IOM from 1951-53: The Creation of PI CMME/ICEM

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What is now known as the International Organization for Migration changed names a few times since 1951, reflecting the evolution of the organizations over the years. For better clarity, the following slide indicates the organization’s ‘family tree’.
IOM ‘Family Tree’

December 1951: Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe (PICMME)

1952/53: Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM)

1980: Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM)

1989: International Organization for Migration (IOM)
In 2011 we will celebrate IOM’s 60\textsuperscript{th} anniversary. We are actually currently going through a period of anniversaries for a whole framework of institutions involved in the field of refugee/migration issues (e.g. ICMC, UNHCR). The late 1940s and early 1950s were years of intense institutional building, not only but especially in the field of migration/refugees issues.

All those institutions have a common history, either because there was a filiation between various institutions or because the creation and development of an institution often had an impact on other institutions. To fully understand where IOM comes from, it is necessary to come back on this aspect.

The following slide presents a simplified diagram summarizing some of the relevant filiations.
United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) (1943-1947)

International Refugee Organization (IRO) (1947-1951)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ICRC</th>
<th>UNHCR</th>
<th>PICMME/ICEM</th>
<th>ILO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tracing missing persons</td>
<td>non-operational agency mandate mainly geared towards the protection of refugees in Europe</td>
<td>operational organization facilitating migration of ‘surplus’ European populations to countries overseas</td>
<td>Advisory Organization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tracing missing persons
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Advisory Organization
After World War II, Europe had to deal with a massive population of displaced persons and refugees. However, the DP problem was part of another perceived challenge, that of “surplus population” in Europe, a central notion in the creation of IOM. It usually referred to persons in Europe who were in excess of the number the European economies could support. The notion was rather vague and not all European countries or sectors of activities were facing this problem. However, intra-European migration was limited and as the next slides show, the problem of surplus population was felt to be critical at least for a few specific countries: a band from The Netherlands to Italy and Greece.
Source:
Parallel to the IRO’s work, an international reflection developed in the immediate post-war years, on how to deal with the surplus population problem after the cessation of IRO’s activities. A number of international conferences and meetings were organized in the late 1940s and in 1950/1951 to discuss this issue, involving many international institutions, particularly the OEEC, ECOSOC and the ILO.

As the quote in the next slide, from a French delegate at the Brussels conference in late 1951, indicate, the results of those talks were far from satisfactory.
French delegate:

“We must admit that results so far have been somewhat disappointing. The multiplicity of efforts has led to nothing but resolutions and partial successes; no one, so far, has migrated except ourselves, from Conference to Conference.”

“The meetings that have moved from Geneva to Paris, Paris to Strasburg, Strasburg to Geneva, Geneva to Naples and Naples to Brussels, are somewhat reminiscent of a team of explorers, not lacking in boldness and really eager to begin their ascent, but who have been circling round and round the mountain without being able to decide on the best way of scaling it and of getting themselves roped together, an indispensable precaution.”

This process culminated at the ILO General Migration Conference (Naples, Oct. 1951). It was a “complete failure”, mainly because the USA, Australia and Canada rejected the plan. They felt ILO was not equipped for such tasks and feared losing control over their migration policy. Potential involvement of communist countries in the plan was also an important issue.

However, the conference had again shown a large agreement over the necessity to devise collective action in this field. In particular, it was considered that vessels and auxiliary services about to be relinquished by the IRO should be preserved in a new framework. There was therefore a certain sense of urgency.

In addition, as shown in the next slide, at about this time the IRO published a report which estimated that some 5 million persons should emigrate in the following ten years from the over-populated European countries.
Source:
IRO, Migration from Europe...a Report of Experience, Geneva, 1951.
Therefore, after Naples everyone was expecting the US to take the initiative and launch a new process. The international community did not have to wait for long. The US State Department suggested to the government of Belgium to convene an international conference, which was held in Brussels from 26 Nov. to 5 Dec. 1951.

At Brussels, the US presented a “Plan to Facilitate the Movement of Surplus Populations from Countries of Western Europe and Greece to Countries Affording Resettlement Opportunities Overseas” (largely based on an IRO scheme) and a “Resolution to Establish a Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe”, adopted with some amendments at the end of the Conference.

The next slide reflects the governments represented at the Brussels conference.
Delegates gather in Brussels for the International Conference of Migration, during which PICMME is founded. Credit: © IOM 1951 - HBE0001
Brussels ‘Migration Conference’
(26 Nov.-5 Dec. 1951)

- Governments represented: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Israel, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Venezuela.

