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The Academy's Program for Placement of Hungarian Scientists

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THE RECENT announcement of the termination of the "parolee" program for Hungarian refugees² comes slightly more than one year after the dramatic fight by the Hungarian people for freedom in their own country. Following the heroic revolution of October 1956, some 200,000 Hungarians were obliged to flee Hungary because of their activities in behalf of freedom and aspirations for a better life. Approximately 35,000 of these people have come to the United States in the hope of establishing new lives in an atmosphere of freedom from fear.

The termination of the parolee program marks a turning point in the Academy's activities in behalf of Hungarian scientists and gives us the opportunity to examine the achievements of the past year, to establish certain conclusions as a result of our experience, and to make possible suggestions for the future.

It may be recalled that in November 1956, the National Academy of Sciences formally resolved to accord assistance to its Hungarian colleagues who might come to the United States, recognizing this as the minimum assistance due those who risked their lives in behalf of the fundamental principles of freedom. In an earlier article in *NEWS REPORT* (see Vol. VII, No. 3, pp. 33-40, 1957), Dr. Wallace W. Atwood, Jr., and Dr. M. H. Trytten, the Co-Directors of the program, described the Academy's program at Camp Kilmer and in Vienna and the results obtained during the first six months of operation.

¹ Mr. Rowan is Assistant Director of the Academy's program for Hungarian refugee scientists. He opened the Academy's office at Camp Kilmer on December 18, 1956, and initially was in charge of the office at Hotel St. George in Brooklyn, N. Y.

² Except for the first 6,500 admitted, the Hungarian refugees, being neither visitors nor permanent resident aliens, entered the United States on parole. This anomalous status will remain until adjusted by an Act of Congress.

By May 1, 1957, when Camp Kilmer was closed and President Eisenhower's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief was deactivated, the majority of the 38,000 refugees destined to come to the United States had already arrived and been resettled. However, refugees continued to arrive at the new reception center in the Hotel St. George, Brooklyn, N. Y. Although fewer in number, the flow remained significant and contained a relatively high proportion of people with talents in the natural sciences, medicine, and engineering. Many of those who had been interviewed by the Academy's team in Vienna during April and May also began to arrive in New York. Still later, a trip to Yugoslavia in behalf of the U. S. Immigration and Naturalization Service by Dr. John Gergely of Massachusetts General Hospital and Dr. Alex Mayer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology resulted in assistance to additional Hungarian scientists. During the autumn of 1957, the Academy found that it also could assist some of the Hungarian refugee scientists who had found only temporary haven in Western European countries.

As the newcomers from these sources arrived at the Hotel St. George, they were formally processed by the immigration authorities, their respective sponsoring agencies, and assisted by the Red Cross. The Academy's staff in the St. George under the direction of Dr. Maria E. Steller, with the collaboration of the staff in Washington and the invaluable assistance of numerous colleagues at universities and in industry in the New York area, matched the newcomers' individual personalities, aspirations, capabilities, and numerous personal problems with positions in the academic or industrial world of the United States which would enable them to contribute their par-

ticular talents to the fabric of our society.

In addition to the extensive interview by an Academy staff member, in most cases the newcomer was sent to an American colleague in the same special field for an "interview in depth," counseling, and an evaluation of his capability. Often the American colleague was able to suggest specific industrial or academic openings in the refugee's field. At this point our staff member would discuss these specific possibilities with the case officer in the refugee's sponsoring agency, such as the International Rescue Committee, or one of several religious agencies. The requirements for suitable employment were integrated with those of housing, initial community assistance, religious considerations, and personal predilections. Then the appropriate person at an industrial laboratory or university department was contacted and a personal interview arranged. The Academy office made travel arrangements and financed travel costs, which usually were refunded by the industry visited. Typically, one or two personal interviews culminated in employment or acceptance at a university, although very often the escapee scientist was accepted sight unseen on the basis of the evaluation of him. It is noteworthy that in several disciplines there were many more offers of employment for highly qualified persons than there were refugee scientists to fill them.

The language barrier was overcome in a number of ways: by industry, through locally arranged language instruction or utilization of German, through community and university projects, and by formal language fellowships for those of especially promising academic caliber. Frequently the Academy offered the newcomer an interest-free loan for 90 days to sustain him until he received his first paychecks. The early and unprompted repayment of the loans has enabled the same service to be extended to those arriving more recently. An important and greatly appreciated service to the newcomer was discussion directed toward planning his career; this covered such matters as salary scales, prospects for further training, the structure of academic and professional organizations in this country.

