The Refugee Camp in Tubabao:
The First Philippine Experience
in International Humanitarian Assistance

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Introduction

The turn of the present century brings few changes in the lives of people who suffer from the consequences of internal and external military and civil conflicts. As it has been for the last hundred years, the year 2000 continues to be haunted by mothers losing their children, children becoming orphans because their parents had been killed, or displaced persons being forced to leave their homeland. Despite a more prosperous world compared to that a century ago, there are still millions of refugees looking for a place where they can be resettled and resume a semblance of a normal life. Faced with the challenge to respond to the refugee crisis, the

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international community could learn from past experiences in helping create better living conditions for refugees. This paper presents the experience of the then new Philippine republic in international humanitarian assistance. The paper revisits the International Refugee Organization (IRO) camp located in Tubabao Island in the Visayas, which served as a refugee asylum for 5,500 people in the period from 1949 to 1953. Most of the data were derived from primary sources, which include diaries of former refugees and their memoirs; official documents and correspondence of the IRO, the Philippine government, the Russian Emigrants' Association, and the US government; periodicals printed in the camp and in the Philippines at the time of the camp's existence; and materials (including photographs) from the archives of the Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco, the Hoover Institution of War, Revolution and Peace Archives, Stanford University, and the National Library of the Philippines. I also conducted interviews with former refugees in the United States. During my field trip to the Philippines, I also talked with Tubabao residents who knew the refugees (Appendix 1).

To be historically correct, the Tubabao experience was not the first time that the Philippines had served as a refuge for displaced persons. In 1922, the Siberian Flotilla was forced to flee Vladivostok in order to escape possible capture by the Red Army. The fleet, consisting of eleven battle ships and approximately 800 refugees (including families with children) arrived in the Philippines in January of 1923 and was stationed at Mariveles and later at Olongapo. About 250 men later moved to Mindanao to look for work on abaca plantations. In May 1923, 536 people were transferred to the United States. The rest of the crew later immigrated to other countries, but some stayed in the Philippines; married local women, and settled down permanently. In these two instances, the majority of the refugees were so-called "White Russians."* In the more recent past, in the 1980s, the Philippines hosted a processing center for refugees from Vietnam. The refugee processing center in Bataan was administered by the government of the Philippines under a contract to the UNHCR (U.S. Congress, Senate, 1985:3). The center was used as a transit point for refugees while their status and final destination were sorted out, and later as a place where basic English and cultural programs were provided to "the refugees already processed.
for third country resettlement who were waiting for their number to come up” (U.S. Congress, Senate, 1985:35).

**Historical Background of the White Russian Immigration**

The Russian Socialist Revolution of 1917 was the first ideological conflict that generated a huge number of refugees in the 20th century. When the ideological confrontation evolved into a civil war, Russian society was subdivided into “Red” and “White.” According to rough estimates, more than a million and a half people left Russia between 1917-1922 (Holborn, 1956:3). They elected to flee the country, hoping to return home someday and destroy the communist regime. The issue of the White Russian refugees, particularly this case, was used by the Soviet Union as well as by the democratic world in their ideological rivalry. To the Soviet Union, the White Russian refugees were “the enemies of the state” while Western countries saw them as victims of “the evil empire.”

The major destinations for these refugees, who were later referred to as “Nansen refugees,” were Europe and the Far East (China in particular). The territory surrounding the Chinese Eastern Railway (KVzhd), with its center in Harbin, attracted thousands of Russians escaping from the Bolshevik regime. It offered them a place to live and work. Immigration from Russia to China reached its peak at the beginning of the 1920s, and was estimated at 250,000 people (Chernolutskaja, 1994:5). By 1937, 94,000 White Russians or Nansen refugees still remained in the Far East (Holborn, 1956:172). However, fear of forceful repatriation to the Soviet Union after the establishment of the communist regime in China, particularly on the eve of the Maoist revolutionary army’s takeover of Shanghai, prompted thousands of White Russians to seek the help of countries in the free world and international organizations. At the end of 1948, the Russian Emigrants’ Association, an organization that was in charge of registration and evacuation of White Russians, received welcome news from the IRO headquarters in Geneva that its members would be temporarily moved to the Philippines. By the end of 1948, an estimated 6,000 Russians were within the IRO mandate (Vernant, 1953:771). Created in 1947, the IRO was responsible for the repatriation,
assistance, protection and re-settlement or reestablishment of refugees and displaced persons covered by its mandate (Vernant, 1953:33).

