

NOTES

VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT HUMPHREY

U.S. COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES

WASHINGTON, D.C.

MAY 17, 1966

We are here today to talk of people . . . many of whom are violently sundered from their families . . . many of whom are maimed . . . all of whom are homeless.

The story of the refugee is told in the most disheartening chapters in the chronicle of man -- the chapters of violence and persecution. The refugee is usually the ordinary, the peaceful, the uninvolved in the struggle -- the seldom wrong but often wronged against.

It is to the credit of this nation that we have, time and again, come to the aid of the refugee -- the person without power, the person without wealth.

Since the birth of this Republic, the hearts and hands of Americans have been extended to the homeless, the sick, the weary, the "tired and huddled masses" -- to the people of any land fleeing the ravages of famine, disaster, political oppression and war.

We have offered refuge, we have offered care, and -- what is most important -- we have offered hope for a better life.

And, more than hope, we attempt to offer the means to a better life.

∠ It seems to me that we fail to grasp the full dimensions of the plight of refugees and of our efforts to help when we think of the problem simply in terms of refugees from oppression, refugees from disaster, refugees from the storms of war.

Such a view implies a simple, single cause . . .  
a temporary plight, and temporary, emergency measures  
to meet the problem -- such as food, shelter and medical  
care.

↳ I believe -- and I know that all of you share this  
belief -- that we must concern ourselves with the question:

"Refugees to what kind of a life?"

↳ To return, after the threat has passed, to the same  
kind of a life?

No.!

↳ We must feed the hungry, house the homeless,  
nurse the sick.

But we must do more than that.

↳ We must offer them the oftentimes pathetically simple  
means to return to a life that is not under the constant  
shadow of hunger, ignorance and disease.

↳ This is what all of us are trying to do in Vietnam today. This is the other war we are waging . . . and this is truly the only war we seek in Vietnam and in the world -- the struggle to help men help themselves to a better life. —

↳ This, you recall, was one of the major aims stated in the Declaration of Honolulu -- to help the people of South Vietnam grow more and better food, to spread the light of education, to stamp out disease.

In Vietnam today, American overseas relief agencies have once again stepped into the front lines of the fight against human suffering.

↳ Once again, you have demonstrated the deep concern of the American people for their fellow man in any land.

*Defeat Communism  
Oppose Socialism  
Build a  
Stable  
South  
Achieve  
Peace*

↳ About 800,000 people have fled to government-controlled areas in Vietnam in the past year and a half. ~~In the period between January 21 and February 11 of this year alone 17,590 new refugees were identified.~~ Of the overall total, 279,873 have been resettled.

↳ The government of Vietnam is working steadily despite the desperate shortage of trained personnel, land and facilities, to resettle the refugees or to build adequate camps for those that cannot be resettled. ↳ The United States government has recruited specialists to coordinate and administer our refugee assistance programs.

↳ Fortunately, one by-product of the economic boom in South Vietnam has been jobs for a great many refugees from rural areas; yet there are very serious problems remaining, especially for the elderly, the sick, and for the orphans of war.

orphans

↳ At Honolulu the two governments recognized the critical nature of the refugee problem and assigned high priority to its solution. But it will require assistance from you in the voluntary agencies as well as from the U.S. and foreign governments.

↳ As an indication of your concern with the plight of refugees in Vietnam, you sent a distinguished committee to Vietnam in October of last year. The recommendations of the Voluntary Agency Vietnam Refugee Committee are being implemented.

↳ Greater emphasis is being given to the entire civilian program in Vietnam. ↳ Refugee programs of the Vietnamese Government, of the United States Government, of international agencies and of American voluntary agencies have been expanded.

↳ Cooperation between AID and the voluntary agencies has been intensified. Coordination between government and private programs has improved.

↳ In all of these measures the role of the Committee which visited Vietnam has been helpful in gaining a higher priority for refugee programs in Vietnam.

↳ I would like to note here that the Senate Committee headed by Senator Edward Kennedy has made a significant contribution in increasing public and governmental understanding of refugee problems, of their importance in the overall struggle being waged in Vietnam.

