U.S. INVITES BRITISH TO REFUGEE PARLEY

Hull Suggests Joint Conference in Ottawa in Answer to Initiative by Halifax

RACE, FAITH DISREGARDED

But America Must Be Bound by Legislation on Immigration, Secretary Declares

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

WASHINGTON, March 3—Ways and means of solving the plight of refugees from Axis-dominated countries without regard to religion or race are expected to receive intensive consideration from the British and American Governments as a result of diplomatic exchanges between them.

If a suggestion made by Secretary of State Cordell Hull to Viscount Halifax, the British Ambassador, in a note made public today by the State Department, is followed, British and American representatives will meet in Ottawa to undertake a preliminary exploration of the problem.

"The United States is of the opinion," Secretary Hull said, "that further efforts to solve the problem may best be undertaken through the instrumentality already existing, the Executive Committee of the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees."

It was to this end that the preliminary exploration at Ottawa was suggested.

Mr. Hull sent his note on Feb. 25. It was made public after Sumner Welles, Acting Secretary of State, had been asked about the problem at his press conference today in the light of the mass meeting in New York Monday night at which Christian and Jewish leaders addressed themselves to the question.

The British Government had already expressed its concern in an aide-mémoire from Lord Halifax to Secretary Hull on Jan. 20.

Quotas Held Binding

"The Government of the United States," Mr. Hull said in his note of reply, "fully shares the concern expressed by the British Government for the situation of the refugees. It feels * * * that it has been and is making every endeavor to relieve the oppressed and persecuted peoples. In affording asylum to refugees, however, it is and must be bound by its legislation applied by its administrative authorities to the admission of aliens to the United States. Under the immigration laws, the number of aliens of any nationality who may be admitted to the United States is limited by the quota system. Under the nationality laws, aliens may be naturalized only if they are found to be attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States and well disposed to the good order and happiness of the United States. Under the public health laws, aliens may be excluded if they are found to be afflicted with certain diseases. Under the public safety laws, aliens may be excluded if they are found to be members of certain classes. Under the criminal laws, aliens may be excluded if they are found to have been convicted of certain crimes or misdemeanors.

"Subject to these limitations, this Government has welcomed the oppressed and persecuted peoples. It has been and is the hope of this Government that after the war it will be possible to establish conditions which will permit the return to their homelands of the victims of present persecutions. It is the hope of this Government that the United Nations will be victorious and that they will be able to establish as a Jewish commonwealth after the war.

Mr. Hull pointed out in his note to Lord Halifax that the United States had admitted many refugees.

"From the advent of the Hitler regime in 1933," he said, "until June 30, 1942, 547,775 visas were issued by American diplomatic and consular officers to natives or nationals of the various countries now dominated by the Axis powers, the great majority of which persons were refugees from Nazi persecution. Of this number 228,964 were issued in the war years 1939-1942. Many more than that number of visas were authorized during this latter period, the aliens in whose behalf such authorizations were given having been unable to depart from their places of foreign residence to reach the United States. Yet, of the number actually issued, practically all of the aliens who received them during the war years 1939-42 have actually arrived in the United States and have remained here, many of them having entered in a temporary status and not yet having departed.

"Over 5,000 visas were authorized for the admission into the United States and permanent residence here of refugee children coming from France, Spain and Portugal under arrangements with certain private persons and organizations in the United States for their care. Visas were also authorized for the parents accompanying them, in certain cases. This government has sought the friendly assistance of the Government of Switzerland to effect the release from France of such of these children who have not been permitted to leave France, for entry into Spain where visas may be issued to them by the American consular officers.

"Since the entry of the United States into the war there have been no new restrictions placed by the Government of the United States upon the number of aliens of any nationality permitted to proceed to this country under existing laws, except for the more intensive examination of aliens required for security reasons."

Mr. Hull also mentioned other measures by the United States. They included official denunciations of oppressive acts and policies, the providing of relief funds for the distressed, liberal application of the immigration laws, the caling by President Roosevelt of the Evian Refugee Conference in 1938, assistance given by the American Red Cross and diplomatic assistance repeatedly given in behalf of refugees in oppressed countries.

He pointed out, too, that the United States was holding in custody dangerous Axis nationals and prisoners of war.