From China to the Philippines

The IRO presented the Russian refugees' request to its members, and the newly independent Philippines readily responded to grant the refugees temporary asylum. The Philippines' offer is not surprising in light of its participation in the creation of the post-World War II new world order. Even before the Philippines gained its independence, "the Commonwealth formally adhered, on June 10, 1942 to the Declaration by the United Nations" (Meyer, 1965:24). The Filipino delegation, headed by Carlos Romulo, represented the Commonwealth at the UN Conference on International Organizations in 1945 in San Francisco. The delegation submitted 21 amendments concerning three major areas (cultural affairs, security matters and colonial people) (Meyer, 1965: 24). The Philippines was very active in helping draft the articles in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (Meyer, 1965: 116). In 1949, Romulo was elected as the first Asian to preside over the fourth session of the General Assembly (Meyer, 1965:120).

In December, 1948, "the Cabinet acceded to a request by the IRO for temporary accommodation in the Philippines for up to 8,000 refugees, mainly from China but of non-Chinese nationalities" (Meyer, 1965:124). In accordance with the Cabinet resolution, the Philippine Government agreed to provide temporary asylum on the following conditions:

1. Guiuan, Samar designated as evacuation areas the Island of Tubabao as Site No.1, the area near the airport as Site No.2, and Manicani Island as Site No.3.

2. IRO shall bear the expenses of transporting the refugees from China to Guiuan, their subsistence while they are in the Philippines, and costs for putting up housing installations and other incidental expenses connected with maintaining the evacuation centers.
3. The number of refugees shall not exceed 6,000 at any one time and this number shall be dependent on housing facilities and accommodations, which may be rendered available.

4. IRO shall be responsible for transporting displaced persons to permanent sites of resettlement within a period of four months after arrival in Guiuan.

5. Admission shall be subject to existing rules and regulations governing the entry of aliens to the Philippines (Clarke (Attachment, n.d.).

At its meeting held on 26 January 1949, the Executive Committee of the IRO "having received the report of the Director-General that the Government of the Philippine Republic has offered to the Organization a temporary asylum under appropriate conditions for refugees now leaving Chinese territory" expressed to the Philippine Government "its highest appreciation of the humanity and generosity of this grant of refuge" (IRO Resolution, 1949a, quoted in Holborn, 1956:751). IRO authorized "the immediate evacuation of the eligible European refugees now in China whose lives or well-being may be in serious danger, subject to a careful control of their eligibility and assessment of the degree of their danger" (IRO Resolution, 1949b, quoted in Holborn, 1956:751). The Executive Committee of the IRO resolved "that this evacuation be carried out in the following manner: temporary reception under the conditions of asylum offered on the territory of the Republic of the Philippines, pending re-establishment elsewhere" (IRO Resolution, 1949b, quoted in Holborn, 1956:752).

The evacuation of the refugees from Shanghai started on January 13, 1949 (Holborn, 1956:769), and the last refugees reached the Philippines in May. The major means of transportation were ships, though some 1,500 people were transferred by plane. The first point of entry for the refugees was Manila, where they were screened by customs and security services. The first group of Russian refugees, consisting of 47 men, arrived at the Camp on January 19, 1949.11 This so-called working group was supposed to build the camp and prepare it for the arrival of the remaining refugees. Upon their arrival, the group found only "a few Quonset huts, a walk-in refrigerator and a large
merchandised laundry [...] none [were] in working condition" (Sokoloff, 1999:40). By the time the first ship arrived, they had managed to build a few toilets and kitchen facilities, and were able to provide tired passengers with some hot food (Miram, 1999:13). This group worked day and night, and despite lacking the necessary tools, partly cleared the jungle-covered slopes and erected dozens of tents on muddy soil. However, with hundreds more arriving, the only way that new refugees could spend a night under a "roof" was to put up the tents for themselves. In the words of a former refugee Oleg Miram, "after a few days, the camp looked like a 'shanty-town' with different size tents, some for two or four and for twenty persons, placed anywhere, and anyhow" (Miram, 1999:14).

The Tubabao Camp

In 1949, the Philippines was rebuilding its economy after the destruction caused by World War II. Faced with the Hukbalahap insurgency, the Philippine government was worried about the possibility of Communist activity in the camp, i.e., in spite of the screening process in Shanghai. This concern, which turned out to be unfounded, figured in the selection of the camp's location. The Philippine government considered two major issues: that it would be isolated from the local people and it could control the movement of the refugees. An uninhabited part of Tubabao Island in the Visayas was chosen as the site for the camp (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). The camp's official name was "United Nations Evacuation Center, Guiuan, Samar."14

During World War II "the town of Guiuan was made into a huge arsenal by the U.S. Navy, planning to make it a staging area for the assault on Japan" (Hendry, 1959:188). According to the Historical Data Collection, since the Spanish regime, "the hills of Camparang were populated with farmers, building their homes in their own lots, so that neighborhoods were far apart" (Samar, 1952-1953:102). In 1945 "the U.S. Navy destroyed their dilapidated homes. People moved their new homes to Camparang proper and in their places Navy camps were built" (Samar, 1952-1953:102). In 1947, Americans left Guiuan and its vicinity. Right after that, the Surplus
Figure 5.1 Map of Leyte-Samar Region