↳ I have mentioned the role of other governments in meeting the needs of refugees in Vietnam. Today over 25 countries are contributing in some way. Only recently Germany announced that it was sending 870 metric tons of rice; New Zealand is sending additional medical teams, Japan is sending textiles and pharmaceuticals. But much more can be done -- and we hope that many other nations will soon participate more actively in dealing with the staggering refugee problems in Vietnam.

Although Vietnam is today uppermost in our minds, we should not lose sight of the problem of refugees closer to home -- namely those thousands that have fled from Cuba to our shores since 1960. Cuba presents the problem of giving asylum to refugees here -- rather than assisting those abroad. I believe that it has been handled well -- thanks to the support of the American people and the bold initiatives of American voluntary agencies. Since 1960, over 200 thousand Cuban refugees have been settled in the United States. Of this total, 105 thousand have been resettled in three thousand communities in every state in the Union.

I Since December 1, 1965 when Premier Castro announced that additional Cubans could leave Cuba, 19 thousand have come to the United States. Thousands continue to arrive every month. And with your help, we shall continue to provide them with help, a home and opportunity to build a new life.

I am here today to commend you, your agencies and the American people you represent . . . and to pledge the continuing support and cooperation of our government in your efforts to shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the sick; and to help them down the road to a life of hope -- and peace.

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EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

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Transcript - US committeeon Refugees

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VICE PRESIDENT HUBERT H. HUMPHREY'S SPEECH

Before

THE UNITED STATES COMMITTEE FOR REFUGEES  
LUNCHEON

Washington-Hilton Hotel

Tuesday, May 17, 1966 - Jefferson Ballroom  
12:00 Noon - 3:00 P.M.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, The Vice President of the United States."

"Thank you very much my good friend, Max Rabb, for not only your gracious introduction, but especially to the United States Committee for Refugees--to you, Sir, and to Dr. Evans for the Citation which I cherish which will always remind me of the importance of the work that all of you are doing and the opportunity that has been mine to share just a little bit in some of this work.

There are so many here today that I should like to acknowledge that it's rather hazardous to even take the time to do it, but I do want to say how pleased I am that members of Congress are here with us today. I am particularly delighted that my sister, Frances, is here with us today. It isn't often that I get around to even acknowledge her presence. When I do, I am always worried that it may cause her trouble rather than any happiness. But I know how much work she gives to these endeavors, and I am very honored that one of the Nation's greatest men and, in my book, our greatest diplomat--a man who represents eternal youth and total vitality--Ambassador Averell Harriman is here with us today. I don't know what Ambassador Harriman has been saying to you while I was on my way here, but I know that whatever he said would be pleasing to me. I know that whatever thoughts he expresses on these matters that relate to human welfare and our national security and our foreign policy--that those expressions are soundly based. They not only come from a warm and good heart but from a great mind and a wealth of experience. Once again, I have the privilege of telling an audience how much Mrs. Humphrey and I enjoyed the opportunity to be with this good man, and if ever I went to school to learn in Graduate School from the Senior Professor in the arts of diplomacy--I did so aboard a 707 Jet--that is, whenever this man could get the student to sit down long enough to listen to him!

I am pleased that Mr. Crockett is with us to discuss with us some of the

matters of refugee problems and the State Department's plans and policies. I have noted that you have a very full schedule and I gather that one of our most illustrious Senators, who carries a noble and honored name--and even more significantly, a noble and honored record of public service, has been here with you today--Ted Kennedy. I want to salute him for the work that he is doing in the field of refugee activity and immigration, just as his illustrious beloved brother, our late President John F. Kennedy, did in the Senate and as the President of the United States.

Your program includes Mr. Hennessy and Mr. Thomas, and my old friend, George Goss. John Thomas is a good, long-time friend of mine. I claim he is a fellow Minnesotan. Where is John? There he is. Hi, John--just delighted to see you. Whenever I see your name upon the program, I know it has been good--and Doctor Wilson, to you once again, my thanks for the good work that you do.

I come here primarily to just visit with you. I have what I call before me 'notes'. I am always in a quandary as to how many of these meetings one should attend. I have been told and advised so many times that I go to too many, and I think that is true. But this is one way that I can, as your Vice President, let you know how much your Government appreciates what you are doing. You know Vice Presidents don't run the country anyhow, and they shouldn't--and I can assure you, they don't. But maybe a Vice President can express, on behalf of the President and your nation a heart full of gratitude for what you do and to give you encouragement.

