### Société des Nations - League of Nations

**Refugees General**

**Registry No.:** 36105 4440

#### Award of the Nobel Prize to the League Office, 1938

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**Archives 1933-1940**

**Institute of the League of Nations**

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BROADCAST
by Judge Michael HANSSON, President of the Governing Body of the Nansen international Office for Refugees, Geneva, through the National Broadcasting Company, New York, on the occasion of the award to that Office of the NOBEL PEACE PRIZE for 1938.

Geneva, the 18th. November 1938.

The Nobel Peace Prize has been awarded this year to the Nansen International Office for Refugees at Geneva. As you know, the Nobel Peace Prize was established by the eminent Swede, Alfred Nobel, who bequeathed his huge fortune to the Nobel Institute at Stockholm. This Institute distributes each year four prizes for science and literature, but Nobel requested the Norwegian Storting, that is the Parliament of Norway, to award the Peace Prize, in recognition of the pacific attitude invariably adopted by that Body which has constantly manifested its will to submit differences with countries to arbitration. The parliament acts through a Committee of 5 members elected for three years. It is this Peace Committee which has now given the prize for 1938 to the Nansen International Office for Refugees.

The prize is an important one; it amounts to about 41,000 dollars each year. If the Nobel Committee have thought it possible to award that prize to the Nansen International Office, it is because they recognized the fact that this Office has effectively worked in the interests of peace among peoples. Then in 1930, the celebrated Norwegian explorer, Fridtjof Nansen, who was the first High Commissioner of the League of Nations for Refugees, died, the Assembly of the League of Nations, at its meeting that year, rendered solemn homage to him, in recognition of the work he had performed to "gather the peoples together in the cause of peace."

Under the administration of Fridtjof Nansen who, by his character, his will and his energy, was perhaps the most remarkable figure of the century, the work in favour of the refugees, under the authority of the League of Nations, produced impressive results. Among the most striking, I would recall
that Fridtjof Nansen, at the request of the League of Nations, saved some 430,000 prisoners of war of 26 different nationalities who in 1921 were still in Russia and Siberia. At the time when the whole world had practically given up all hope of saving these unfortunate people, Nansen managed in a few months to repatriate them to their respective countries. Thanks to his immense activity, he likewise saved from famine and even death millions of Russians.

In 1921, he was also charged with the protection of the refugees who had to leave Russia during and after the Great War and who then numbered a million and a half. Following this, he directed his efforts towards saving the Armenians threatened with deportation, of whom 350,000 have been settled in Greece, Bulgaria and other countries. Similarly, after the defeat of the Turkish Armies in Asia Minor, 1,300,000 Greek and Bulgarian refugees had to be transferred to their respective countries in exchange for the 300,000 Turks who were transferred from Greece to Turkey. In Syria alone, 100,000 Armenians approximately came from Cilicia after the French Authorities had renounced their occupation of this country and had withdrawn their troops. In Syria, Nansen commenced building huts and villages for some 40,000 of the poorest of the Armenian refugees, which was possible largely owing to the important financial contributions provided by philanthropic organisations and the French and Syrian Governments.

This task has been completed recently by the Nansen International Office, for whom I am speaking, as after Fridtjof Nansen's death in 1930, the League of Nations decided to create an autonomous organisation, under the authority of the League of Nations, for the continuation of the admirable work of the great philanthropist.

As can easily be imagined, the Nansen Office has had to overcome very great difficulties, especially from a financial and political point of view. It is true that the number of refugees had decreased considerably during Nansen's lifetime, but after his death it is believed that there still remained a million Russian, Armenian, Assyrian, Assyro-Chaldean and Turkish refugees. Since 1935, the Nansen Office has also been called upon to look after the Saarlanders who were obliged to leave their territory following the plebiscite.
The number of refugees entrusted to the care of the Office has gradually diminished. Many have died from sheer misery, others have emigrated to overseas countries, others again have acquired the nationality of the country to which they have moved. To-day, however, there are nearly half a million refugees under the protection of the Nansen Office. They are spread over a number of countries in Europe, especially in France, Poland, the Baltic and Balkanic States, Greece, Czechoslovakia, Belgium, etc.

