

(Indeed, could we even get a well-financed group of scientists to conclude that, say, landing a spaceship on the sun is impossible? More likely we would get an honest account of the difficulties and careful recommendations for additional lines of expensive research.)

The public, however, is likely to be more impressed by the fact that the research is simply not yielding a satisfactory waste disposal plan. There is, admittedly, none in existence today—after twenty years of looking. Makeshift solutions (sea dumping, shallow burial, etc.) are already less palatable than they once were, and, as a result of public apprehension, the standards for a permanent solution are continually rising. There's the rub: For reasons both technical and political we are today *farther* from an acceptable long-term nuclear waste storage program than we were five years ago.

So, two kinds of qualms seem fated not only to grow but also to nourish each other—for ourselves, nuclear plant safety; for our descendants, nuclear waste. Sometime soon we may expect that somebody up there will drop the other shoe—the third one, so to speak. A clutch of economists is probably even now grinding away on a fleshed-out report of the true costs—in hard cash—of nuclear energy; costs that include items like the total mop-up on Three Mile Island, the decommissioning and disposal of worn-out nuclear plants, research on waste disposal, waste storage costs, and on and on. What if the cheap energy myth then dissipates like hot steam?

This was the spring of our discontent, when the demons in the atoms launched their Tet offensive and overwhelmed our innocence. With questions about the morality, safety, and cost of nuclear energy now irrevocably before us, we enter a decade of debate with the strong likelihood that the outcome will be a strategic withdrawal from the national nuclear jag. It will be the moral equivalent of losing a war. True, some journals of opinion still deplore opposition to nuclear power as “irrational.” But after the spring of '79, regardless of whether the opposition becomes more or less rational (it is likely to change in volume and visibility first, not in quality), it will no longer be prudent to *call* it irrational.

Our present national commitment to nuclear energy is deeply entrenched. We are now so firmly bound to it—economically, bureaucratically, politically—that no blast of arguments based only on morality, safety, or cost could release us. As President Carter said in April, “There is no way for us to abandon the nuclear supply of energy in our country in the foreseeable future.” It was of course the same with our Vietnam pacification program; like it, the nuclear energy program, if and when it succumbs, will yield finally to massive unpopularity. Nuclear energy has long had the support of a strong silent majority; soon it seems destined to have only a strong vocal minority.

The technical arguments will continue. I have

stated what I believe to be the political facts. Will any serious presidential candidate take the initiative to make the safety, morality, and cost of nuclear energy an issue, even if it is not (yet) a winning issue?

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EXCURSUS II

Eileen Egan

When a Voluntary Agency Saved Displaced Persons

The death of Sir George Rendel of the British Foreign Office on May 5, 1979, brought to mind a hidden and tragic aspect of U.S. and British policy in the wake of World War II. At the Yalta Conference, and later in the original articles of agreement of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), citizens of the various nations were to be repatriated to their home countries with dispatch. The fact that Soviet citizens, or citizens of areas under Soviet control—Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia—would refuse repatriation was not considered. The rights of freedom of choice and of asylum were thus excluded from the rights accorded to people outside their homelands at the end of World War II.

The Soviets were desperately anxious to have their own nationals turned over to them at the earliest possible moment. Some of them, prisoners of war in camps that were murderously ill-provisioned, had accepted induction into German army units. Others had been dragooned into slave labor in German factories after occupation of their areas by Hitler's armies. Still others were Russian emigrés who had settled in Yugoslavia and other parts of Eastern Europe and had for the most part acquired other citizenship. The Soviets wanted them all.

When the Russians, most of them gathered into camps in war-ravaged Austria and Germany, showed their reluctance to return to the Soviet Union, American and British military men used brutality and trickery in a program of forced repatriation. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., in his memoir, *Once to Every Man*, tells of an “attack” by an American unit that moved in on two thousand Russians to turn them over forcibly to a Soviet division “at the ready” with a train of boxcars. The time was February, 1946. There were three G.I.s to every Russian. Their predawn attack resulted in despair and suicide among the Russians, many of whose families had been imprisoned under Stalin's purges. Two

men cut their jugular veins by forcing their heads through windows and sawing on the jagged glass. Coffin, who had known in advance of the secret plan of forced repatriation, said that his participation in it has left him with a sense of guilt that will never leave him. Similar scenes of despair and suicide took place in many camps in 1946. In Lienz, Austria, there is a cemetery of Russians who avoided forcible repatriation by choosing death. At this cemetery an Orthodox Liturgy is regularly held in their memory.

