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COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AND CULTURAL RELATIONS HUNGARIAN REFUGEE STUDENTS

Note by the Netherlands Delegation

Up to 1st January, 1958, 111 Hungarian refugee students had received a scholarship from the "University Asylum Fund" (UAF) (1).

2. Between December 1956 and January 1958 an even greater number of refugee students received assistance from the UAF, but some of these proved to be unable to follow university studies. With the aid of the U.A.F. they were transferred to other educational institutions.

3. Four students returned to Hungary, two have emigrated to the United States and Australia respectively. Three others have disappeared altogether, probably to Germany and Austria where they allegedly wanted to go.

4. However, the vast majority of the Hungarian students who sought asylum in the Netherlands after the Hungarian revolution, have adapted themselves to Netherlands university life, in spite of great difficulties, both psychological and technical.

5. In general, the liberties of our higher educational system are hard for them to understand, in particular the absence of a rigid study scheme. Most of the Hungarian students have themselves drawn up such a scheme, in the implementation of which they are assisted by the local committee of the UAF or by a "mentor".

6. Admission to universities or high schools has been granted not on the basis of examinations but of specially organized courses from which their intelligence and knowledge could be judged. Almost all of them could be admitted to the appropriate level.

(1) Reference AC/52-D/223

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7. An extra difficulty for the Hungarian students was their serious lack of knowledge of foreign languages. The UAF has therefore organized courses in Dutch and English. In a later stage they will also be taught German.

8. Naturally only a few students have been able to go in for an examination, but the results obtained so far are encouraging.

9. From the beginning the activities of the UAF have had a wider scope than providing study-facilities, viz, to promote the greatest possible adaptation to the Western and more particularly the Netherlands way of life so that its scholars, after finishing their studies, will have the same professional chances as their Netherlands fellow-students.

10. For that reason the UAF has engaged an advisor/social worker who assists the students in all fields. Many of the difficulties which the Hungarian refugee students encounter are traceable to the regime under which they have been brought up. Time and again it becomes apparent that this regime gives the individual little opportunity of developing a sense of independence and responsibility.

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