countries alike—have an equal vote in determining the program. As the Council member from China, T. F. Tsiang, said at the final meeting of the second session of the Council, "As among the 44 nations which have met together here I could not say which are the 'haves' and which are the 'have nots.' Some nations are contributing nations while others are receiving nations, and I suppose it might be said that the contributing nations are the 'haves' and the receiving nations are the 'have nots.' However, I for one have not been conscious of that distinction

in UNRRA although I have been associated with UNRRA from the very beginning. I cannot see that such a distinction exists in fact."

UNRRA is a unique organization in the relief field. After World War I, the United States, the most advanced nation, undertook chief responsibility for the relief of European peoples stricken by the war, for the most part acting unilaterally. Various official and private agencies carried on relief activities, with little joint planning and with little participation in planning on the part of the receiving nations. In striking contrast to this type of benevolent activity, civilian relief after the present war will be undertaken in most instances by the governments themselves with the aid of an international agency set up by themselves.

## Organization and Basic Policy

The establishment of UNRRA after some months of negotiation grew out of the activities of a number of separate wartime organizations. These included the British Committee on Surpluses, set up early in the war; the Inter-Allied Committee on Post-War Requirements, established in September 1941 to estimate the extent of post-war needs; the Middle East Relief and Refugee Administration, organized by the British to operate refugee camps; and the Office of Foreign Relief and Rehabilitation Operations, created in December 1942 in the U. S. Department of State. The agreement creating UNRRA to administer relief to victims of war in areas under the control of the United Nations was signed by the 44 United and Associated Nations at the White House on November 9, 1943.

President Roosevelt, acting as host on this historic occasion, hailed the establishment of UNRRA as putting "into practical effect some of the high purposes" set forth in the Atlantic Charter. UNRRA, said the President, "makes the first bold steps toward the practicable, workable realization of a thing called freedom from want."

## Organization and Finance

The Council of UNRRA, which is the central policy-making body, is made up of one representative from each of the 44 member governments, each of which has one vote. Decisions are made by a simple majority vote. The Central Committee, composed of representatives of China, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom, and the United States, is authorized to make emergency policy decisions between sessions of the Council, subject to later reconsideration by the Council. Two regional committees—the Committee for Europe, with an office in London, and the Committee for the Far East—recommend relief policies for these areas. Standing committees include the Committee on Financial Control and the Committee on Supplies, which is composed of representatives of the chief supplying nations and is concerned with general policy on the provision, financing, and transport of supplies. Five technical committees advise the Administration in the fields of agriculture, displaced persons, health, industrial rehabilitation, and welfare.

The Administration, with headquarters in Washington, D. C., has adopted a functional organization similar to that of the Council, with divisions corresponding to three of the standing technical committees and three bureaus, concerned with supplies, finance and administration, and areas. The administrative personnel has been recruited and selected with the aid of the civil-service agencies of the Governments of Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. On June 30, 1944, the staff included nationals of 21 member governments.

All member nations share in the administrative expenses of the Administration, with allotments to the member governments fixed by the Council. The resources used for relief operations are derived principally from contributions by member nations that have not been invaded; it has been recommended by the Council that these nations contribute to this purpose approximately 1 percent of their national incomes for the year ending June 30, 1943.

## Provision of Relief Supplies

Estimates of relief supplies required by liberated areas are made in consultation with the governments and are submitted to the Combined

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Boards—that is, the various boards of supply of the United Nations—which allocate goods in short supply among the military, lend-lease, allied governments with foreign exchange assets, and UNRRA. Procurement of supplies, in general, is carried on by the official procurement agencies of the supplying countries to fill requisitions filed by UNRRA. In the United States, an Executive order of July 6, 1944, gave the Foreign Economic Administration responsibility for United States procurement for UNRRA.

Immediately upon liberation of an area, the military undertake responsibility for civilian relief to the extent necessary to prevent disease and unrest prejudicial to military operations. For planning purposes, this is estimated as a 6-month period although in fact it may be shorter or longer. When the military relinquish control over the area, the civilian government or recognized national authority will assume responsibility. Governments that have foreign exchange resources for the purchase of supplies will cooperate with UNRRA in obtaining allocation of relief supplies from the Combined Boards. Member governments without foreign exchange resources may request UNRRA to provide supplies.