The Western Allies, who had secretly rid themselves of Soviet citizens who would have been a cause for disagreement with the Soviets, were left with more than a million and a half Eastern Europeans, who also refused repatriation. These were men and women who had been the "Ost" slave laborers in German factories and on German farms. The camps into which they had been gathered at war's end were under the control of UNRRA and the military. The Soviet Union, one of the founders of UNRRA, was able to enter the camps and obtain lists of inmates. There was pressure on the American and British Allies to use every method to have these Displaced Persons return to life under the new regimes in their countries.

The largest number of D.P.s were Poles, the eastern half of whose nation was being incorporated into the Soviet Union. The Western Allies were unwilling to use on the Poles the same brutal methods they had used on the Russians and devised another method. They would close the D.P. camps during the spring of 1946. Turned loose on the destroyed landscape of Germany, the Displaced Persons would have no choice but to make their way east. Trains were ready for them, and UNRRA was offering enormous sacks of food in a gigantic "Operation Carrot" to promote voluntary repatriation.

While William Sloane Coffin, Jr., was watching the Russians being herded into boxcars in Europe, I was attending the Fourth Session of the UNRRA Council in Atlantic City. I was an observér for Catholic Relief Services, the overseas aid agency of the American Catholic community. I had been working not long before in a camp of Poles—men, women, and children—who had been deported to Siberia during the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland that resulted from the Hitler-Stalin pact of 1939. They were now hidden away in an abandoned hacienda in Mexico. I harbored few illusions about the Soviet Union, having heard hundreds of accounts of what happened to innocent deportees in the Gulag system.

There was heavy stress on the necessity for repatriation of Displaced Persons during the UNRRA sessions. I came to know some of the delegates, including Sir George Rendel. I talked with him about the aim of the new regime in Poland to remove from the D.P. camps the 150 liaison officers of the London-Polish government who had access to the camps. A resolution was presented to this effect.

I brought Rendel a clipping from the International News Service, datelined Germany. It announced that American authorities were getting ready to close the D.P. camps in Germany, the exception being the few camps housing Jewish victims. Rendel said with unmistakable earnestness that all the discussions at the UNRRA meeting were of little importance compared with what could happen in Europe. If there was much delay, the Displaced Persons would be beyond help.

"But this cannot be true," I said. "We would have known about it. Our agency, and other American voluntary agencies, would have been the first to learn of such a decision. We have staff members working in the camps."

"Possibly, and possibly not," said Rendel. "If hundreds of these camps were to be closed, it is conceivable that the only way to do it would be without any warning at all. The writer of this news release indicated that he got wind of it only through an unofficial leak."

"What can we do here?" I asked. "The head of our agency, Monsignor O'Boyle, is attending this meeting." Rendel looked at me steadily and said in his measured way: "There is absolutely nothing you can do by remaining at this session. It is your own government that must be approached if you feel it necessary to overturn this decision."

In his diplomatic way he had confirmed a plan that would have had the effect of forcible repatriation without the need to send in G.I.s and British soldiers with guns and truncheons. I informed Monsignor Patrick O'Boyle (later cardinal archbishop of Washington, D.C.), who asked me to prepare a memorandum. In four pages the plight of the D.P.s was detailed, as were their rights to freedom of choice and of asylum. With the memorandum in hand, O'Boyle rushed to Washington and obtained a hearing with the secretary of state, James F. Byrnes. Byrnes confirmed the plan, stating that from his reports there were over half a million men in the D.P. camps living a life of idleness. It would be a healthy thing if they were forced to work, either in Western Europe or in their own homelands. He promised to look into the matter and to communicate with Catholic Relief Services. Byrnes's communication of April 1, 1946, was noncommittal. He saw no other way of dealing with the Displaced, whom he always referred to as "men," unaware that large numbers of the slave laborers had been women and girls.