Figure 5.2 Map of Guiuan Area, Manicani, Tubabao and Inatunglan Islands
Property Commission (SPC) was set up “to dispose of all the properties left by the Americans” (Samar, 1952-1953:7). After the SPC abandoned its office on Tubabao, it was converted to become the camp for the Russian Refugees (Samar, 1952-1953: 102). In 1949, some army buildings still remained in the area and were used for the churches and headquarters of the IRO in the camp. The camp was not really equipped to host thousands of people. Basic infrastructure such as roads, electricity and drinking water were not readily available. Caught up as it were in rebuilding its economy, the Philippine government did not have resources to provide for these necessities.

Showing its hospitality, the Philippine Government sent Malacañang Technical Assistant Alfredo Eugenio as its representative in setting up the camp to supervise the arrival of the refugee. Jim Fennel, the first IRO camp director, arrived on Tubabao a week after the Hwa Lien, first ship arrived (Miram, 1999:14). In total, more than 5,500 people were evacuated to Tubabao. Russians were the majority of the population. Others interned on Tubabao included Austrians, Armenians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Estonians, Hungarians, Lithuanians, Latvians, Germans, Poles, Romanians, Syrians, Tatars, Ukrainians, Yugoslavs, British, Italians, French, Jews (Moravsky, 1997:280). They were divided into 12 groups.

**Peacekeeping and Organization of the Camp**

To maintain law and order, the Philippine authorities asked the IRO to help find volunteers from each national group residing in the camp. This job was considered a very important one and it led to the creation of the so-called Philippine Office, the main goal of which was the development and improvement of a strong relationship between the camp residents and the Philippine Republic (Stoopina, 1994:52).

The camp consisted of 16 districts, and generally each district was composed of a few hundred refugees. Democratically elected district chiefs were responsible to the IRO authorities for the running of the camp. A former refugee remembers that, “all men in the camp have to perform monthly duties,” women who didn’t have small
children or weren’t old or sick worked in the community kitchens, in the IRO offices or in the hospital" (Morozova, 1953:56). Gradually, the refugees, with the help of Filipinos, built roads, put up a power station, and found sources of drinking water (Balakshin, 1958:319).

In order to preserve their “normal” way of life, a Russian Orthodox cathedral and two churches, as well as a Catholic Church, assembly tents for Pentecostals and the Baptists, and an Islamic mosque were set up in the camp shortly after the refugees’ arrival. In April of 1949 Archbishop John of Shanghai arrived at the camp and spent three months there serving in the Russian Orthodox cathedral. Many parishioners considered him a “holy figure” and even Filipinos believed that while he was in the camp, typhoons would bypass the island (Skopichenko, 1993:257).

In charge of the camp’s security was the National Intelligence Coordinating Agency, which was affiliated with the Office of the President, Republic of the Philippines with its headquarters in Manila. Colonel A. Gabriel coordinated the agency’s activities from the capital. At the camp, local power was in the hands of Captain Jose M. Tinio (Stoopina, 1994:51), who was in charge of the so-called Security Office (the official name was “The Republic of the Philippines, Office of the Security Control Section”, Tubabao, Guiuan, Samar).

The Security Office dealt with different kinds of problems, in particular, keeping law and order in the camp. The Philippine authorities didn’t use a fence around the camp (Morozova, 1953: 288), trusting its inhabitants to be law-abiding people. However, there were two security posts [“Filipino Constabulary Guard House”]: one on the main road leading to the town of Guiuan, and the other was close to the beach. Refugees were not allowed to leave the camp without the permission of the Philippine authorities (except for visits to the nearby beach); however, requests for town-visits were always granted.

The refugees organized their own police force, consisting of ex-military and ex-policemen, who worked closely with the Filipino Security Office. In the words of a former refugee, their duties were to “keep peace and resolve petty squabbles” (K. Tatarinoff, 1999:30).
Figure 5.3 One of the camp's districts.*

Figure 5.4 Russian Orthodox Cathedral in the camp.

*[All photographs in this article are courtesy of The Museum of Russian Culture in San Francisco. These photographs may not be reproduced without written permission from the Museum.]*
Besides that, an arbitration court, consisting of refugees with legal experience, investigated disputes arising in the camp. However, "some [of the] more serious offences were sometimes referred to authorities in Cebu" (K. Tatarinoff, 1999:30).

The Philippine Government considered the camp its special responsibility and was ready to do everything possible to maintain peaceful order and proper conduct. According to Tamara Stoopina, a refugee and who worked as a secretary at the Security Office, "they always understood the needs of the refugees" (Interview with T. Stoopina, 1999). She stressed that, "in implementing surveillance of the refugees, they were correct and helpful" (Stoopina, 1994:51-52).