Happily, thanks to the efforts of the various Governments, of the Refugee organisations and to the Nansen Office, many refugees have been definitely established. Nevertheless, there are thousands and thousands still existing in the most miserable conditions and in an atmosphere of suspense, as, having no right to live anywhere, they are simply tolerated, until, as a consequence of political or economic events, they are required to leave the country in which they have taken refuge. The result of this state of affairs is an appalling number of cases of individuals and even of whole families who, obliged to leave their fatherland, have been wandering for the last 20 years from one country to another. In many cases, after being expelled from a given country they are returned to that country from which they are again thrust out. To make matters worse, the fact that these unhappy creatures do not enjoy the right to exist and to settle down in any country, exposes them to imprisonment for not submitting to expulsion orders which it is absolutely impossible for them to obey.

However, thanks to Inter-Governmental Arrangements, due to the efforts of the League of Nations and the Nansen Office, an improvement in this deplorable state of affairs has been noticed. But even in those lands where the refugees have been allowed to settle, they live very precariously owing to the absence of any diplomatic or consular protection and because, as I have already mentioned, their very existence depends on events. This fact has a very depressing effect on their minds. Add to this the poverty, infirmities, illness, old age and even blackest misery in which a large number of these emigrants are still living to-day, and you will realise how necessary is the work on behalf of refugees under the authority of the League of Nations.
The Nansen Office has, in many countries, representations which are entrusted with the protection and the humanitarian assistance of refugees. The importance of the work done by these representations is considerable. Suffice it for me to say that since 1931 until this day, the Nansen Office and its representatives have intervened in 700,000 various cases to assist refugees in all the phases of their existence. During past years, the Office has disposed of a sum of between $90,000 and $113,000 per year for the relief of the most indigent refugees. This money is used exclusively for humanitarian purposes, either in the form of advances or as direct subventions for those in a most critical situation.

It should be noted that this money is, for the most part, provided by the refugees themselves, as in order to obtain the issue or renewal of an identity certificate or the so-called "Nansen-Passeport", they have to pay a levy of 5 gold francs. This tax, however, may be reduced or even cancelled altogether in the case of indigent refugees. Besides these resources, the French and Norwegian Governments have issued postage stamps the proceeds of which are utilised for the refugees. The results obtained are extremely satisfactory and ought to encourage other Governments to follow their example.

I hope I have been able to outline to you the chief activities of the Nansen Office. It is unnecessary to add what it means to the refugees to feel that there exists an institution under the authority of the League of Nations, which is there to protect them and to alleviate their sufferings. There is no doubt that this thought has prevented them from giving way to despair or committing criminal acts; in other words, it has prevented social disorder.

The mandate of the Nansen Office expires at the end of this year, but fortunately its work will be continued. Already in 1935, the Norwegian Government proposed to unite under one management the Nansen Office and the High Commission for Refugees coming from Germany created in 1933. This proposal - which has since been repeated - met with a great many difficulties. On the one hand, the Soviets were opposed to the continuation by the League of Nations of the protection of the former Russian refugees, and, on the other hand, as long as Germany was a member of the League, the Government did not wish
the latter to occupy itself with the German refugees. But at the present time, these difficulties do not exist any more, and the League of Nations, at the last Assembly, in September, decided to unite under the direction of one High Commissioner in London, the refugees under the protection of the Nansen Office and those coming from Germany and the former Austrian territory. The Assembly appointed as the new High Commissioner, Sir Herbert Emerson, ex-Governor of the Punjab, in India, in whom will certainly be found an energetic and inspired worker to continue a task which has become more necessary and more arduous than ever.

I need not describe to you the terrific situation as it is to-day. I would only mention that to the 700,000 Jews and non-Jewish refugees, approximately, who have to leave Germany and former Austrian territory, will probably be added masses of refugees from former Czechoslovakia, namely Jews, Sudete refugees and others, to say nothing of the possibility of having to find a home for those Jews living in other European countries who either desire or have to seek shelter elsewhere. Their number may be estimated in millions.

The problem cannot be solved without the close collaboration and good-will of the Governments. In the meantime, may I be allowed to say that the fact that the Nobel Peace Prize has been attributed to the Nansen Office is a great encouragement to all those who are called upon to participate in the solution of the terrible problem which weighs heavily on the conscience of the whole world.

