

END OF THE DP PROGRAM

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led by the snarls of the interminable red tape. Each agency had its own special plan and each of the governments taking refugees had its own set of rules and qualifications. This made the whole process of getting the refugees through the camp and on their way: to America, or Australia or South America or wherever they were bound, incredibly complicated. When I saw all this and realized the pitifully small amount of money appropriated by the governments to handle this refugee problem, it seemed to me incredible that any of them ever got to the right places.

Overcrowding and Delay
Bagnoli was built to house perhaps 2000 young people; when I visited it there were more than 5000 inmates. The barracks, built like gigantic warehouses, were literally stuffed with humanity. Besides the office and clinic buildings there were the single men's building, the single girls' building, and the family building. In the first, the two upper floors were open and filled almost solid with triple-decker bunks, narrow aisles between the rows. I remember that one room held 480 men, another perhaps a few less, and so on. The single women's building had been divided up a little more, with the floors compartmented with beaverboard partitions, so that the numbers in the rooms were less: 40 and 60 and 70. In some, attempts had been made by the women, too, to relieve the bare ugliness of the dormitories with paint and coverlets for the beds. There was an occasional picture over a bed, or a little vase of flowers.

But the family building seemed to me the most pitiful. Here the warehouse floors had been divided by an aisle running down the center, with partitioned-in cubicles down each side. Each family had a cubicle. Some were bigger than others and the big families were in these, with curtains hung, in some cases, to give a little privacy. But there was not much of that, due to the fact that the cubicle walls did not reach to the ceiling.

The attempts some of the families had made to pretty-up these miserable excuses for homes were touching proof of the indomitable courage of man and that homing instinct that seems to be universal. Some had put up window curtains others had made rugs and bedspreads and bureau covers. There were often little religious

pictures in the rooms and almost always a vase of flowers. The camp supplied only beds, blankets and one straight chair apiece; whatever else there was in the way of furnishings must be found by the inmates. As most of these people came with practically nothing and had no way of earning anything in the camp, it may be imagined that their furnishings were few.

If Bagnoli had functioned as was originally intended, as merely a final short stage on the journey, such accommodations might have been all right. But instead of staying in the camp a few weeks, most of the refugees had been there many months and a large proportion two and three and four years. This was something I found it hard to take: that human beings had been living in such conditions for so long and that we were allowing it to happen. And I kept thinking that if only some of the senators and representatives who were junketing around Europe on trips of investigation, if only Senator Pat P. McCarran, leader of the bitter fight against the DP commission, if only these people could see the camp at Bagnoli they would have felt ashamed that America would stand by and let such conditions exist and would have tried to do something about it.

Employment
One of the great problems with which the management of Bagnoli was faced was that of occupation for the inmates. They had tried to face it but had been unable to get anywhere. The Italian government, with more than three million unemployed of their own people, very naturally refused to let the refugees work. They could not take jobs and they could not produce anything in the camp. There was a school for the little children and there was some organized athletics for the young people, but not much. The great number of refugees were the laboring type or they were too old or sick to do anything very active; and it was not in their tradition of life. There was some attempt at adult education and, if there had been funds to set up such a program I believe this would have been a most valuable effort. But, with the varied types and nationalities, and ages it would have been a complicated undertaking.

But the thing that worked to undermine all such efforts, besides the matter of funds, was the changing condition of the camp

and the fact that all its inmates were being "processed." They were being called to this or that clinic or office by the loudspeaker that kept up its ceaseless noise. A measure of the complications of the system is shown in the fact that those destined for the United States, for instance had to undergo eight separate security examinations, by eight separate agencies. And, as papers were incorrectly made out, or lost or the needed duplicate or triplicate missing, the whole thing would have to be repeated. The same red tape held true of physical and mental and other examinations. So all these people spent most of their time either being examined or waiting to be examined; waiting for the loudspeaker to call their names. When I realized this I understood why there were so many people wandering footlessly about, or sitting on curbs or leaning up against the wall; why there was this odd empty feeling of hanging fire. They were just . . . waiting.