The Philippine government was committed to facilitate the resettlement process. In September of 1949 officials of the Security Office assisted the Chairman of the Russian Emigrants' Association, G. K. Bologoff, in organizing his trip to Manila. The major purpose of his trip was to visit embassies of Western and South American countries in order to promote the resettlement of the refugees. In his letter to Colonel Gabriel he wrote: "Brilliant officers and very kind men - both Captain Tinio and Captain Belisario greatly contributed to the success of my errand - trip to Manila and to our general cause, both in Manila and here, and I would appreciate it very much if you would kindly convey to them my sincerest thanks for what they have done for us" (Bologoff to Gabriel, 1949).

In September 1949, the refugees found out that the head of the Liberal Party, President Quirino, would visit Guiuan and was planning to stop at the camp sometime in October. On October 28, 1949, the President and his daughter Vicky visited the camp. Residents of the camp gathered in the market place wearing their best clothes. An eyewitness to the event described that episode as follows: "The Chairman of the Emigrants' Association [Bologoff] was waited for the President at the entrance to the Security Office under the flag of the Philippine Republic... At about 11 o'clock the president's procession arrived, which included a few security cars, a car with his aides and some women [among whom was his daughter Vicky]. [That day the President arrived in Samar by airplane and should have visited Guiuan first]. Stepping out of his car, Quirino went directly toward Bologoff and greeted him with a handshake... Bologoff
delivered a short speech and presented the President with a written copy of the address... [It was decorated by Russian artists living in the camp, and signed by all the camp residents.23] According to Russian tradition, he also was given bread with salt on a beautiful plate that was made in the camp” (Morozova, 1953:182).24

The address expressed the feelings of the refugees (Address, 1949):

We, the refugees of the United Nations Evacuation Center on Tubabao Island in the Province of Samar, are expressing herewith to Your Excellency, your Government and the entire Philippine Nation our sincerest gratitude for the cordial hospitality and brotherly treatment accorded to those who were, by force of political circumstances, deprived of the privilege of having a country of their own.

The unforgettable legend of your noble and generous act in saving five thousand five hundred human beings from the claws of the Red Beast, by offering them a haven at the most critical moment of their lives, will live in our hearts for ever and ever. [sic]

President Quirino thanked them for the presents and warm reception, and conveyed his sympathetic attitude toward them. He said that he considered it to be his primary duty to be hospitable toward political immigrants and would do all in his power to facilitate their quick resettlement. He said: “I am not in a hurry to turn you out as long as you conduct yourselves in conformity with our laws and you do not cause trouble in the country.” The president was given three vigorous cheers by the refugee community when he declared in closing: “Even as you go out to countries of your choice and where you belong, you will not forget the Philippines, and that there is one ruler among us - and that is God” (Sunday Times, 1949). After he finished his speech he shook Bologoff’s hand and left.

That visit had a very positive effect on the residents of the camp: knowing that the President of the Philippine Republic cared about them gave them the feeling that they were not forgotten. Former refugee Olga Morozova wrote in her diary: “While the audience was departing,
they were sharing impressions and were proud to realize that the President himself, the first person in the country, had visited us. We, who were living in the mud, slaves without rights” (Morozova, 1953:182).25

Grateful to the Philippine government for giving them temporary asylum on its territory, the refugees sent telegrams congratulating the President of the Philippines on Independence Day and Christmas. For example the following radiogram was sent on 3 July 1950:

His Excellency Honorable Elpidio Quirino
President of the Philippines
Manila
Your Excellency
On the occasion of the independence day we pray for prosperity and peace of the Philippines and hope that god will grant your excellency strength for many years to come for the good of your country stop Long live Republic of the Philippines [sic]
Bologoff
The refugees received the following reply (Bologoff to Obana, 1950):

Malacanan Palace
Manila
July 5, 1950.

Dear Mr. Bologoff,

The President is most deeply appreciative of your message on Independence Day and desires me to convey to you and your community his gratification for your generous good wishes. [sic]

Sincerely yours,
Federico Mangahas
Private Secretary to the President

Daily Life in the Camp

In order to improve the food rations of the refugees, many of whom were children and the elderly, the Philippine authorities permitted the local people to set up a market where they could sell products that were much needed in the camp. According to the memoirs of a former refugee: “Philippine shopkeepers...opened many stalls along the main road from the jetty. The shops were simple nipa huts built in a few hours. They sold everything from fresh fish to fanciful dresses and simple kitchen equipment. A few of them had kitchens where one could eat and have a drink of San Miguel. They formed a continuous row, brightly illuminated with portable kerosene lamps at night” (Sokoloff, 1999:41).