It is not only material assistance, or in other words the increase of the humanitarian fund of the Office, which is important. I attach even greater importance to the moral effect of the decision taken by the Nobel Committee in Oslo, who have thereby confirmed the declaration made at the Assembly of the League of Nations that the work of Dr. Nansen and accordingly of the Nansen Office and of the High Commissioner for refugees coming from Germany, meant, in the first place, the promotion of the maintenance of social order and civil peace.

A great deal has been done, but there still remains an enormous task to carry out. More than ever every effort must be made to persuade Governments seriously to deal with the
refugee problem, to open up their frontiers, and to allow these outlaws to settle down in their countries. Although the League of Nations will certainly continue its efforts in this respect, it is none the less true that the problem has acquired such vast proportions that the League of Nations alone will not be able to deal with it.

I have not even mentioned the question of simple justice towards human beings who, in their great majority, through no fault whatever of their own, are without a fatherland, without means of existence, and without the slightest protection.

I appeal to the compassion of all the peoples of the world. Let us all follow the example of the great Samaritan of modern times: Fridtjof Nansen.
A

Office International d'Hansem pour les Réfugiés

Transmet trois exemplaires
du texte du discours prononcé
par lui le 18 nov. à la Radiation
à Genève, à l'occasion de l'attribution du Prix Nobel à l'

[Commentaires.]
Monsieur le Secrétaire général,

J'ai l'honneur de vous adresser ci-inclus trois exemplaires du texte du discours que, sur la demande de la National Broadcast Company à Bâle, j'ai prononcé vendredi dernier à la Radio suisse à Genève à l'occasion de l'attribution du Prix Nobel de la Paix à l'Office international Nansen.

Il m'est particulièrement agréable de pouvoir vous annoncer qu'à la suite de cette allocution la National Broadcast Company m'a télégraphié ce qui suit:

"Your broadcast yesterday received splendidly
New York many thanks = National Broadcast Company"

Veillez agréer, Monsieur le Secrétaire général, les assurances de ma haute considération.

Monsieur le Secrétaire général de la Société des Nations,

G E N E V E.

RECEIVED
22 NOV.1938

Dear Judge Hansson,

I am writing to confirm our conversation over the telephone on Saturday, and to send you a copy of the statement which the Acting Secretary-General authorised us to issue to representatives of the Norwegian Press in Geneva, on the occasion of the awarding of the Nobel Prize to the Nansen International Office for Refugees.

We very much hope that this statement will prove useful to your Office.

Yours faithfully,

INFORMATION SECTION.

Judge Michael Hansson,
Nansen International Office for Refugees,
43 Quai Wilson,
Geneva.

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Yours faithfully,

INFORMATION SECTION.

Judge Michael Hansson,
Nansen International Office for Refugees,
43 Quai Wilson,
Geneva.
The Secretary-General is gratified to learn of the award of the Nobel Prize to the Nansen International Office for Refugees. This award is a well-deserved expression of appreciation of the great effort made by the Nansen Office to solve one of the most tragic problems of the post-war world.

The Nansen Office, presided over since January 1936 by Judge Michael Hansen, is an autonomous organisation which was set up under the auspices of the League of Nations in pursuance of a resolution adopted by the 1930 Assembly. Its object has been to carry on and complete as rapidly as possible the work initiated by Dr. Nansen as League High Commissioner particularly for Russian and Armenian Refugees.

The Nansen Office has continued the humanitarian side of Dr. Nansen's work, more particularly by the collection of information regarding the material and moral condition of those concerned and by assisting them in finding employment or opportunities for settlement.

The President of the Governing Body of the Nansen Office is appointed by the Assembly of the League of Nations, which receives the annual reports on the activities of the Office. The administrative expenses of the Office have been borne by the League of Nations. In addition the Office is empowered to receive funds from private sources for relief and assistance.
The Governing Body of the Nansen International Office for Refugees is to liquidate this Office at the end of this year in accordance with a decision adopted some eight years ago. Full responsibility for this liquidation rests with the Governing Body as do all decisions with regard to the disposal of funds in their possession.
HOMMEUR le Président,

J'ai l'honneur d'accuser réception de votre lettre en date du 21 novembre 1938, par laquelle vous avez bien voulu me communiquer le texte de l'allocution que vous avez prononcée à l'adresse du public américain, à l'occasion de l'attribution du prix Nobel de la Paix à l'Office international Nansen pour les Réfugiés.

