CURRENT ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE ORGANIZATION IN LATIN AMERICA

I. INTRODUCTORY.

The Constitution of the International Refugee Organization was approved by Resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations on 15 December 1946. This action called for the establishment of a specialized agency to be brought into relationship with the United Nations for the purpose of bringing about a rapid and positive solution of the problem of bona fide refugees and displaced persons.

Pending the entry into force of the Constitution upon its acceptance by fifteen government members of the United Nations, the Preparatory Commission for the IRO was assigned the task of taking all necessary and practicable measures for bringing the Organization into effective operation as soon as possible.

The great majority of the Latin American States voted in favour of the General Assembly Resolution of 15 December, and while there were a few abstentions, none voted against it. Thus far, eight Republics (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Peru) have signed the Constitution, while three (Argentina, Dominican Republic, Guatemala) have ratified it. There are positive indications that several additional countries will become full members of the International Refugee Organization in the near future.

II. OPERATIONS
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1. General.

The activities of IRO in Latin America revolve around resettlement programmes which embrace both mass and individual migration. For purposes of definition, mass, or group movements are those which are based on agreements or understandings with governments which allow for regularized procedures in selection, documentation, transportation, and reception of displaced persons in the country of destination. Individual resettlement, on the other hand, usually pertains to those cases which are dealt with through ordinary consular channels, most of them at the instance of private individuals already residing in the country, or of voluntary societies who act as sponsors.

In connection with mass resettlement programmes IRO has at the present time formal agreements with Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. In addition, there are informal understandings with Argentina and Paraguay. These agreements and understandings do not provide for a specific number of refugee-immigrants, since both the governments and IRO feel that such determinations are possible more properly on the basis of the progress of operations.

Although not all of the States with whom IRO has agreements have commenced receiving displaced persons, it is expected that by the end of IRO's first fiscal year (30 June) the number of displaced persons resettled in Latin American countries under mass movement schemes shall be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>9,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>23,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, under individual migration, approximately 6,000 individuals will have been resettled in nearly all the Latin American Republics.
2. **Nature of Resettlement Schemes**

The standard formula which has been used for mass migration is the following:

a. **Selection.** The receiving countries have special representatives in Europe who undertake the selection of displaced persons in accordance with instructions from their governments as to occupational skills, health and age requirements, nationality, etc. IRO cooperates with these Selection Missions by presenting them with eligible candidates who appear to fulfill the stated requirements; also IRO collaborates by making available any additional information about the individuals which may be of help to the Missions in the final selection of the immigrants.

b. **Transportation.** Once refugee-immigrants are accepted finally, they are assembled and transported to special staging camps preparatory to their embarkation on IRO vessels. Besides bearing the cost of transportation, IRO equips the vessels with escort and medical officers, who ensure the well-being of the passengers on route to their country of destination.

c. **Reception and Placement.** All the Republics accepting displaced persons under these agreements have made arrangements for receiving them, including provisions for necessary documentation and lodging and feeding. Reception centres have been prepared where the refugee-immigrants may be housed pending their placement in employment. In some countries these centres serve also to give orientation courses in languages, legal and employment regulations, local customs, etc.

For purposes of employment with private individuals in industry and agriculture, the governmental authorities usually have made prior arrangements with employers who desire displaced person workers and, up until the present time, the majority of the new settlers have been placed shortly after arriving. Some of the countries have taken, or are taking, steps to settle part of the arriving displaced persons on government agricultural colonization projects where they may have an opportunity to
opportunity to become independent farm owners. It is expected that this
type of resettlement shall become increasingly important as time goes on.

d. Legal Status. The receiving governments recognize the
obligations of the IRO under its Constitution to give legal and other
protection to the displaced persons until such time as they have become
firmly established and, for that purpose, the agreements provide for IRO
representation in the territory of the States to render consular services
and assist the government officials and displaced persons in such other
ways as may be deemed necessary.

In the case of individual migration, since the persons involved
almost always have connections in the country of their destination such
as relatives, contracts for work, etc., the IRO usually limits its
participation to assisting in the clearance of documentation, providing
for passage and establishing contact with the interested parties in the
receiving country. This type of immigration, while more modest than mass
movements, plays a very important part in helping solve the refugee re-
establishment problem. Also, the greater facility for its execution creates
few problems for both the receiving countries and IRO.

III OBSERVATIONS

The determining factors in the immigration policy of receiving
governments in Latin America are:

a) the need for manpower in certain categories
   of industry and agriculture, and

b) the general need for population increase.

The latter is important from the humanitarian point of view,
since all the resettlement schemes provide for admitting whole families,
thus avoiding the splitting-up of household units, and additionally
giving an opportunity for the inclusion of older dependents who other-
wise would have to remain in Europe owing to circumstances of age and
infirmitv.

The first wave of displaced persons immigration to Latin America
has been geared to immediate immigration needs of the country, and
therefore the new settlers have been readily absorbed. Some governments, however, are making plans to coordinate forthcoming immigration with broader programmes of general economic development, particularly those related to agricultural production. These plans may encounter serious difficulties in their execution under present conditions because, while most countries have an abundance of land, and adequate legislation, they usually lack two essentials: financial resources and technical facilities. There are indications that some governments have approached lending agencies such as the Export-Import Bank and the International Bank, with a view to enlisting their support in the prosecution of development projects, an important phase of which would be immigration programmes.