The arrangement was helpful for the refugees who did not have much choice in their daily food rations. One of the two restaurants, “Ugolok,” though owned by Filipinos, served Russian food, prepared by Russian cooks, such as pelmeni, shalshlik, and borsht. The local population, especially the ones who lived in Tubabao, established friendly relations with the residents of the camp. Farmers and their children brought local fruits: coconuts, mangoes, and bananas to be
exchanged for bread, which was baked in the camp (Odron, 2000). Refugees also bought flowers from the locals, and boys selling *The Manila Times* were frequent visitors at the camp.

On some occasions, Russians were invited to the homes of Filipinos. For example, one of the refugees attended a baptism in a barrio in Tubabao (Interview with I. Petrov, 2000). Some Russian musicians and singers were guests of honor at the home of the Buena family of Guiuan, the owners of the restaurant “Ugolok” which catered to refugees (Interview with A. Buena, 2000). A former refugee has this recollection of Tubabao: “A few little beaches of white coral sand nestled in the dense mangroves. Near them the natives lived in nipa huts on stilts. They fished in outriggers and sailboats called “banka”, planted some taros, harvested coconuts and bananas, kept pigs, chickens and enjoyed a simple but pleasant life, enhanced by music, church services and religious processions” (Sokoloff, 1999:32).

People from the camp made trips to the town of Guiuan in order to visit their relatives and friends in Dr. Montero’s hospital, get money transfers, and buy some medicine. One of the refugees (writer-Olga Morozova) gives the following account in her diary of her first visit there: “I went to the town. It looks like a village. In
the center of the town is a small square, on one of its sides stands the old Catholic Cathedral that people say was built by the Spaniards about 400 years ago, and on the other side is a school. On the third - some shops that look Chinese, on the fourth - first, some small grocery stores and after them some fabric shops, haberdasheries, green grocers where one can see a little bit of the blue eggplants, two or three pumpkins, mangos and plenty of bottles filled with tuba. At the end is the white post office building..." (Morozova, 1953:122).

In order to cheer up the spirits of the refugees during the Christmas holidays of 1949, the camp welcomed young Filipino girls in masquerade costumes and invited some musicians on two occasions (Morozova, 1953:208).

The camp had a lively cultural life. There was an improvised open air movie theater where the audience had to bring their own seats. On some nights the same square was used for dance parties. The refugees also had poetry readings, lectures and performances by acrobats and dancers (Kounitsky, 1999:22). The amateur theater company was organized through the efforts of the actor N. S. Slaviansky (Isaenko, n.d.:15). The company performed more than 50 plays at the camp. One of the districts in the camp was called "Musical," as most of its inhabitants were musicians who had played in the P.F. Tebnev orchestra. They performed not only for their fellow refugees, but also for the local community - in one occasion it played for 250 Filipino pupils (Morozova, 1953:178). The orchestra also performed in a small town - Mercedes - in front of a big local audience that included Mayor Lagos. The money they received was donated to the Filipino Red Cross (Tubabao znaet, 1949b:4). These performances were very popular among Filipinos who remembered the Russians as great musicians and singers (Interview with H. and B. Guaban, 2000). One of the refugees, a gifted pianist who graduated from the Moscow Conservatory of Music, P.V. Karamzina, gave private piano lessons to Filipino children (Interview with A. Karamzin, 1999). During the Easter of 1949, the President's representative in charge of Guiuan, Alfredo Eugenio, the Mayor of Guiuan Mr. Lacoste, and the Mayor of Tubabao Mr. Kabonse visited the celebrations in the camp (Tubabao znaet, 1949a:1).
Among the refugees in the camp, a large portion consisted of children and teenagers. To provide them with extracurricular activities, Russian enthusiasts headed by Mr. Kniazeff organized the Tubabao Camp Scouts towards the end of January, 1949. Some 450 people, youngsters and scoutmasters, joined the organization (Kniazeff, 1959:4). According to Moravsky's account (1998:165): “The 4th District in the camp was called “Scouts,” because the majority of the population consisted of families with scouts. Shortly after the creation of the “Scout District,” a special stage and playground were set up to be used for scout activities.”

The first scouts’ assembly was held on 20 February 1949 (Moravsky, 1998:165). The Tubabao Camp Scouts established good and friendly relations with their Filipino counterparts. They met on June 26, 1949 when “a group of Filipino Scouts from Samar presided by scout masters Elias Bolima and Ignasio Monasterio arrived at the camp” (Tubabao znaet, 1949c:5-6). In the morning, the scouts got acquainted with each other, and after lunch they went to the sports field to participate in competitions; in the evening, the scouts presented their performances by the campfire.

On 4 July 1949 - the Independence Day of the Philippines - a big parade was organized in Guiuan. That day, the camp scouts

Figure 5.7 Tubabao Scouts
and Tebnev orchestra visited the town and took part in the celebration (Tubabao znaet, 1949c: 1). On 18-19 March 1950, the camp scouts participated in the last scout meeting in Guiuan and won sports competitions and gave wonderful performances.

