

Message from Harry S. Truman on United States participation in UNRRA (13 November 1945)

Caption: On 13 November 1945, US President Harry Truman makes a statement to Congress in which he emphasises the importance of the aid missions carried out by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) in countries affected by the Second World War and reaffirms the United States' financial and material contribution to the organisation.

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United States Participation in UNRRA

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO CONGRESS¹

[Released to the press by the White House November 13]

To the Congress of the United States of America:

This country has pledged itself to do all that is reasonably possible to alleviate the suffering of our war-torn allies and to help them begin the task of restoring their economic productivity. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration is one of the most important instrumentalities for accomplishing this great task.

As I stated in my message to the Congress on September 6, 1945, the forty-seven nations of the Council of United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration determined at their Third Meeting in London last August that contributions beyond those originally made would be necessary if we expect to complete the minimum tasks assigned to UNRRA. The Council recommended, on the motion of the United States Delegate, that each member country, whose territory had not been invaded by the enemy, should contribute an additional amount equal to one percent of its national income for the fiscal year 1943.

In accordance with this recommendation, the United States share would be \$1,350,000,000, matching our original contribution authorized by the Act of Congress of March 28, 1944.

The original contributions of all the member nations have been applied principally to the activities of UNRRA in providing relief and rehabilitation assistance to the countries of eastern and southeastern Europe, and to the care of United Nations displaced persons stranded in enemy territory. UNRRA, of course, does not undertake relief or rehabilitation responsibilities in either Germany or Japan.

The invaded countries of northwest Europe, comprising France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark and Norway, by and large, possess sufficient resources in foreign currency and credit to acquire their own essential imports from abroad. Direct assistance to northwest Europe is, therefore, not being furnished by UNRRA.

Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Greece, and Albania, on the other hand, not only have suffered greatly at the hands of the enemy in the course of the war but they are almost entirely without foreign exchange or credit resources. Consequently to date they have been the chief objects of UNRRA's activity.

UNRRA has undertaken a limited program of \$50,000,000 in Italy to provide for the health and care of children, and expectant or nursing mothers.

Italy, since her participation in the war as a co-belligerent with the United Nations, has contributed substantially in both manpower and facilities to the Allied victory, becoming, at the same time, one of the most severely contested battlefields of the war. The destitution and needs there are appalling. Italy has virtually no foreign exchange resources and without the aid of UNRRA the country might well lapse into starvation.

UNRRA has also assisted in the care and repatriation of millions of allied victims of Axis aggression who were deported to and enslaved in Germany. It has initiated a preliminary program of assistance to China.

By the end of this year UNRRA anticipates that all the funds which will be made available to it from all sources in accordance with the original contributions will have been spent or encumbered. The flow of supplies purchased with these funds cannot last beyond the early spring.

The end of the war with Japan has made it possible to estimate the magnitude of the relief requirements of China and other Far Eastern areas. Reports on the European harvest of 1945 reveal a serious shortage of all types of foodstuffs.

China presents the largest of all the relief responsibilities which UNRRA now faces. With inadequate supplies and resources it has struggled bravely for eight years to combat the enemy as well as the ravages of famine, disease and inflation. Other programs are required for Korea and Formosa, two areas of the Far East which are now being restored to the peaceful ranks of the

¹ H. Doc. 378, 79th Cong., 1st sess.

United Nations after decades of Japanese oppression and extortion.

UNRRA proposes the extension of aid to Austria. This proposal is in accordance with the Moscow and Potsdam declarations by the major powers to the effect that Austria should be treated independently of Germany and encouraged to resume the free and peaceful role which it played before being invaded by Hitler's legions.

A limited program of aid is also intended for the Soviet Republics of White Russia and the Ukraine. These areas constituted the principal battlefields in the struggle between Russia and Germany. They were the scene of some of the worst German atrocities, devastation, and pillage.

The recommended additional contributions will hardly suffice to permit UNRRA to meet the most urgent and immediate needs for relief and rehabilitation for which it is responsible. We hope to fulfill a substantial part of this contribution through the use of military and lend-lease supplies which have become surplus since the surrender of our enemies.

I know that America will not remain indifferent to the call of human suffering. This is particularly true when it is suffering on the part of those who by sacrifice and courage kept the enemy from realizing the fruits of his early victories and from bringing his military might to bear upon our own shores.

UNRRA is the chosen instrument of forty-seven United Nations to meet the immediate relief and rehabilitation needs of the invaded countries.

UNRRA is the first of the international organizations to operate in the post-war period, one which the United States originally sponsored and in which it has played a leading part. Apart from purely humanitarian considerations, its success will do much to prove the possibility of establishing order and cooperation in a world finally at peace.

I, therefore, request the Congress to authorize a new appropriation of \$1,350,000,000 for participation in the activities of UNRRA.

HARRY S. TRUMAN

THE WHITE HOUSE,
November 13, 1945.

¹ Made on Nov. 16, 1945 before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in connection with a bill making further authorizations for UNRRA.