I know that here are represented many agencies, many voluntary groups, our great Labor movement, our great religious--the voluntary forces of American life, and voluntarism and voluntary activity are so much a part of the American scene that you simply can't talk about our country in any of its activities without recognizing this great private sector. Voluntarism is a unique characteristic of the American life and I think our best--so I salute you.

Now, we are here today to talk about people and of people. I mentioned

to a group of award winners in the Department of Agriculture this morning, that this old phrase that is bandied around so much--"Government of the people, by the people and for the people"--is really...it means what it says, and that when you are in Government, your only purpose should be to be for the people. You ought to remember that you are not in a position to serve your institution, to serve your job, or to even serve your so-called boss. You are here to serve the people, and the only justification of any institution is to add even greater dignity to make life more meaningful and, if possible, to make life better.

Now we talk, therefore, of people, many of whom have been violently torn from their families, many of whom are maimed, and all of whom are homeless, because refugees have one common characteristic--they're homeless. The story of the refugee is told in the most disheartening chapters in the chronicle of man, the chapters of violence and of persecution and of hate--the refugee is usually the ordinary, the peaceful and the uninvolved in some of the ferocious struggles--the seldom wrong, but the often wronged against. It is to the credit of this nation of ours that we have time and again come to the aid of the refugee, the person without power, and the person without wealth. That's what the Statue of Liberty signifies, at the gateway of the richest and most powerful nation in the world and, indeed, the gateway of the richest city in the world. There is the Statue of Liberty with those immortal words of Emma Lazarus, reminding us of what this nation means--its real spirit, extending her arms of welcome and offering to every person that comes to this land a chance to be something, opportunity to live a life, to work, to have an education, to make something out of one's life. Now since the birth of this Republic, the hearts and the hands of Americans have been extended to the homeless, to the sick, and to the weary and the tired and huddled masses, to the people of any land fleeing the ravages of famine, disaster, political oppression and war. We have modified our immigration laws, too, to bring humanity back into them. What a great day that was, just a few months ago, up at Liberty Island, when President Johnson signed the new

Immigration Act! I sort of felt that we had cleansed ourselves. It was really more than a legislative or governmental experience--it was a spiritual experience for me. I couldn't help but feel that, at long last, we had admitted our guilt, or as they say in church, 'our sin'--and we had done something about it, and we are a better people because of it too--a better nation, a better heart, better conscience. You see, we have offered the refugee more than just a piece of land. We have offered him refuge, we have offered him care and what is more important, we have offered hope, for a better life.

I believe in the politics of hope and of promise; the difference between utter disaster and the possibility of success is hope and we Americans must always be the people of hope, extending this great inspirational force to mankind that it can be better. But more than hope, we attempt to offer the means to a better life. It seems to me that we fail to grasp the full imensions of the plight of refugees and of our efforts to help them, when we think of the problems simply in terms of refugees from oppression, or refugees from disaster, or refugees from the storms of war. Such a view implies a simple, single cause--a temporary plight, emergency measures to meet an immediate problem, such as food, shelter and medical care--all of which are important. I believe, and I know that all of you share this belief, that we must concern ourselves with a more basic question. Refugees to what kind of a life? What will the future be? Not--where are you from? Not so much, even--what happened to you? But, where are we going? What will the tomorrow be? To return, after the threat has passed, to the same kind of a life? No! That is not our goal! We must feed the hungry, yes--help house the homeless and nurse the sick. To do less would be unworthy of us, but we must do MORE than that--we must offer the refugee the oftentimes pathetically simple means to return to a life that is not under the constant shadow of hunger, ignorance and disease. In other words, we must offer something better than that from which they fled!

This is what all of us are trying to do in Vietnam today. This is the other war that we are waging. Yesterday afternoon, and in an executive session, so to speak, I spoke to two or three hundred members of the Advertising Council...some of our top business people--about the other war. I am no militarist, but I do know that you have to fight a constant battle for a better life. Even in our own lives, we have to.

