

REMARKS OF VICE PRESIDENT WALTER F. MONDALE  
UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON INDOCHINESE REFUGEES  
GENEVA, SWITZERLAND  
JULY 21, 1979

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FINAL

File:  
Refugees

MR. SECRETARY GENERAL, DELEGATES:

ONCE AGAIN THE COUNTRIES OF THE WORLD TURN TO THE UNITED NATIONS. WHEN PROBLEMS TOUCH THE WHOLE HUMAN COMMUNITY, NO OTHER FORUM PROVIDES A VISION MORE ENCOMPASSING. WHEN NATIONAL INTERESTS CONFLICT AND COLLIDE, NO INSTITUTION CONVENES US WITH GREATER MORAL AUTHORITY. THE UNITED NATIONS IS OFTEN CRITICIZED, AND SOMETIMES EVEN MALIGNED. BUT THE COMMON GROUND IT PROVIDES US DESERVES OUR THANKS AND OUR PRAISE. ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES -- AND, I BELIEVE, ON BEHALF OF ALL NATIONS IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY -- I THANK SECRETARY-GENERAL WALDHEIM AND HIGH COMMISSIONER HARTLING FOR THEIR LEADERSHIP IN CONVENING US HERE TODAY.

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL, SOME TRAGEDIES DEFY THE IMAGINATION. SOME MISERY SO SURPASSES THE GRASP OF REASON THAT LANGUAGE ITSELF BREAKS BENEATH THE STRAIN. INSTEAD, WE GASP FOR METAPHORS. INSTEAD, WE SPEAK THE INAUDIBLE DIALECT OF THE HUMAN HEART.

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TODAY WE CONFRONT SUCH A TRAGEDY, IN VIRTUALLY ALL THE WORLD'S LANGUAGES, DESPERATE NEW EXPRESSIONS HAVE BEEN BORN. "A BARBED-WIRE BONDAGE," "AN ARCHIPELAGO OF DESPAIR," "A FLOOD-TIDE OF HUMAN MISERY": WITH THIS NEW COINAGE OUR LANGUAGE IS ENRICHED, AND OUR CIVILIZATION IS IMPOVERISHED.

"THE BOAT PEOPLE," "THE LAND PEOPLE," THE PHRASES ARE NEW, BUT UNFORTUNATELY THEIR PRECEDENT IN THE ANNALS OF SHAME IS NOT. FORTY-ONE YEARS AGO THIS VERY WEEK, ANOTHER INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAKE GENEVA CONCLUDED ITS DELIBERATIONS. THIRTY-TWO "NATIONS OF ASYLUM" CONVENED AT EVIAN TO SAVE THE DOOMED JEWS OF NAZI GERMANY AND AUSTRIA. ON THE EVE OF THE CONFERENCE, HITLER FLUNG THE CHALLENGE IN THE WORLD'S FACE. HE SAID, "I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE OTHER WORLD, WHICH HAS SUCH DEEP SYMPATHY FOR THESE CRIMINALS WILL AT LEAST BE GENEROUS ENOUGH TO CONVERT THIS SYMPATHY INTO PRACTICAL AID." WE HAVE EACH HEARD SIMILAR ARGUMENTS ABOUT THE PLIGHT OF THE REFUGEES IN INDOCHINA.

AT STAKE AT EVIAN WERE BOTH HUMAN LIVES -- AND THE DECENCY AND SELF-RESPECT OF THE CIVILIZED WORLD. IF EACH NATION AT EVIAN HAD AGREED ON THAT DAY TO TAKE IN 17,000 JEWS AT ONCE, EVERY JEW IN THE REICH COULD HAVE BEEN SAVED. AS ONE AMERICAN OBSERVER WROTE, "IT IS HEARTBREAKING TO THINK OF THE DESPERATE HUMAN BEINGS WAITING IN SUSPENSE FOR WHAT HAPPENS AT EVIAN. BUT THE QUESTION THEY UNDERLINE IS NOT SIMPLY HUMANITARIAN. IT IS A TEST OF CIVILIZATION."

AT EVIAN, THEY BEGAN WITH HIGH HOPES, BUT THEY FAILED THE TEST OF CIVILIZATION,

THE CIVILIZED WORLD HID IN THE CLOAK OF LEGALISMS. TWO NATIONS SAID THEY HAD REACHED THE SATURATION POINT FOR JEWISH REFUGEES. FOUR NATIONS SAID THEY WOULD ACCEPT EXPERIENCED AGRICULTURAL WORKERS ONLY. ONE WOULD ONLY ACCEPT IMMIGRANTS WHO HAD BEEN BAPTISED. THREE DECLARED INTELLECTUALS AND MERCHANTS TO BE UNDESIRABLE NEW CITIZENS. ONE NATION FEARED THAT AN INFLUX OF JEWS WOULD AROUSE ANTISEMITIC FEELINGS. AND ONE DELEGATE SAID THIS: "AS WE HAVE NO REAL RACIAL PROBLEM, WE ARE NOT DESIROUS OF IMPORTING ONE."