Je sais cette occasion pour vous adresser mes félicitations à l'occasion de cet événement. L'attribution du Prix Nobel est un hommage public éclatant aux services que l'Office a rendus aux réfugiés. Il est également un hommage à votre dévouement et à l'énergie admirable dont vous avez fait preuve depuis que l'Assemblée vous a confié la direction de cette institution.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président, les assurances de ma haute considération.

Le Secrétaire général,
Monsieur le Président,

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Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président,
les assurancce de ma haute considération.

Le SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL :

Monsieur Michael NANSSEN,
Président du Conseil d'Administration
de l'Office international Nansen pour les Réfugiés,
GENEVE.
Geneva, January 25th, 1939

Dear Sirs,

I beg to enclose herewith cheque valued Sw.Fr. 50,-

being for pictures, papers and data concerning a special refugee case, (according to Mr. Felt's instr.of 17.1.39.

I should feel obliged if you would acknowledge safe receipt in due course on the form attached.

Yours faithfully,

P.G. WATERSON,
Chief Accountant.

Please detach here.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Kindly sign and return this receipt to the CHIEF ACCOUNTANT, League of Nations, GENEVA

Nansen International Office for Refugees

GENEVA

Appropriation

S.I. 1/39

Januarv 25th, 1939

Received from the Secretariat of the League of Nations

the sum of fifty Swiss Francs.

being in respect of expenses incurred in connection with a special refugee case.

(signature)
Ci-joint, je vous remets copie d'une lettre en date du 26 janvier 1939 que j'ai reçue du liquidateur de l'Office Nansen, M. M. HANSSON.

Comme vous le verrez, j'ai demandé, en vue de notre Pavillon à New-York, qu'on me prête le diplôme et la médaille d'or du Prix Nobel de la Paix pour 1938, décernés récemment à l'Office par la Commission compétente du Parlement norvégien.

En ce qui concerne le diplôme, je l'exposerai en original. Quant à la médaille, ne voulant pas risquer le vol d'un objet aussi précieux (400 grammes d'or pur, sans compter la valeur artistique et morale), j'en fais faire un moulage de chaque face.

Toutefois, M. HANSSON soulève une autre question au sujet de cette médaille, à savoir l'endroit où elle sera conservée définitivement. Au cours d'une conversation téléphonique, il m'a dit qu'à son avis le meilleur endroit serait la Bibliothèque, mais il s'agit là évidemment d'une question que je dois vous laisser le soin de décider.
Monsieur le Directeur,

L'Office international Nansen en liquidation a remis hier à M. Hall, contre reçu signé par ce dernier, le diplôme et la médaille d'or du Prix Nobel de la Paix pour 1938, en vue de l'Exposition de New-York.

Le diplôme sera exposé en original au pavillon édifié par la Société des Nations et la médaille sera reproduite par les soins du Secrétariat dans le même but. Comme il a été convenu entre nous, la médaille d'or ne sera pas retournée à l'Office Nansen mais conservée à la Société des Nations pour être exposée dans l'une des vitrines du Secrétariat.

Je vous serais obligé de vouloir bien me confirmer votre accord à ce sujet, et vous en remerciant à l'avance, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur le Directeur, l'assurance de ma considération très distinguée.

[Signature]

Liquidateur.

Monsieur A. FLET,
Directeur de la Section d'Information,
Société des Nations,
G E N E V E.
M. Stencek:

I have temporarily in my custody the gold medal which accompanied the award of last year’s Nobel Peace Prize to the now-extinct Nansen Office for Refugees. This was entrusted to our section by M. Hansson, late Governing Director of the Nansen Office, so that we might have replicas made for exhibition in the League Pavilion at the New York World’s Fair. Thereafter, according to M. Hansson’s request, the medal was to be retained for the League Museum. The Peace Prize Diploma, which also is to go afterwards to the League Pavilion, has been sent to New York for exhibition in the original.

Our replicas having been made, we are ready to hand over the medal to your section. Shall I send it by huissier, or bring it in person?

Yours faithfully,

Information Section.

Information Section.

[Signature]

Temporary Collaborator.

Counter parts please are awaiting as to immediate action question. O. O.'s.

O. Strack

24/3
Reçu de M. Hall la médaille en or du prix Nobel
décernée à l'Office Nansen et destinée au Musée de la
Bibliothèque.

J. Vallery-Radot.
Genève, le 30 mars 1939.
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