This morning I spoke with the Agriculture people, as I said, about what's going on in the other war, in terms of agriculture, of social development. This other war that I speak of that we are waging--this is truly the only war we seek in Vietnam and the world. It is the struggle to help men help themselves to a better life. This, you recall, was one of the major aims stated in the Declaration of Honolulu--to help the people of South Vietnam--I repeat--to help the PEOPLE of South Vietnam, to grow more and better food, to spread the light of education, to stamp out disease. It grieves me greatly when I hear people make mockery of the Honolulu Declaration as if it were something that never should have happened, or (that it was a) meeting in Honolulu with representatives of a Government. Whatever you may think of it, one of the most important developments in modern time was that meeting in Honolulu. It didn't lay out a blueprint of action. It laid out a charter of hope. What did it say? Well, it pledged this nation to defeat aggression and you have to defeat aggression, however you do it! It pledged us to defeat social misery. Surely this rich and affluent and powerful America can give of its resources to defeat social misery. It pledged us to help build a viable and stable economy and that Declaration pledged us to pursue relentlessly a just peace. These are wonderful objectives, and I am heartsick when I hear people make light of them and try to make it appear that this particular conference dealt with only personalities. We went to Honolulu, not because of the name of a Prime Minister, or even the name of the President of this Republic. We went there because we believe in people. We believe that misery is not to be the

lot of man. Be believe that aggression is evil. It is wrong--politically, morally--every way wrong and it must be defeated. We went there because we believe that freedom cannot live as an island in a sea of despair. There must be a viable and reasonably stable and progressive economy.

We went to Honolulu to once again say, 'America is essentially a nation that loves peace.' We are a life-giving nation, not a life-taking nation! We are builders, not destroyers! We seek peace at every corner of the earth, in every way, and we want it to say so, and we want to have it as a document as well--a promise and a pledge and a hope. Yet I have never in all my life witnessed a meeting that has had less interpretation of its purpose in this great America than that one--we ought to be ashamed of ourselves! This ought to have been to us a challenge so we would be worthy of the great wealth that is ours today and the power that is ours today. Instead of that, it promoted an argument. It became involved in personalities. People said, 'When was it planned?' Of what importance is that! What is MOST important is that it happened. Many a thing has happened that wasn't planned. There have been changes in the tide of battle that no one planned that changed the whole life of nations. What IS important is what HAPPENED.

Well, my dear friends, in Vietnam we are defeating social misery--at least we are trying. American overseas relief agencies have once again stepped into the front lines of the fight against human suffering, and that is where we ought to be. Once again, you have demonstrated the deep concern of the American people that you represent, the concern of our people for their fellow men--for their fellow man in any land. About 800,000 people have fled to Government-controlled areas in Vietnam in the past year and a half. Of that overall total, about 280,000 have already been resettled. I am telling you how much more there is yet to do. And the Government of Vietnam is working, despite the desperate shortage of trained personnel, land and facilities to help resettle the refugees or to build adequate camps for those that cannot be resettled. I was in one of these areas--in District 8, outside of Saigon--

and what a price THEY paid for my visit! Because the Viet Cong, within a few days after that visit, sent a company of their terrorists in to destroy them. They didn't succeed though, because these refugees with young people as their guides had built a community, their homes, their school, their community center, and these people rose up to defend even that very primitive community that they had developed--to defend it against the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong just couldn't leave them alone. And when I hear people tell me that that is a "national liberation force", it sickens me, because it is NOT national liberation, it's desperation, and indeed it is the work of desperados. It is evil work--when you kill and destroy. Fortunately, the United States Government has been of help in these camps, recruiting specialists to coordinate and administer our refugee assistance programs.

Fortunately, one by-product of the economic boom in Saigon and in South Vietnam has been jobs for a great many refugees from rural areas. Yet there are difficult serious problems remaining, especially for the elderly, the sick and the orphans of war. The real tough war to win is this other war. Militarily, there is no power on this earth that can defeat us. Militarily, it is IMPOSSIBLE for the enemy to defeat the United States, but to help build a nation, to save people's lives, that is the job--that is the tough one, that is where you come in, and if I have any mission in life, it is to arouse in the American people a sense of conscience and of decency to want to do something about helping people help themselves, to build and create and to make new lives for these people.