AS THE DELEGATES LEFT EVIAN, HITLER AGAIN GOADED "THE OTHER WORLD" FOR "OOZING SYMPATHY FOR THE POOR, TORMENTED PEOPLE, BUT REMAINING HARD AND OBDURATE WHEN IT COMES TO HELPING THEM." DAYS LATER, THE FINAL SOLUTION TO THE JEWISH PROBLEM WAS CONCEIVED, AND SOON THE NIGHT CLOSED IN.

LET US NOT RE-ENACT THEIR ERROR. LET US NOT BE THE HEIRS TO THEIR SHAME.

TO ALLEVIATE THE TRAGEDY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, WE ALL HAVE A PART TO PLAY. THE UNITED STATES IS COMMITTED TO DOING ITS SHARE, JUST AS WE HAVE DONE FOR GENERATIONS. "MOTHER

OF EXILES," IT SAYS ON THE PEDESTAL OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY AT THE PORT OF NEW YORK. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE ALREADY WELCOMED OVER 200,000 INDOCHINESE. THEIR TALENT AND THEIR ENERGIES IMMEASURABLY ENRICH OUR NATION.

WE ARE PREPARING TO WELCOME ANOTHER 168,000 REFUGEES IN THE COMING YEAR. THE GOVERNORS AND THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS IN OUR DELEGATION -- AS WELL AS OUTSTANDING RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC LEADERS FROM THROUGHOUT AMERICA -- ARE A SYMBOL OF THE ENDURING COMMITMENT OF PRESIDENT CARTER AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MANY NATIONS REPRESENTED HERE HAVE RISEN TO HISTORY'S TEST, ACCEPTING SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF REFUGEES. THE ASEAN STATES, CHINA, AND HONG KONG HAVE OFFERED SAFETY AND ASYLUM TO OVER HALF A MILLION REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM, LAOS, AND KAMPUCHEA SINCE 1975. AND OTHERS HAVE OPENED THEIR DOORS.

BUT THE GROWING EXODUS FROM INDOCHINA STILL OUTSTRIPS INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS. WE MUST WORK TOGETHER, OR THE SUFFERING WILL MOUNT. UNLESS WE ALL DO MORE, THE RISK OF FRESH CONFLICT WILL ARISE AND STABILITY OF SOUTHEAST ASIA WILL ERODE. UNLESS THIS CONFERENCE GIVES BIRTH TO NEW COMMITMENTS, AND NOT SIMPLY NEW METAPHORS, WE WILL INHERIT THE SCORN OF EVIAN. IT IS A TIME FOR ACTION, NOT WORDS.

I WOULD LIKE TO OUTLINE SEVEN AREAS WHERE ACTION IS NEEDED,

FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY MUST REST WITH THE AUTHORITIES OF INDOCHINA, PARTICULARLY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM. THAT GOVERNMENT IS FAILING TO ENSURE THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ITS PEOPLE. ITS CALLOUS AND IRRESPONSIBLE POLICIES ARE COMPELLING COUNTLESS CITIZENS TO FORSAKE EVERYTHING THEY TREASURE, TO RISK THEIR LIVES, AND TO FLEE INTO THE UNKNOWN,

THERE MUST BE AN IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON THE FURTHER EXPLUSION OF PEOPLE FROM VIETNAM. WE MUST STOP THE DROWNINGS AND ESTABLISH A HUMANE EMIGRATION PROGRAM. THE POLICY OF EXPULSION WHICH HAS LED TO SO MANY TRAGIC DEATHS MUST END. IT MUST BE REPLACED BY A POLICY WHICH ENABLES THOSE WHO WISH TO LEAVE THEIR HOMES TO DO SO -- IN SAFETY, AND BY CHOICE, AND IN AN ORDERLY MANNER.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE MUST NOT FORGET THE LAND PEOPLE DRIVEN FROM THEIR HOMELAND BY CONFLICT AND FOREIGN INVASION. THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD MUST PROMOTE A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT IN KAMPUCHEA. THE SURVIVAL OF A WHOLE PEOPLE IS IN GRAVE DOUBT. NEITHER THE POL POT NOR HANG SAMRIN (HANG-SAM-RIN) REGIMES REPRESENT THE CAMBODIAN PEOPLE. THE CONFLICT, AND THE HUMAN TRAGEDY IN ITS WAKE, MUST STOP. THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST NOT TOLERATE FORCED EXPULSION OF ENTIRE POPULATIONS. I CALL ON ALL