Rehabilitation Needed
Later on, when I got home and heard a few people complaining about their DPs, I thought about Bagnoli and the people waiting. Most of those people had not had a regular job since the war started. Driven from their homes, they had wandered here and there fending for themselves as best they could, been herded into camps; perhaps a few had been in labor camps of the conquerors. That condition, jobless, penniless, hopeless, fearful, had gone on for many of them for seven or eight years, perhaps longer. Laying aside all question of physical rehabilitation, loneliness, and language difficulty, how would it be possible for such people suddenly to take regular jobs and do them well? Instead of cussing out the DPs who failed it seems to me that we should have bowed our heads in wonder that any were able to succeed in their new lives.

For these people needed rehabilitation from being refugees. Being a refugee, I saw at Bagnoli, was being sick, with a mental and physical sickness that sapped the strength and undermined the soul. Our DP program, it seemed to me, should have started with a period for convalescence. The refugees who came to this country should have been given time to get well again, as well as to learn a little English and something of the sort of work they would be required to do before being sent out to work. But that would have meant money. It would have meant that the DP Commission,

instead of consisting of three Commissioners, each with a couple of secretaries and a handful of field workers, housed in five or six rooms of a government building, would have been a well-staffed, well-equipped organization, with rehabilitation camps under its management, schools, welfare workers.

Our Congress, appropriating billions for bombers, could not see the need for a few millions spent on the refugee problem. Yet does it not seem likely that upon the way these lost and fearful people of the world are treated may depend whether or not we live in peace or fight another war? For, what has happened to the more than 5000 people who were at Bagnoli, what has happened to the other refugees of Europe. No one seems to know. I have tried to find out and have heard only that the International Refugee Commission is dissolved, as is our own DP Commission. Presumably the people of Bagnoli have been dumped onto the Italian government. Italy was already running three refugee camps last summer where, I was told, "conditions are much worse than at Bagnoli." In view of the fact that many governments cooperated to run Bagnoli while Italy, already sorepressed and with her own unemployed to cope with, has not surplus funds for refugees, this is not surprising. So the DPs we might have taken here, without even knowing it, are dumped back to swell the numbers of impover-

ished, restless, bitter, lost people of Europe.

We cannot substitute refugee funds for bombers, naturally; that goes without saying; but not to find the refugee funds out of our enormous sources of wealth, seems

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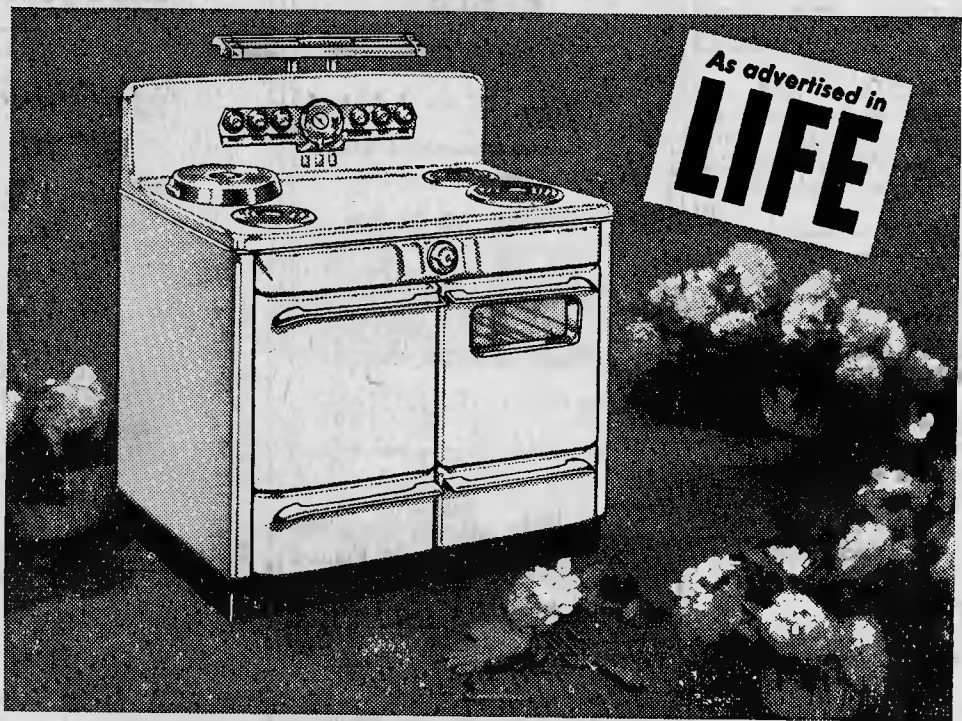
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