#### *Basic Policies Adopted at Atlantic City*

The basic policies for the administration of relief were established by the Council at its historic first session in Atlantic City, November 10–December 1, 1943. Briefly summarized, they include, among others:

1. Operations are limited to relief activities administered in such a way as to be rehabilitative—to help people to help themselves—but rehabilitation is defined as coterminous with relief and not as the beginning of reconstruction. The Administration may provide supplies to meet immediate needs—food, clothing, shelter, and medical supplies—and materials for rehabilitation, such as seed, fertilizers, raw materials, and machinery, to enable countries to provide themselves with relief supplies. The Administration may also supply technical services essential to the relief and care of the people and to the return of displaced persons to their homes, and it may restore necessary public services such as light, water, sanitation, power, and transport.

2. The Administration is to operate in liberated or other areas under the control of the United Nations, determined in consultation with the government or the military or civil authority in the area. It may not operate in enemy or ex-enemy areas unless the Council approves the scale, character, and standard of operations and the expense is borne by the enemy or ex-enemy country. In such cases, the Administration must operate under the control of the military command or recognized administration of the area. The Montreal session modified this policy in certain respects and interpreted its application to Italy, now a cobelligerent, and to certain groups.

3. Whether relief is to be provided to a particular area and the amount to be given are determined by the extent of need, not by the ability of the area to pay for supplies and services.

4. Insofar as possible, the government or recognized national authority is to be responsible for distributing supplies and services within an area.

5. Relief is to be distributed fairly within an area on the basis of the relative needs of the population and without discrimination because of race, creed, or political belief.

6. Relief supplies are to be distributed insofar as possible through normal governmental, commercial, and cooperative agencies of distribution as long as such a plan provides for adequate control of distribution.

7. As long as hostilities or military necessities exist in an area, the Administration may operate there only with the consent of the military command and under its control.

8. Coordination of UNRRA's requirements for supplies and transportation is to be obtained through the use of the existing intergovernmental agencies for the allocation of supplies and shipping.

9. In the administration of welfare services, nonindigenous voluntary relief agencies are to be used, when practicable, to give services in which they have special competence, under the supervision of the Administration. It is believed that the resources, personnel, and skill of voluntary agencies will be needed but that they should be integrated with the UNRRA program as a whole to prevent either duplication of service or gaps in service. Consequently the agreement establishing UNRRA provides that in areas receiving relief from UNRRA,

foreign voluntary agencies may not initiate operations unless subject to the regulation of the Administration.

### Action at Montreal

Almost 10 months after the adoption of these initial policies—months of planning and preparation for the day of liberation and ensuing field operations—the Council held its second session in Montreal, September 16 to 26, 1944. Against a background of swiftly moving military action and impending liberation of Nazi-dominated Europe, the Council considered practical questions of immediate importance to speedy operation. The keynote of this session was voiced by the United States member of the Council, who said, “. . . the watchword of this period is urgency . . . there can be no delay, there can be no more meetings; we must be prepared to act.” In preparation for action, the Council added some new policies, clarified the application to particular situations of the basic policies adopted earlier, and in other ways facilitated and speeded up operations.

#### *Extension of Coverage*

At the Montreal session, the Council was first concerned with questions of extending the coverage of UNRRA operations to additional areas and groups of people. Some of these questions involved only clarifying the application of existing policies to groups whose status was not clear. Others had to do with modification of fundamental policies adopted at the first session, especially those relating to operations in enemy or ex-enemy territory or to return of displaced persons of enemy or ex-enemy nationality.

With occupation of Germany and other Axis territory imminent, the need for operations essential to the protection and welfare of the United Nations themselves was obvious. Consequently, operations in enemy or ex-enemy territories were authorized for the control of epidemics and for the care and repatriation of displaced nationals of the United Nations. This resolution also covered other persons who have been obliged to leave their homes or have been deported by the enemy because of race, religion, or activities in favor of the United Nations.

*Aid to Italy.*—Italy represented a separate issue because of its peculiar status as a former enemy and aggressor nation which is now fighting with the Allies against the Nazis. Whether some aid should be given to the Italians themselves was the most controversial question considered by the Council at this session. The occupied European nations feared that aid to Italy would reduce the supplies available to them. The nations that have suffered Italian occupation inevitably found it hard to approve this step. The United States member introduced a resolution providing that, in addition to the type of operations already approved for ex-enemy territory, limited aid be undertaken for Italian victims of war. The aid contemplated was to include only (1) provision of medical and sanitary aid and supplies, (2) assistance in the care and return to their homes of displaced persons, and (3) care of, and welfare services for, children and expectant and nursing mothers. The Director General was authorized to expend up to \$50 million in foreign exchange for this program.