GOVERNMENTS TO ALLOW NORMAL FREE EMIGRATION AND FAMILY  
REUNIFICATION. MY GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO NEGOTIATE

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A PROGRAM OF ORDERLY DIRECT DEPARTURES FROM VIETNAM -- BUT NOT AT THE EXPENSE OF THOSE IN CAMPS ELSEWHERE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ALREADY AWAITING RESETTLEMENT, AND NOT AS PART OF A PROGRAM OF EXPULSION OF ETHNIC OR POLITICAL GROUPS.

SECOND, I URGE THE COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM TO CONTINUE TO PROVIDE TEMPORARY SAFE HAVEN TO ALL REFUGEES. THE COMPASSION THESE NATIONS HAVE SHOWN EARN THEM THE RESPECT AND ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD COMMUNITY. BUT THESE NATIONS CANNOT BEAR THIS RESPONSIBILITY ALONE. WE CALL ON THEM TO PERSIST IN THEIR SPIRIT OF HUMANITY SO THAT OUR COMMON EFFORT CAN PROCEED.

THEREFORE, THIRD, THE REST OF US MUST PROVIDE ASSURANCES TO FIRST-ASYLUM COUNTRIES THAT THE REFUGEES WILL FIND NEW HOMES WITHIN A REASONABLE PERIOD OF TIME. TO MEET THIS OBJECTIVE, WE CALL ON ALL NATIONS TO DOUBLE THEIR RESETTLEMENT COMMITMENT, AS THE UNITED STATES HAS ALREADY DONE. MOREOVER, WE MUST ALL BE PREPARED TO COMMIT OURSELVES TO MULTI-YEAR RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMS -- FOR THE PROBLEM WILL NOT BE SOLVED QUICKLY. THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT IS NOW SEEKING THAT AUTHORITY.

FOURTH, EACH OF US MUST MAKE A GREATER CONTRIBUTION TO THE RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES. THE UNHCR WILL NEED INCREASED RESOURCES NOW

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AND IN THE COMING YEARS TO CARE FOR GROWING REFUGEE POPULATIONS, AND TO ALLEVIATE THE MISERY IN REFUGEE CAMPS. THE UNHCR MAY REQUIRE AN ESTIMATED \$400 MILLION FOR ITS INDOCHINA PROGRAMS IN 1980.

TO DO OUR PART TO HELP, I AM PRIVILEGED TO ANNOUNCE TODAY THAT MY GOVERNMENT WILL ASK OUR CONGRESS TO ALLOCATE \$105 MILLION FOR THOSE PROGRAMS -- MORE THAN DOUBLE OUR CURRENT EFFORT. WE ARE ALSO READY TO ASSIGN HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS TO WORK IN THE CAMPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA -- TO WORK NOT ONLY WITH THE INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES, BUT ALSO IN THE PROGRAMS OF THE UN HIGH COMMISSIONER. WE URGE OTHER NATIONS TO UNDERTAKE SIMILAR PROGRAMS OF SUPPORT.

FIFTH, IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT WE RELIEVE PRESSURES ON EXISTING CAMPS AND CREATE A NETWORK OF NEW TRANSIT CENTERS FOR REFUGEES DESTINED FOR PERMANENT RESETTLEMENT ELSEWHERE. GIVEN THE MAGNITUDE OF THE REFUGEE POPULATION, SUCH CENTERS MUST ACCOMMODATE AT LEAST 250,000 REFUGEES. MY GOVERNMENT HAS ENDORSED THE INITIATIVE OF THE ASEAN STATES FOR UN-SPONSORED REFUGEE PROCESSING CENTERS. PRESIDENT CARTER APPLAUDS THE GOVERNMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES FOR THE BOLD AND EXEMPLARY STEPS IT HAS TAKEN -- A MODEL OF RESPONSIBLE WORLD LEADERSHIP. TODAY I AM ESPECIALLY PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT



WE ARE REQUESTING MORE THAN \$20 MILLION FROM THE CONGRESS TO FINANCE OUR SHARE OF SUCH NEW UNHCR FACILITIES.