During the course of the operation, the Academy staff personnel was too preoccupied day and night to be concerned with keeping score of the number of refugees interviewed and placed. Indeed, the staff recognized from the beginning that it was dealing with individuals and that it mattered little which organization achieved actual placement so long as it was professionally adequate and utilized the newcomers' professional talents. Building a high score of placements by the Academy itself was not an objective of the program. Instead, emphasis was placed upon helping as many individuals as possible, paying special attention to those highly qualified. This often was accomplished by counseling and referring a refugee to another American organization more closely related to the individual's special field. Ideally the interviewing and placement of refugees could best be accomplished by an American professional society devoted to the same profession as the refugee. Because there were no such organizations at Camp Kilmer, the Academy's office was asked by the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief to assist other professionals such as lawyers, practicing physicians, social scientists, etc.

Table 1 presents a tabulation of placements from the beginning of the Academy's program late in December 1956 until the termination of the parolee program on December 31, 1957. Because registration with the Academy's office was entirely optional, an undetermined number of scientists among the refugees are not included in the figures shown in the table.

While it is still too early to evaluate the magnitude of the contribution which the newcomers are making, from numerous reports it appears that the vast majority seem pleased with their new positions and several have participated in the solution of particular research problems at both industrial and academic laboratories. A score or more of those with scientific and technical talents also are satisfactorily serving with various research organizations of the federal government, including those of the military services. As a result of a more comprehensive survey, it soon will be possible to publish details of the distribution

and positions of those assisted under the program.

TABLE 1.—Placement of Hungarian refugee scientists tabulated by professional fields.

Professional field	Direct Placement	Counseling and Placement Assistance ¹	Interviewed or Counseled Only ²	Total
Chemical engineering	71	25	4	101
Electrical engineering	28	17	3	48
Civil engineering	37	21	30	88
Mechanical engineering	71	50	13	134
Other engineering	21	23	4	48
Medicine	108	82	28	218
Chemistry	21	11	8	40
Mathematics and physics	25	9	5	40
Other natural sciences	34	22	4	59
Other professions (social sciences, law, etc.)	51	88	44	173
Technicians	36	44	32	112
Total	615	410	180	1,205

¹ Includes those who were placed in cooperation with other organizations or societies and those whose placement was largely consummated before arrival in the United States.

² Includes those who departed from Camp Kilmer before assistance could be arranged, those who had standard qualifications, a few who had personality problems which made placement difficult, and some whose special talents tended to be applicable only to Hungarian institutions.

It would be impossible to give a full list of American institutions which deserve credit and appreciation for their assistance. But special recognition is due the Rockefeller Foundation which has provided substantial support for the Academy's program, and the American Council for Emigres in the Professions (ACEP) which on a continuing basis has worked closely with the Academy's staff. The ACEP maintains offices at 62 West 45th Street in New York City and continues to offer assistance in placing qualified emigres.

During a period of shortage of scientific and academic manpower in the United States, it was particularly gratifying to see that some hundred and forty persons were accepted at the graduate level by more than thirty-five universities across the country. Although most of these were financially assisted by the universities concerned, the Academy awarded 18 fellowships supported by the Rockefeller Foundation. In addition, 50 refugees considered of special academic or research promise attended English language courses arranged by the

Academy in cooperation with Rutgers University and later at New York University and other institutions. Although there was great variation in the facility with which fluency in English was acquired, in most instances the 8- to 10-week language course enabled the refugee to assume a research position without significant difficulty in communication. Teaching responsibilities of course required additional language preparation.

At the undergraduate level the Institute of International Education with the cooperation of Bard College, St. Michaels, and others, conducted English language courses for 660 Hungarian students. In all nearly 800 undergraduate students who arrived from Hungary after the October Revolution are now attending some 300 to 400 American colleges and universities. This has been made possible through the good offices and assistance of the individual institutions, the World University Service, and the Institute of International Education. Well over 600 of these students are pursuing engineering, science, and medicine at various undergraduate levels. If but a fraction of these Hungarian students follow in the footsteps of the Tellers, Von Neumanns, and Szent-Györgyis, their contribution to this country will be incalculable. However, unless financial aid is forthcoming, many promising students will be unable to pursue their academic training further. It is hoped that appropriate support will be found for these potential scientists and future citizens of the United States.