**Resettlement and the End of the Camp**

Originally, the Philippine government agreed to host the refugee camp for four months, during which time, all refugees should have been resettled to other countries. The camp was visited by delegations of different countries interested in resettling the refugees: Australia, France, and the U.S. (Senator William Knowland made a trip to the camp). On one occasion President Quirino summoned G. Bogoloff to Manila to confirm reports that the majority of the DPs were already resettled in other countries. After the talk with Bogoloff, President Quirino sent a telegram to Washington insisting on the acceptance of a few thousand refugees still living in the camp. There had been some delay in the resettlement due to various reasons—illnesses, old age or mismatch in the occupations preferred by countries of settlement. Thus, the agreement with the Philippine government was extended a few times. The last refugee did not leave the Philippines until the Spring of 1953.

The first extension occurred in June 1949 when the Philippines agreed to host the camp for four more months until 1 October 1949. The IRO should have resettled 1,200 people every month under that new agreement (Morozova, 1953:127). At its meeting on 12 October 1949, the IRO Executive Committee resolved:

1. to express its highest appreciation to the Philippine Government for the generous assistance already accorded to refugees in the gravest need, and to appeal to that Government, in the name of the Organization, to extend the period of the hospitality offered them; and

2. to instruct the Director-General to intensify his work with interested Governments in order to develop all possible programmes calculated to speed up the resettlement in countries of permanent reception of the European refugees now maintained on the territory of the Philippines, in full
satisfaction of the assurances given by the Organization to the Philippine government, and to report to the Executive committee at its Seventh Session on the results achieved (IRO Resolution, 1949c, quoted in Holborn, 1956:753).

In September 1949, a new Filipino doctor arrived at the camp. Dr. Altamirano was a TB specialist whose expertise hastened the screening process, a prerequisite for resettlement. He won the respect of the refugees. When he left his post in December, the refugees tendered a farewell party for him (Morozova, 1953:200).

The passing of amendments to the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 on 16 June 1950 (U.S. Statutes, 1952:222), facilitated and quickened the resettlement of the refugees. It allocated 4,000 additional U.S. visas for displaced persons or refugees who resided in China on 1 July 1948 and "are still in China or, having left China, have not subsequently been received for permanent residence by any country other than the United States" (U.S. Statutes, 1952:222). It allowed Russian refugees from Tubabao to immigrate to the U.S. without waiting for years for their numbers under Chinese or Russian quotas to come. This amendment was made possible by the joint efforts of California Senator William Knowland and the Russian community in the U.S., including Archbishop John of Shanghai, who testified before the Subcommittee on Amendments to the Displaced Persons Act of the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate (See U.S. Congress, Senate, 1950:379-408).

By April, 1951, only two districts remained in the camp with a population of 950 people (Russkaia Zhizn', 1951). In November 1951, around 210 refugees lived in the camp, and of these 73 people - mostly TB patients - were transferred to sanatoriums in France at the end of the month (Russkaia Zhizn', 1952a).

On 9 December 1951, a typhoon struck the camp. Two refugees and three Filipinos were killed, and almost everybody else was injured. All tents and buildings were completely destroyed. In Guiuan, 80 percent of the buildings were destroyed. The roof of the old cathedral was blown out to sea, its walls were covered with cracks. The bridge between Tubabao and Samar was destroyed. Of the almost 130 refugees remaining at that time, about 50 were
transferred to Manila to process their papers for further resettlement, and the 22 who were injured were moved to hospitals in Tacloban, Leyte (Russkaia Mysl', n.d.).

After an appeal to the president of the Philippines by the remaining refugees, which was supported by the representative of the Catholic Church in Guiuan, they were transferred on 25 December 1951 to Tacloban. Very quickly the remaining refugees earned the respect of the local population. However, on 19 January 1952, they found out from newspaper reports that the government had decided to move them back. Terrified of such a prospect, a representative of the refugees, Father David, met with the governor of the province and presented him with two petitions for the president. The governor, who had often helped the refugees, promised to organize a meeting with the president. On 22 January 1952, Father David spoke with the president who was visiting Tacloban. The local population, including administrative and social organizations, supported the refugees' pleas (Kratkaia svodka, n.d.). Thus, they were allowed to remain in Tacloban for a while. However, in September 1952, the IRO authorities of the camp received an order from the Philippine government that the remaining White Russian refugees should be transferred from Tacloban to Guiuan where a refugee village was reconstructed.