Now, at the Honolulu Conference, the two Governments recognized the critical nature of the refugee problem and it was given a priority and, fortunately, as an indication of your concern with them, the plight of the refugee in Vietnam, you sent a very distinguished committee there in October of last year. I met with that committee, and the recommendations of the voluntary agency, Vietnam Refugee Committee, are being implemented. They need even more attention, I must say in all candor. Greater emphasis is being given to the entire civilian program in Vietnam. We talk of it

and work on it every day. Your President has appointed a Commander-in-Chief, so to speak, a Secretary of the General Staff, Mr. Robert Komer, right here in Washington, to coordinate these activities. Refugee programs of the Vietnamese Government, your Government of international agencies and of American voluntary agencies have been expanded. Cooperation between AID and the voluntary agencies has been improved and intensified. Coordination between Government and private programs has improved. In all of these measures, the role of the committee which visited Vietnam has been helpful in gaining a higher priority for these refugee programs in Vietnam.

I paid my respects to this distinguished young Senator, Senator Kennedy, and he surely deserves every pat on the back that he has received, because he did a good job in this refugee effort.

I have mentioned the role of other Governments in meeting the needs of the refugees in Vietnam. Today over 25 countries are contributing in some way. Only recently, Germany announced that it was sending this 870 metric tons of rice; New Zealand is sending additional medical teams. Wherever I went on my tours in the Far East, I asked, not for troops, but help for the people, for help in the orphanages, in the refugee camps. I did this in Japan. I did it in India. I did it wherever we went because--I will be quite candid with you--I think that this is one place where people can be of help and not, in any way, have to make any declaration as to their views on the war. I am happy to say that there has been response. Japan is sending textiles and pharmaceuticals, but with all of these areas and countries much more can be done. Let me say much more SHOULD be done and surely the great free countries of the world should do much more than has been done thus far, because the problems are staggering.

Now although Vietnam is today uppermost in our minds, I am sure you have not lost your interest in other refugee problems. I know that you haven't, and even some closer to home--namely, the thousands that have fled from Cuba to our shores since 1960. Cuba presents the problem of giving asylum to refugees here, rather

than assisting those abroad. And I believe that it has been handled rather well. I ought to congratulate my friend John Thomas--I think you have done a good job, and, thanks to the support of the American people and the bold initiatives of American voluntary agencies, a good job of resettlement has been accomplished. Since 1960, over 200,000 Cuban refugees have been settled in the United States. And of this total, 105,000 have been resettled in 3,000 communities in every state in the Union. And that is the way it ought to be handled; it isn't just a Miami problem. Miami is the gateway--it is the portal through which the refugee from Cuba may come, but every State in this great Union and every community ought to offer a chance for these people to have a full and rich life. Since December of this past year 1965, when Castro announced that additional Cubans could leave Cuba, 19,000 more have come to the United States. And thousands continue to arrive every month. With your help, we shall continue to provide them with help, with a home and an opportunity to build a new life.

I think we should let the world know that we do like people. I have used this statement, as I conclude, several times...About a month ago, a little over a month ago, I was home and attended my home church. The title of the sermon was the most interesting one that I have ever seen because it came out about the same time that there was a headline in one of the big magazines entitled, "Is God Dead?". Really, I just hadn't given that very much thought--it seemed to me, frankly, that he was quite alive in my life! I have been a mighty lucky person, but this particular sermon was "The Way You Treat People is the Way You Treat God". Whatever your religion, I think that about sums it up! And what we are talking about is the way we treat people. I don't think we can say that we are a people of principle, that we are a people of ideals, the people that believe in human dignity and human brotherhood, unless we treat people that way. Those of you that are engaged in this magnificent effort to help the refugee--you really are demonstrating more than a program of action. You are demonstrating a philosophy of life. You are proving that

we ARE our brother's keeper; that we can help other people help themselves, and you are proving, too, that we can shelter the homeless, feed the hungry, heal the sick, and help the less fortunate move down the road of life, of hope and of peace."

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Speech of the Vice President of the United States  
before the Seventh Annual Meeting Luncheon of the  
United States Committee for Refugees, Inc.  
at the Washington Hilton Hotel, Jefferson Ballroom  
Tuesday, May 17, 1966  
12:30 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.



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