The philosophy of the Academy's program is not to accord a special advantage to the newly arrived refugee scientist or engineer, but rather to eliminate some of the special obstacles confronting the refugee who arrives without resources, friends, or contacts, and who often has no knowledge of the English language and lacks familiarity with the procedure for finding a position in his profession in this country. The scientist who is a regular immigrant usually is able to make arrangements in advance. The objective of the Academy's program is to enable the newcomer to become integrated into his local and professional community as rapidly as

possible, in order to enable him to contribute his special talents to our society at the earliest possible time. The sooner that the newcomer becomes familiar with the nuances of his profession in this country and the sooner that he establishes contacts with colleagues in his field and in turn is evaluated by them, the sooner he becomes integrated, happy, contributive, and able to compete for normal opportunities. How the newcomer fares during his first months probably constitutes the impression which he gives his scientific colleagues abroad of the prospects for talented immigrants in the United States. It may be worth observing that of the some 330 Hungarian refugees who decided to return to Europe, none had been placed by the Academy.

Several special problems have been encountered in the program. Medical doctors, doctors of veterinary medicine, dentists, teachers, in fact all those who require licensure by the various states, are often confronted by varying requirements, such as graduation from an American university and citizenship. The parolee status held by most of the Hungarian refugees in the United States naturally was unforeseen by those who drew up the various states' licensure requirements. As a consequence, most of the refugees in this category are not yet eligible to apply for the various examinations, successful completion of which would enable them to practice their professions and contribute their special talents in this country. In addition, the foreign trained physician finds it exceedingly difficult to sustain himself and his family on an intern's salary keyed to the requirements of the young American graduate who is usually free of family responsibilities and who may have other sources of income.

Although one objective of the Academy's program is to help the newcomer become competitive with his American colleagues for normally existing opportunities, it has become apparent that a very limited number of fellowships are available to permanent resident aliens and virtually none for parolees. Yet these persons are presumed future citizens. The parolees are ineligible for the fellowship opportunities which exist for both American citizens and visitors from

abroad. Except for the temporary opportunities especially created for the Hungarian refugees, virtually no fellowships exist for parolees and permanent resident aliens. This situation militates against the best interests of the country, because many promising young scientists among the refugees who look forward to becoming citizens, will be unable to continue education which would prepare them to contribute their special talents to this country.

Those staff members who were immediately concerned with the Academy's Hungarian Scientists Program formed certain conclusions as a result of their experience. Among these is that the major technical universities of Hungary, although under Communist domination for the last decade, continue to turn out very well-trained young scientists. For example, allowing for individual differences, it has been estimated that the graduate from the Polytechnical University of Budapest or the Science Department of Péter Pázmány University (later renamed Eötvös Lorant University) have received training equivalent to a level between the bachelor's and master's degree of the better universities of the United States. It could also be concluded that the enforced instruction in Marxism and the Russian language usually had an effect contrary to that which was hoped for by the Communist leaders. Although most of these people had encountered the experience of revolution, escape from Hungary, separation from loved ones, continued uncertainty regarding a future, they presented surprisingly few practical personality problems. Being met and treated as equals by their American colleagues had a visibly comforting and reassuring effect.

Apart from being amazed by the continuous flow of much highly qualified talent from a relatively small country, members of the staff also were interested in the general intellectual attitude of the newcomers from Hungary. Most of the people interviewed possessed considerable awareness of social and political issues and a more than basic knowledge of the humanities which they traditionally were taught to consider as essential premises to learning. They also tended to regard science as a method of approach as well as a subject of study. These

attitudes were strongly reflected in their choice of recreation and hobbies, blending a career in natural sciences with interest in music, fine arts, and literature.

Above all they brought a fresh appreciation of freedom, an appreciation acquired only through the experience of having lived under Communist domination for ten years. These people are the *doers* as well as the contemplators. In keeping with the best traditions of earlier immigrations to our country, they bring a new blood, enthusiasm, and aspiration.

Certain observations and recommendations concerning the future may be in order. First, it should be made clear that termination of the parolee program in no way changes the customary and special opportunities for immigration to the United States. The "first preference" mechanism which enables a university, industry, or hospital to bring in qualified immigrants is a regular feature of our immigration laws, but within recent years it has been utilized only to about 5 percent of the extent authorized by existing legislation. The district offices of the U. S. Immigration and

Naturalization Service and the United States consular officers abroad are in a position to give the necessary details of this procedure. Furthermore, recent legislation (Public Law 85-316) allocates an additional 15,000 visas to escapees from Communist countries in Europe, including Hungary. Doubtless, those who come to the United States under this legislation will include many with special qualifications in science, engineering, and medicine.

Those associated with the Academy's Hungarian Scientists Program have found the entire experience both challenging and rewarding. It has been a source of inspiration to see the refugee, weary and harassed upon arrival, soon become happily settled in job and home. More significantly, at a time when the United States is embarking upon a long-term program to satisfy its shortage of scientific personnel, the rapid assimilation of great numbers of scientists from abroad, already well-trained, can only be considered a legacy of the first order. The Academy hopes to continue indefinitely to assist refugee scientists who seek opportunities in the United States.