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BERNARD FRASER'S MEMOIRS

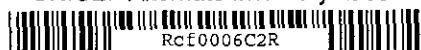
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Memoirs of Bernard H. Fraser: Background; Maurice Pate; H
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My name is Bernard H. Fraser. I joined UNICEF in Washington on 23rd June 1947, roughly six months after UNICEF had come into existence with Maurice Pate as the first Executive Director. I had known Maurice since 1939 when he was the Director of the Commission for Polish Relief; it had been established when World War II broke out, and the purpose was to help needy children in the country. So this activity was really a forerunner of the work which UNICEF was to do after the end of hostilities.

The Commission for Polish Relief was inspired by former President Herbert Hoover who subsequently, when Nazis had invaded Holland, Belgium, Denmark and Norway, headed the National Committee on Food for the Small Democracies. The plan was to provide foodstuffs to the children in these countries, perhaps under the supervision of Swiss or Swedish personnel. My task was to provide research material to substantiate the need for help to children there, and while this material was then endorsed by leading American authorities in the field, nothing did materialize by way of aid for political reasons as the Administration at that time objected to the plans.

In presenting this background, I am reminded of the fact that I was myself a beneficiary of the feeding by the Quakers while a child in Bremen, Germany, where I was born. This was in the years 1921 and 1922, possibly 1920, and it was known as the "Hoover Speise" or the Hoover Meal. I had occasion to tell

Mr. Hoover this once, and it seemed to please him. It has made me wonder whether there may have been, among the U.N. delegates whom I met here in the course of years, were any who benefitted from the dry skim milk and other foodstuffs which were sent to war-ravaged countries while I was UNICEF's Shipping Officer from 1947 to late 1949.

When Maurice Pate asked me to join him in UNICEF by a letter of 7th March 1949, he made the statement:

"The Chief (Hoover) is behind me in this work. So is President Truman. In fact the whole idea of setting up the child feeding under United Nations was given by Mr. Hoover last year."

My occasion to call this text to the attention of Mr. J. Charnow a few months ago was to emphasize Mr. Hoover's role in this picture which had become somewhat confused with the part which Dr. Ludwik Rajchman played in the creation of UNICEF. There is no doubt that he had a leading role in the actual discussions among governments on the basis of the Hoover premise for the need to help which eventually led to Resolution 57 (I) of the General Assembly. Maurice Pate, who had lived in Poland for a number of years, probably knew Dr. Rajchman and worked with him. This is a phase of history which should be explored. One may surmise that Dr. Rajchman was instrumental in setting efforts into motion which lead some European governments to look with favor upon the establishment of UNICEF, while Hoover did so in the United States (especially with Senator Vandenberg whose initial financial support was so essential).

The influence of Hoover in the creation of UNICEF has been chronicled in a paper which a Yale University student wrote in January 1972. His name was Phillip H. Waldoks and a copy of his 22-page report is attached with a request that it be returned to me. Particular attention is called to the following paragraphs from the report:

"Hoover had been dissatisfied with the progress of UNRRA's operations. As early as May 1945, Hoover "in a V-E Day address at Carnegie Hall... pleaded for immediate action... to help save the war ravaged peoples of Europe from starvation, particularly the millions of sick and emaciated children."¹⁸

"He brought up a feeling quite prevalent in the minds of Americans who had observed the rise of facism from the depths of the depression that engulfed Europe, especially Germany, in the thirties. "But after all, peace, prosperity and freedom will not arise from stunted minds or stunted bodies... The preservation and rebuilding of these children is a far greater contribution to freedom, to prosperity, to peace than a hundred signed documents."¹⁹

Hoover went on, characteristically, to give four concrete proposals:

- 1) UNRRA should send food within 2 weeks.

2) Thousands of canteens should be established in industrial areas to rehabilitate undernourished children.

3) The cost should be paid out of international contributions to UNRRA or the particular nations themselves.

4) Whatever government agency undertakes to do the job of feeding and rehabilitation should also transport supplies for and make places for such organizations as 'Save the Children Fund' which "can give sympathetic help that official agencies cannot so fully accomplish."

Hoover added that if UNRRA could not do the job then the War Department should do it. This was no reflection on Herbert Lehman, director of UNRRA, Hoover said,

"He has been hampered by power politics. His organization has not had adequate transportation nor single-headed authority which these large scale operations so urgently require. We could never had won the battle of the Western front with committee control. But precious time has been lost."

16) *ibid*, pgs. 3-4

17) *ibid*, pg. 5

18) This, and all the rest of the quotes on page 9 come from an interesting and hitherto unnoticed article in the N.Y. Times, May 9, 1945 page 16.

19) Another American, then Representative J. William Fulbright used just the same sort of expression to support an international effort in education, remarking that it could "do more in the long run for peace than any number of trade treaties." See Chapter 3 of *ENGAGING INTERNATIONALLY* by James P. Sewell (as yet unpublished) p.8.

Waldok's report is full of other interesting details on Pate's nature, his relationship with Hoover and how the early staff was assembled.

So close was Pate to Hoover that it almost seems as if life had little meaning left for Pate after Hoover passed away in October 1964; Pate died in January 1965. It is necessary to draw a line between Hoover as a former president and his function as a humanitarian, the latter is being recognized more and more, and at least two historians dwelt on it at ceremonies commemorating the anniversary of Hoover's birth last August when one of them (Professor Justice D. Doeneker) made this statement:

"Once the United States entered World War II, Hoover devoted himself to the coming peace. Hoover specifically spoke of the end of hostilities being immediately followed by the lifting of food blockades, instant relief to friend and foe alike, and a reduction of tariffs..."

Reflecting on Pate's personality it is interesting to note that he was reported to have taken part in a seance conversation which Ruth Montgomery reported in her book entitled, "A Search for Truth" which was republished in August 1982 (see attached photocopy of pages 184 and 185). I shared this with Helenka Pantaleoni who tells me that this became known for the first time a year or two after Pate had passed away. It is an interesting sidelight on a person with unusual abilities, and it is quite possible that he had psychic faculties.

I have been told that there was a lady in the Paris office of UNICEF who referred to Pate as a Saint. He certainly had an impressive appearance which reflected angelic qualities to some people. If one differentiates between psychic powers and spiritual powers, he may have had some of the latter too. There were inner convictions which spurred him on as if he had the backing of some divine power; one that comes to mind is that he felt and acted as if it were a privilege to give funds to UNICEF. When the Hungarian uprising took place in 1956, Pate could not get the entrance visa in New York and went instead to Vienna where he obtained it as if an inner voice had told him so.

The Mary Leeper mentioned in Montgomery's book was -- so I understand -- an official of the National Education Association. But I cannot recall her name in my work for UNICEF.

Virtually all these comments refer to the Pre-UNICEF period. So what I have been talking about is UNICEF in its embryonic stage. When I return in mid-January UNICEF will come to life with recollections of the first few years, and others are to follow at a later stage.

Thank you for the courtesy of letting me read a copy of the transcript so that I may edit it if necessary.