The next slide shows the 16 Original PICMME Member States.

Three types of states became members: emigration, immigration, and sympathizing countries. The latter category was best represented by the US, which was chiefly concerned to provide aid for the movement of migrants between other countries.

Membership was open to “democratic governments with a demonstrated interest in the principle of the free movement of persons” (thus excluding Communist countries) and which undertook to make a financial contribution to the Committee.
PICMME: Original 16 Member States (Dec. 1951)

Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Federal Rep. of Germany, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland, Turkey, USA.
The Committee was to provide and arrange for transportation of migrants and refugees from certain European countries to countries overseas. Each country retained control of standards of admission and of the number of immigrants to be admitted.

A specific notion of “Migration and Development” was at the heart of the creation of IOM, since the Resolution explicitly pointed out “that a close relationship exists between economic development and immigration”. Linked to the issue of “surplus population”, the goal was to facilitate European recovery by acting as a “safety valve” and also to stimulate the creation of new economic opportunities in countries lacking manpower.

In addition, refugees were explicitly included in the mandate of the Committee. However, there was no clear definition of the term ‘refugee’ which was considered as a good practical thing by many representatives, such as the Swiss delegate:
Swiss delegate:

“When we consider the present Plan we find that a much more liberal definition of the term has been accepted and that refugees may now be persons residing in their country of origin. For this reason it is almost impossible to dissociate the refugee problem from that of surplus population; and this is why we have here today a number of persons who have been concerned mostly with the refugee question, collaborating with others who are more experienced in manpower problems.”

The approach of the Committee was to be cost effective, key words being: ‘small’, ‘flexible’, ‘economical’ and ‘efficient’. It was to be involved only in implementing the movement of migrants who would be unable to move under existing arrangements for migration.

The Committee’s income would consist of government member contributions to the administrative costs, government member contributions to an Operating Fund and reimbursements for services rendered.

On this basis the Committee started its activities on 1st February 1952. Ambassador Hugh Gibson (US) was elected Director in June 1952, and Pierre Jacobsen (France), a former Assistant Director General of IRO, was appointed as Deputy Director (see next slide). The ICEM Constitution was adopted on 19 Oct. 1953 and entered into force a year later, on 30 Nov. 1954.
Hugh Gibson (left), Pierre Jacobsen (right); first Director and Deputy Director of ICEM
Interestingly, one of the first actions of the Committee was to set up, in early 1952, a joint UNHCR/PICMME office in Hong Kong tasked to arrange overseas resettlement for refugees of European origins (mostly former White Russians and Jews) able to leave China. UNHCR and ICEM had inherited this issue from the IRO and the joint office was run until 1973. The next slides illustrate this operation as well as some of the other early actions undertaken by ICEM such as the movement of migrants from Southern Europe to Latin America and Australia.
A group of White Russian, handicapped refugees arrive in Switzerland to start a new life. Credit: © Unknown 1963 - HCH0107
Departure from Spain of the Alcantara to South America, 1953. Credit: © IOM 1953 - HES0011
This presentation focused solely on the creation of the Committee and not on assessing its actions but one can provide a few indicative figures on the scale of the activities undertaken early on by ICEM.

In all, 313,000 persons were moved by ICEM to Australia between February 1, 1952 and December 1960, of whom 81,000 were refugees. “This total is more than one-quarter of the more than a million immigrants received by Australia since the end of WW2.” In 1956, for example, “approximately 40 percent of all overseas migration from the member countries of ICEM on continental Europe ... was assisted by ICEM.” (Holborn 1961, p.8-9)

The next slide provides further figures.
### People Resettled by ICEM from February 1952 - December 1960

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries of Emigration</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Migrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>132,000</td>
<td>22,000</td>
<td>154,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Republic of Germany</td>
<td>130,000</td>
<td>92,000</td>
<td>222,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>59,000</td>
<td>69,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>16,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>44,000</td>
<td>248,000</td>
<td>292,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>89,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>45,000</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>131,000</td>
<td>41,000</td>
<td>172,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

463,000  

### Countries of Immigration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Countries of Immigration</th>
<th>Refugees</th>
<th>Migrants</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>104,000</td>
<td>107,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>81,000</td>
<td>232,000</td>
<td>313,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>74,000</td>
<td>89,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>80,000</td>
<td>157,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>67,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>68,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union of South Africa</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>167,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>185,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others—Overseas</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>4,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others—Europe</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

463,000  

*This figure, 463,000, includes 345,000 refugees within the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.*

Source: 
Thank You!

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http://graduateinstitute.ch/globalmigration