There were continued telephone calls to Catholic Relief Services staff in Germany and continued calls to the State Department. Finally, there was the announcement by our agency that we were going to give full publicity to the plan and to the hardships it would inflict on innocent people. That seemed to have an effect, since the ethnic vote, particularly that of Polish-Americans, had been a mainstay of the Democratic party. Byrnes asked O'Boyle to return to Washington for further consultations. The State Department seemed unaware that a public outcry would result from making the camp closing

an item of news. Byrnes asked O'Boyle to wait for ten days while the subject could be discussed further.

At the end of ten days the State Department made it known to our agency that the decision to close the D.P. camps had been reconsidered and reversed. Nothing about the matter was broadcast to the press by either the government or the voluntary agency.

It was the advice of Sir George Rendel that was crucial in turning the tide. Rendel, who died at ninety, had a fruitful and exciting career. Entering the diplomatic service in 1913, he survived two world wars. He also survived two assassination attempts in the course of World War II. After the UNRRA meeting he filled a number of posts, including service in 1947 as Britain's chief delegate to the Austrian Treaty Commission in Vienna. The decision to keep open the D.P. camps helped save from unimaginable hardship a whole generation of refugees. They received better protection from UNRRA's successor, IRO, the International Refugee Organization, and went on to become U.S. citizens as well as "New Canadians," "New Australians," and productive citizens of many other lands. The rescue of the Displaced Persons in 1946 was only one of the many occasions on which an American voluntary agency served as "embassy of the stateless" on behalf of the most helpless members of post-World War II society—the members of a war-born nation, the "nation of the nationless," the refugees.

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EXCURSUS III

Joan Landsbergis on The Not So Silent Church in Lithuania

"Everyone in Lithuania is a dissident. We don't have a few dissidents; we have a handful of collaborators."

This bold assertion was uttered November 22, 1978, in Moscow by Father Alfonsas Svarinskas, a Lithuanian priest. He was addressing a group of Western correspondents at a press conference, where, as spokesman for five Lithuanian clergymen, he announced the formation of a new Catholic Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Believers, established nine days earlier in Lithuania.

The committee, he said, has already sent a number of communications to the Soviet authorities, and has asked President Carter and the Archbishop of Canterbury to take international initiatives to protect religious freedom.

The formation of this new committee is the latest in a series of events that has made Lithuania, a country of 3.5 million, the most dissident and volatile Republic in the Soviet Union. Only a few of these events have come to the attention of the American public. The U.S. press did mention the protest letters to CPSU Secretary Brezhnev and U.N. Secretary General Waldheim signed by more than 17,000 Lithuanian Catholics in January and February of 1972. There were also brief reports about the mass riots in Kaunas, Lithuania's second-largest city, in May, 1972, following the self-immolation of Romas Kalanta, a young student-worker protesting Soviet domination and religious persecution. The establishment in December, 1976, of a Lithuanian Committee to Monitor the Helsinki Agreements also received a few brief notices. But these glimpses hardly begin to tell the story.

Father Svarinskas alluded to this lack of knowledge in the West. During the Moscow press conference he used the term habitually attached to Catholics under Soviet rule, "The Church of Silence." "Even when our woes cried out loudly for help," he said, "even when we were subject to persecution and were struggling," the Catholic Church in Lithuania was still called the "Church of Silence." For instance, very few Americans know today that Lithuania, the only Roman Catholic country in the Soviet Union, leads the other Republics of the USSR in the number of *samizdat* periodicals.

The main source of information on the religious and national ferment in Lithuania is the *samizdat* journal *The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*, which has been appearing since March, 1972. It is laboriously typed in multiple carbons and passed secretly from hand to hand before being smuggled out to the West. (English-language translations of the *Chronicle* are available from the Lithuanian Roman Catholic Priests' League of America, 351 Highland Boulevard, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11270.) Father Casimir Pugevicius, an American priest of Lithuanian extraction, is the moving spirit behind this project. In his small Brooklyn office he described the *Chronicle*. "The underground journal, thirty-four issues of which have reached the West by the end of 1978, is the second-oldest continuous *samizdat* periodical in the USSR, after the Russian-language *Chronicle of Current Events*. Like its Russian counterpart, the Lithuanian *Chronicle* is distinguished by its factual approach, calm matter-of-fact tone, and general reliability. It keeps a detailed record of religious persecution and violations of human rights. The *Chronicle* has had a great impact in Lithuania and abroad—it has given a voice to the beleaguered Lithuanians and has helped to acquaint the outside world with the extent of the repression and popular discontent in Lithuania."