On 26 September 1952, the 38 remaining refugees [13 refugees were in hospitals in Manila and 6-7 in Tacloban - a total of 54 DPs (Bel'chenko, 1952)] were transferred to the newly built Pacific Beach Camp in Sapao near Guiuan. On 26 October, the new camp, consisting of seven tents, was completely destroyed by typhoon Wilma (Rule, 1953:2). No one was hurt. The refugees escaped to Guiuan, and the majority stayed at the Roman Catholic rectory and remained there until the camp was rebuilt. For about a month or more the IRO was “occupied ... in building the wood and nipa huts ..., and every male refugee who was willing to work was employed helping” (Rule, 1953:2). These houses were cooler inside, stronger than the tents and withstood storms and typhoons. One by one, the remaining refugees acquired visas to resettle in Belgium, France (mostly people afflicted with TB and other illnesses) and Brazil. By the Spring of 1953 the last of the White Russian refugees had left the camp.
Conclusion

Most of the refugees had immigrated to the U.S. (over 3,000), Australia (around 1,500), Surinam, Dominican Republic, Argentine, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and France. Fifty years later, former refugees still remember their odyssey. Though they now live in different countries, they remain grateful to the Philippine government for giving them the opportunity to escape the horrors of forced repatriation to the USSR, a first step in beginning their new lives in democratic countries. The life of the refugees in the camp was difficult: they had to deal with an uncertain situation and an unpredictable future, they were separated from their families, they had to adjust to an unusually hot, tropical climate, and the conditions in the camp were far from favorable. Nevertheless, as one of the refugees who spent two years in the camp - Tamara Stoopina said: "...we remember only purple sunsets and moonlit evenings where you could almost reach the beautiful moon with your hand" (Stoopina, 1994:68). Filipinos living in Tubabao, who were interviewed for this paper, also have vivid memories of the Russian refugees, calling this period "tiempo Russo" (Russian period). They remember how friendly and open the refugees were and their readiness to share what little they had with the needy Filipinos.

The Tubabao experience can be considered a success and several factors contributed to this outcome:

- Commitment on the part of the IRO and the international community to resettle all the refugees, that led to the complete resettlement of the camp population (the majority was resettled within two and a half years).
- A generally cooperative and supportive host country, and, in particular, a friendly attitude by the local population.
- A pro-active Philippine government policy, with its efforts to facilitate resettlement.
- The help of the Russian community in the U.S. in securing affidavits and providing accommodations for arriving refugees, and its efforts in petitioning for and presenting the case of the Tubabao refugees at the Congress hearings.
• An adequate health service to reduce the death rate and to meet the necessary requirements for immigration.

• Efforts on the part of the refugee community in the camp to maintain a "normal way of life" by launching religious, cultural and social activities, scout organizations and a school for children.

• The involvement of the refugee community in the day-to-day functioning of the camp (working groups, monthly duties, construction and maintenance of power station).

• The joint efforts of the refugees, the IRO, and the Philippine security to maintain peace and order in the camp.

Major obstacles for a quicker resettlement were the absence in the beginning of a qualified TB specialist and difficulties in meeting the requirements of some countries of resettlement. The preference of some countries for younger and professional refugees led to a situation where younger refugees were forced to immigrate without their parents. Thus, some families had to be separated for several years.

The study of this historical experience is vital for understanding and finding ways to resettle refugees in similar situations in our contemporary world. In these times of shifting economic and ideological systems, there is a very high potential for generating enormous refugee movements. The lessons from the Tubabao camp experience can be illuminating in our search for lasting solutions to refugee movements.
The creation of a universally accepted definition of the term “refugee” had several stages of development. The first one started in 1921 when, on the appeal of the International Red Cross Committee, the League of Nations appointed Fridtjof Nansen of Norway as “High Commissioner on Behalf of the League in Connection with the Problem of Russian Refugees in Europe” (Marrus, 1985:86-96). According to the arrangements of 12 May 1926, 30 June 1928 and 30 June 1935 the “Nansen refugees” were the White Russians, the Armenians, the Assyrians, Turks and the Saarlanders (Holborn, 1956:172). These refugees were issued “Nansen passports” - “travel and identity documents” - which were recognized by many governments and which facilitated their resettlement. These arrangements along with other documents referred to in Article A (1) of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees determined different categories of refugees according “to their national origin, the territory which they had left and the lack of diplomatic protection by their home country” (UNHCR Handbook, Introduction, 1992). In the post World War II period, efforts towards the creation of a unified definition of this term led to the adoption of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. It states that a refugee is “any person who... owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence ... is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (U. N. Treaty Series, 1954:152). However, this definition had geographical and time limitations (it applied to persons who became refugees “as a result of events occurring before 1 January 1951.”) Following turbulent times in different parts of the world, the 1967 Protocol to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees eliminated the above-mentioned limitations in defining a refugee. The 1951 Convention together with the 1967 Protocol remain the most important documents of the international refugee law. Today, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) assists not only refugees, but also other people of concern, including asylum seekers, returned refugees, and internally
displaced persons or IDPs (i.e., those “who have been forced to flee their homes, but who have not reached a neighboring country and therefore, unlike refugees, are not protected by international law”). IDPs “are now the second largest group of concern to UNHCR” (UNHCR, 2000:3).

