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LABOUR PROBLEMS.

by THÉO CHOPARD.

The industrial countries of the West are enjoying an unprecedented period of prosperity. Never has the market been as well supplied as it is now, and never have people possessed such a high purchasing capacity. Everything in fact is going so well that people are beginning to worry about the "dangers" of prosperity. Just like those people who eat too well and have nothing else to worry about except their digestion or their liver, Governments, experts and public opinion are giving careful thought to what are the best remedies for the prevention of "indigestion due to too much good fare".

Every sensible man cannot but judge such behaviour to be paradoxical. A Conference which recently brought together in Geneva representatives of private and inter-Government Organisations for aid to Refugees, recalled the fact that millions of displaced men, women and children are still living, in various parts of the world, in conditions of absolute distress. There are still 200,000 refugees to be found in the Gaza Zone. It is estimated that more than a million refugees are still dumped down, under the most terrible conditions, all along the Arab-Israel frontiers. But above all it is generally ignored that in Asia some twenty-two million displaced persons are living in the most complete destitution. Eight million Hindus have fled from Pakistan, and six-and-a-half million Moslems have fled from India into Pakistan. As a result of the arbitrary amputation of Vietnam, 900,000 persons have proceeded to leave the North for the South. In Korea the number of refugees coming from the North is estimated at more than five millions. In Hong Kong some 700,000 Chinese, who have fled from the Communist régime, vegetate in conditions of the most sordid need. And we have not even mentioned the tens of thousands of former refugees who are still living in camps in Europe.

The distress of these millions of human beings is not only of a material but also of a moral order. They are deprived of all rights. Their children are born and live in the most terrible promiscuity, deprived of all possibilities of education and of technical training. For all these millions the Charter of the Rights of Man promulgated by the U.N.O., the social rights affirmed by the International Labour Organisation and the rights claimed by the trade unions for their members, merely constitute a sinister farce. Never has a greater offence been committed against such a numerous and unhappy mass of people!

But why is there such misery in the midst of all this prosperity? Because of the indifference shown by those who have plenty, and also because of political tensions. For instance, in so far as the Arab refugees of Gaza and Palestine are concerned, the United Nations have offered the necessary financial means to enable this tragic mass of people to be settled in various countries of the Middle East. This offer of help, however, has been refused, up to the present, for political reasons. It looks just as if a quantity of labour was being maintained in distress for purposes of political blackmail. Such political blackmail, in its turn, is an indirect consequence of the Cold War which — if one may so express it — puts in the ice-

box the solution of every kind of essential problem — problems on the solution of which depends, to a large extent, the solution of the refugee problem. The expenditure on armament necessitated by the Cold War also prevents any serious steps being taken in regard to the financing of those measures which are required for the assistance of the refugees from India, Pakistan and Vietnam, as well as Korea, where the political situation is such as to make possible the reintegration of these masses of human beings.

Were public opinion less indifferent to all this misery a portion of these refugees, if not all of them, would be able once more to step forward along the road of hope. As we have already said in these talks, public opinion in the prosperous countries must urgently call upon the Governments to set aside part of their budget for aid in case of catastrophes, but this appropriation must be sufficient to endow in an effective manner the international Special Agencies. Their budgets do not exceed 200 million dollars per year, as compared with armament expenditure which is evaluated at four hundred times that amount! This levy on the fruits of prosperity should be sufficiently substantial to make it possible to face any tasks which may crop up in the future. For, after all, the events of the last twenty years have shown that neither natural nor political catastrophes are the exception and that, in the world of today, the right of Man to live in dignity, in his own country, is only guaranteed in a minority of countries. However, the problem which we have just outlined looks as if it might very well remain without any solution so long as the Cold War goes on.

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