SIXTH, WE MUST EXTEND REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT TO NATIONS WHO ARE READY TO RECEIVE THEM -- BUT WHO DO NOT HAVE THE RESOURCES TO DO SO. TODAY, ON BEHALF OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, I PROPOSE THE CREATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT FUND. IF OTHER NATIONS JOIN US, WE WILL ASK OUR CONGRESS FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FUND TOTALLING \$20 MILLION FOR THE FIRST YEAR. WE ASK TODAY THAT OTHER NATIONS MATCH US. WE RECOMMEND THAT THE FUND BE CAPITALIZED AT \$200 MILLION. THIS FUND COULD, FOR EXAMPLE, ENDOW AN INTERNATIONAL CORPORATION WHICH WOULD HELP DEVELOPING COUNTRIES EMBARK ON THEIR PLANNING AND SECURE ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR THIS HIGH HUMANITARIAN PURPOSE.

SEVENTH, AND ABOVE ALL, WE MUST ACT TO PROTECT THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO SEEK SAFETY. THE UNITED STATES IS ACTING VIGOROUSLY TO SAVE REFUGEES FROM EXPOSURE AND STARVATION AND DROWNING AND DEATH AT SEA. AS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE MILITARY, THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES HAS DRAMATICALLY STRENGTHENED HIS ORDERS TO OUR NAVY TO HELP THE DROWNING AND THE DESPERATE.

TODAY THE PRESIDENT HAS ORDERED FOUR ADDITIONAL SHIPS FROM THE MILITARY SEALIFT COMMAND TO BE DISPATCHED TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA -- WHERE THEY WILL BE AVAILABLE BOTH TO TRANSPORT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF REFUGEES FROM CAMPS TO REFUGEE PROCESSING CENTERS, AND TO ASSIST REFUGEES AT SEA. AT THE SAME TIME, THE PRESIDENT ALSO ORDERED LONG-RANGE NAVY AIRCRAFT TO FLY PATROLS TO LOCATE AND SEEK HELP FOR REFUGEE BOATS IN DISTRESS. AND THE PRESIDENT IS ASKING OUR PRIVATE SHIPPING INDUSTRY AND UNIONS TO PERSIST WITH THEIR TIME-HONORED EFFORTS TO HELP REFUGEES AT SEA. WE APPEAL TO OTHER GOVERNMENTS TO DO THE SAME -- AND TO ACCEPT FOR RESETTLEMENT THOSE WHO ARE PICKED UP.

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL, FELLOW DELEGATES, IN CONCLUSION LET ME REITERATE TWO POINTS,

FIRST, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY MUST NOT TOLERATE THIS FORCED EXPULSION. WE CALL UPON VIETNAM TO CEASE THOSE POLICIES WHICH CONDEMN SO MANY TO FLEE. THERE MUST BE AN IMMEDIATE MORATORIUM ON EXPULSIONS.

THE FREEDOM TO EMIGRATE IS A FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHT, BUT NO NATION IS BLIND TO THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FREE EMIGRATION AND FORCED EXODUS. LET US IMPOSE A MORATORIUM ON THAT EXODUS, LET US HAVE A BREATHING SPELL DURING WHICH ALL OF US --

GOVERNMENTS, VOLUNTARY AGENCIES, AND PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS ALIKE -- MOBILIZE OUR GENEROSITY AND RELIEVE THE HUMAN MISERY, AND LET US URGE THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM TO HONOR THE INALIENABLE HUMAN RIGHTS AT THE CORE OF EVERY CIVILIZED SOCIETY.

SECOND, OUR CHILDREN WILL DEAL HARSHLY WITH US IF WE FAIL. THE CONFERENCE AT EVIAN FORTY-ONE YEARS AGO TOOK PLACE AMIDST THE SAME COMFORT AND BEAUTY WE ENJOY AT OUR OWN DELIBERATIONS TODAY. ONE OBSERVER AT THOSE PROCEEDINGS -- MOVED BY THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SETTING AND THE TASK -- SAID THIS:

"THESE POOR PEOPLE AND THESE GREAT PRINCIPLES SEEM SO FAR AWAY. TO ONE WHO HAS ATTENDED OTHER CONFERENCES ON LAKE GENEVA, THE MOST STRIKING THING ON THE EVE OF THIS ONE IS THAT THE ATMOSPHERE IS SO MUCH LIKE THE OTHERS."

LET US NOT BE LIKE THE OTHERS. LET US RENOUNCE THAT LEGACY OF SHAME. LET US REACH BEYOND METAPHOR. LET US HONOR THE MORAL PRINCIPLES WE INHERIT. LET US DO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL -- SOMETHING PROFOUND -- TO STEM THIS MISERY. WE FACE A WORLD PROBLEM. LET US FASHION A WORLD SOLUTION.

HISTORY WILL NOT FORGIVE US IF WE FAIL, HISTORY WILL  
NOT FORGET US IF WE SUCCEED,



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