According to UNHCR estimates there are about 22.3 million persons “of concern to UNHCR,” including refugees (about 11.7 million people), asylum seekers, returned refugees, IDPs and others of concern. The estimated number of persons of concern who fall under the mandate of UNHCR are as follows: 6.3 million in Africa; 7.3 million in Asia; 7.3 million in Europe; 90,000 in Latin America and Caribbean; 1.2 million in North America; and 80,000 in Oceania (1999 Statistical Overview, 2000, Table I.1).

The exact figure of evacuees is unknown. According to Holborn (1956: 490), “IRO evacuated 5,500... White Russians to Samar in the Philippines.”

The term “White Russians” does not bear any racial connotations. It refers to those who were opposed to the Socialist Revolution of 1917, in contrast with the “Reds” who supported it.

A “Nansen refugee” is “any person of Russian origin who does not enjoy or who no longer enjoys the protection of the Government of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics and who has not acquired another nationality” (Arrangements of May 12, 1926, quoted in Vernant, 1953:54).

Big White Russian communities also existed in Shanghai, with smaller colonies in Peking, Tientsin, Tsingtao, the province of Sinkiang and the region of the Three Rivers and Seven Rivers in the North (See Tatarinoff, K. and P., 1999:1).

The majority of Russian refugees lived in China; smaller communities lived in Japan and Korea.

At that time approximately 9,000 White Russian refugees remained in China; the rest either accepted Soviet citizenship and were repatriated to the USSR or immigrated to third countries.

It was closed down in 1952 (Holborn, 1956:774).

The original wording has been edited.
The next day, January 20, a group of 48 people - including women and children - arrived by plane (Austria, 1949:4).

"They were a pile of old wartime tents ... all of different sizes, some with holes and some without ropes and pegs" (Miram, 1999:13).

K-rations, tents, cots, bed sheets, mosquito nest, and kitchen utensils were supplied by the U. S. Army (Austria, 1949:4).

The camp was situated on Tubabao island, but its official address was “Guiuan, Samar” as barrio Tubabao was under the jurisdiction of the municipality of Guiuan and the post office was situated in Guiuan. At that time, the islands were linked by the pantone bridge.

At that time there was only one barrio on the island - Tubabao; its popular name was Camparang (Samar, 1952-1953:102).

In order to avoid profiteering, the government monitored the local contractors who supplied local foodstuffs; they were paid by the IRO (Austria, 1949:4).

As of 8 May 1949, there were 4,300 Russian refugees in the camp (Tubabao znaet, 1949b).

“...motor pool, electrical and plumbing work, supply offices, garbage disposal, showers, and ...digging pits for toilets” (L.I., 1999: 35).

According to the information in the Manila Times, “Philippine Army guards under Capt. Salvador and the Security Guards of the Surplus Property Commission in Guiuan under Capt. Arboleda were cooperating in securing the compound” (Austria, 1949:4).

Translation by the author.

Vicky was acting as the President’s First Lady as his wife was killed in 1945 (Espinosa-Robles, 1990: 49, 90).

See Minutes of the meeting, 1949.

Translation by the author.

Translation by the author.

Translation by the author.

The Scout Movement had been very popular among Russians living in China (Moravksy, 1998:165).
28 Part of the scouts' equipment and clothes were received from the Filipino scout organization (Moravsky, 1998:167).

29 Many counties (Australia, Paraguay, Dominican Republic, Surinam) that were considering to accept the refugees for resettlement were primarily interested in farmers and laborers. However, only fifteen percent of the refugees in Tubabao belonged to this most favored category. Eighty-five percent of the refugees, including university graduates, white-collar workers, and retirees, encountered difficulties in finding a place for permanent residence.

30 Russians born in China were placed by the US government under the Chinese quota.

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APPENDIX 1
List of Interviewees

Buena, Arturo B. Presently Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines. His family owned a restaurant that catered to refugees where he worked while on vacation in town. Interviewed in Manila, 13 July 2000.

Guaban, Henry and Bibiana. Judge H. Guaban and his wife were teenagers during the camp’s existence and had friends among the refugees. Interviewed in Guiuan, Samar, 15 July 2000.


Odroń, Porfirio. Lives in Tubabao, his family owns part of the territory that was used for the camp. He was a teenager during the camp’s existence. Interviewed in Tubabao, Samar, 16 July 2000.


Stoopina, Tamara. Former refugee. She was a secretary at the Security office. Interviewed in San Francisco, 16 December 1999.