The most dramatic point of the session came when, following the introduction of this resolution in the Committee on Policy, the victims of Fascist aggression and occupation—Yugoslavia, still at war with Italy, Greece, and Ethiopia—rose one by one to describe the cruel sufferings of their peoples at the hands of the Italian invaders but to say that for humanitarian reasons they would not oppose the resolution.

Before acting on this proposal, however, the Nazi-occupied nations—with Norway acting as their spokesman—wanted assurance that the program for Italy would not reduce assistance to their own peoples. After overnight study of the question, the Director General reported that operations in Italy would have only a slight effect upon supplies and services for occupied countries. The supply of sugar and fats, which is short, will require minor adjustments on the part of the supplying nations in order to avoid interference with provisions for other countries. The Italian program does not call for supplying clothing and shoes, of which stocks are also insufficient. Private agencies will be relied upon to provide clothing to Italian war victims. Medical and sanitary supplies are available.

After hearing this reassuring re-

port, the Council unanimously approved the program for Italy. The resolution, however, was adopted with the reservation that it would not constitute a precedent for operations in other enemy or ex-enemy areas. The action of the Council with respect to Italy does not, of course, make Italy a member of UNRRA and, during the debate on the resolution, the member from France stated that UNRRA's action should not result in the extension to Italy of "the privileges, or the right to assistance enjoyed by the United Nations."

*Aid to other groups.*—Restrictions on assistance to persons of enemy nationality were further modified by action to permit assistance to Jews and other groups of enemy nationality who have been persecuted by the Nazis. This resolution authorized the Administration to undertake the care and return to their homes of persons of other than United Nations nationality who are found in liberated territory because they have been obliged to leave their homes or have been deported by the enemy because of their race, religion, or activities in favor of the United Nations.

A resolution providing for the removal and return to their own country of enemy or ex-enemy nationals who have been intruded into the homes of United Nations nationals in liberated areas cleared the way for the return of the several million Germans who, it is estimated, have settled in the occupied countries. The consent of the government of the liberated area where these persons are found is necessary. The costs of such operations are to be paid ultimately by the enemy or ex-enemy country.

The status of certain other groups of people who might be considered of enemy or ex-enemy nationality was clarified. The inhabitants of the Dodecanese Islands, who are almost exclusively Greeks but have been under Italian rule for 30 years, were brought within the scope of UNRRA's activities. Proposals introduced by the Yugoslav and Polish delegations to authorize aid to minorities of Yugoslav or Polish nationality or origin were withdrawn with an expression of hope by the delegates that the adoption of the resolution on the Dodecanese Islands would constitute a precedent that would permit aid to other population groups in a similar situation.

Particularly difficult was the question of repatriating displaced persons now in allied countries that have never been occupied by the enemy. On the recommendation of the Standing Technical Committee on Displaced Persons, the Council finally approved principles to guide the Administration. UNRRA's resources for the repatriation of individuals now in countries never occupied by the enemy are to be used mainly for congregated groups, rather than for individuals. Only needy persons who cannot arrange for their own return are to be helped. UNRRA will assume responsibility for the care of such people awaiting repatriation only in areas where the resources for their maintenance are inadequate or cannot continue to be made available. Repatriation of displaced persons will be undertaken only with the approval of the governments concerned.

In pursuance of a recommendation of the U. S. Congress, the Council, on the motion of the American member, authorized UNRRA to operate in areas under the control of the United Nations and of military importance that are stricken by famine or disease. The motion was strongly supported by the member from India whose Legislative Assembly had made a similar recommendation.

### *Bases of Requirements*

The second concern of the Council was with the adoption of bases of relief requirements or standards of assistance for Europe—the standards to be used in determining the need of individual European countries and the amount of relief supplies. At its first session the Council had provided that the Administration compute estimates of requirements for Europe in conformity with bases to be developed by the Council's Committee for Europe. At Montreal this Committee, after months of work, submitted its recommendations for bases for use in the European area and these were adopted. They include bases of requirements for food, clothing, medical supplies, and supplies for agricultural and industrial rehabilitation. The Director General was authorized to adopt bases for other articles and supplies. This action will permit the procurement of supplies that may be required in administering welfare services, such as equipment for nurseries or child-feeding centers.

A resolution put forward by the Soviet Council member recognizes that UNRRA's primary responsibility is to obtain relief and rehabilitation supplies for liberated areas of the United Nations and that special weight and urgency shall be given to the needs of those countries in which the devastation and suffering are greater and have resulted from hostilities and occupation by the enemy and active resistance during the war.

### *Other Actions*

Other important actions at the second session related to public health, rehabilitation, and membership.

Revision of the International Sanitary Convention of Paris of 1926 and the International Sanitary Convention for Aerial Navigation of 1933 was a major task. The Council approved in principle drafts of conventions amending the existing conventions which, if ultimately adopted, would authorize UNRRA to undertake on an emergency basis the public health functions previously exercised by the International Office of Public Health in Paris.

A resolution, sponsored by Czechoslovakia, stressed the limited character of UNRRA's functions in relation to rehabilitation and the need for more comprehensive measures of reconstruction of industrial production and transportation; it urged that the member governments provide a means of international cooperation for resolving problems of continued rehabilitation.

In anticipation of early liberation of Denmark, the Council authorized the Central Committee to admit Denmark before the next Council session, if after liberation an appropriate Danish government should apply for membership. India, as an important source of relief supplies, was added to the Committee on Supplies.

The second session of the Council decided practical questions important to operations and so cleared the way for action. It also renewed confidence in the organization and in the support of member governments. The United States member made a particularly strong statement concerning the support of his country: ". . . the Congress of the United States and the people of the United States are unreservedly behind this Administra-

tion. There is no question in the mind of any American now that UNRRA is the instrumentality which he will back to the limit in performing the task of relief." In the words of the Director General, "There has been at this conference a reaffirmation of the United Nations' belief in the high value of common effort to help people to help themselves, and a declaration of united faith in a high purpose."

### **The Welfare Committee**

The Standing Technical Committee on Welfare advises the Council and the Administration on welfare problems and services. "Welfare" is interpreted to mean "(a) social relief such as food, clothing, shelter, and other basic necessities of life made available to persons unable through the effects of war to provide for themselves or their dependents, and (b) services for the personal rehabilitation of individuals requiring special help." It is expected that groups especially in need of welfare services will include children, particularly orphans and others separated from their families, expectant and nursing mothers, the aged, persons disabled by the war, and homeless families.

Welfare policies adopted at Atlantic City, stressing nondiscriminatory administration and provision of relief in a way that preserves morale and helps maintain self-respect, required no modification at the second session. During recent months the Welfare Committee has devoted itself especially to advising the Administration in regard to relief methods to be used under emergency conditions in newly liberated countries. A comprehensive report on methods of organizing emergency welfare services has been prepared in the headquarters office, not only to serve as a basis for general welfare policies of UNRRA but also to provide principles that will be helpful to governments and to international voluntary agencies in planning their own relief programs. The report includes sections on information services, emergency feeding and shelter, clothing and household supplies, cash assistance, child and family services, occupational activities, and services in temporary communities and to welfare institutions.

Staff of the Social Security Board prepared the chapter on the use of cash in meeting emergency relief needs, covering guides for programs administering cash assistance and basic principles governing the emergency use of social insurance benefits and other types of cash payments, such as family allowances and noncontributory pensions. At the Atlantic City session, the Subcommittee on Welfare had suggested both cash relief and social insurance as methods of implementing the principle of helping people to maintain self-respect.

The principles suggested in this report are for the most part embodied in a statement recommended by the Committee on Welfare for issuance by the Administration as a statement of its welfare policy. The Subcommittee on Welfare for Europe, in conjunction with other subcommittees, has developed a number of reports of a more specific character, such as welfare services and information and advice services for displaced persons in assembly areas.

At Montreal the Welfare Committee recommended the development of a plan for reporting on relief activities by individual countries. Such a system will provide information not only on programs in areas where UNRRA operates but also in those where relief is carried on without UNRRA's aid.

Technical subcommittees, including one on welfare, have been appointed for the Far East. Offices are now to be established in Sydney and Chungking. A survey mission was sent to China last spring, and China has now submitted its estimate of requirements which far exceed those submitted by any other country. The months ahead will see intensive preparation for Far Eastern activities as well as European operations. Missions to Poland and Czechoslovakia to plan for further programs in these countries have been announced. A mission to South America will promote greater understanding and interest in the program of UNRRA.

The Council ended its second session with emphasis on the need for full support of each of the United Nations. In the words of the Chairman: "For better or for worse—in success or failure—we are as surely roped together as any climbers who ever scaled a mountain peak. We go up—or down—together."