

THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS

HUNGARIAN REFUGEE RELIEF
1956-1957

(Prepared in 1961 - Revised in 1968 and 1971)

On a Saturday morning late in November 1956, some three weeks after President Eisenhower's re-election, Governor Sherman Adams phoned me in Brooklyn. The Governor was the right-hand man of the President, possessing very broad authority. He asked me if I could come to see him at the White House that morning. I said that I was in Brooklyn, and could not reach Washington until afternoon. He said that he did not know that he had reached me in Brooklyn; that Monday morning would be all right; could I come in then? I said "Yes," and we made an appointment for 8:00 a.m.

He said at the Monday morning meeting, "The President has a problem with these Hungarian refugees, and wants you to act as his representative in dealing with them." I said that of course I would do whatever the President wanted, but that I should like to accept under one condition - that I do the work without pay as I thought I could make a better success of a job like this if I did it for free. The Governor said that he was sure that this would be satisfactory to the President.

My instant thought was that I would probably be presiding at Kilmer over the biggest concentration camp which ever existed in the United States; yet that I could not decline to do what the

President asked, and that it would be harder to shoot at me if I was doing the work without pay as a strictly humanitarian task. (I had learned this lesson from former President Hoover.)

Governor Adams then asked me: "When would you be ready to go to work?" I said, "Well, I'm here." He said, "All right, there is an office upstairs." I went upstairs and went to work. This was all the formality there was except that some time later I received a notice appointing me.

Very shortly after the Hungarian revolution had been brutally beaten down by Russian troops and tanks, large numbers of those engaged in it--many of them with their wives and children--escaped across the marshes into Austria. This influx totaled about 160,000, but the figure later went higher. The Austrian Government took them in, but of course could not handle them all. Other European countries had already taken large numbers, for example, Switzerland 10,000, of which 6,000 were to be there temporarily only.

The U.S. had an authorized unfilled immigration quota of about 6,500, and steps had already been taken to open Camp Kilmer for the temporary care of the refugees. There had been much criticism of the way things were handled at Kilmer, and of the inadequate action of the U.S. in meeting the pitiable emergency needs of the refugees. Some of this criticism was in the Scripps-Howard papers, but The New York Times, on November 26 (1956) had carried a bitterly critical editorial entitled, "The Mess at Kilmer." Such press criticism, I

assume was a factor leading to the request of the President and Governor Adams to me to take over the problem.

We anticipated that large additional numbers of refugees would be brought in--people who were penniless, with no possessions but the clothes on their backs, and very few of whom were able to speak English.

After working without pay but on a full time basis during the 1956 Presidential campaign at the Headquarters of the Republican National Committee, and after President Eisenhower's landslide re-election, I had seen Governor Adams and had told him that I had not done this campaign work with any idea of a Government job; that I did not seek one and was not available for one; however, that, if there were any chores for which I was needed, I would try to do them. This presumably led to the Governor's calling me for the refugee job. It was certainly a more difficult "chore" than anything I had anticipated.

The office assigned to me in the White House, which was the only space available, was so small as to make work difficult if occupied only by me and a secretary. I immediately drafted Mr. Harry T. Carter from the work which he was doing in the Pentagon to help me, and he proved to be absolutely indispensable. However, he and his secretary, added to my secretary and myself, made a real crowd in that small office.

The refugees were continuing to pour into Kilmer, where over

twenty Government agencies and private voluntary agencies were milling around in inevitable confusion, although all were trying to do their best.

The President had directed the Army to conduct the feeding and the care of the refugees in the camp. On only a few days' notice they had made a good start considering the bad condition of the camp--a World War II Army installation of temporary frame structures. Brigadier General Sidney C. Wooten was in command.

A Mr. Garrity of the State Department at about that time returned from a short inspection trip in Austria, and recommended that an additional 15,000 refugees be brought in as "parolees" under an emergency provision of the Immigration Law. This was promptly approved by the President so that the total quota at that time jumped to 21,500, and I correctly anticipated that it would go much higher. The United States had never had an experience with refugees of a size and immediacy such as this crisis operation. So there were no precedents.

The hard core of the problem was not untangling "The Mess at Kilmer," although this had to be done, but how to find a way to resettle in America this mass of indigent strangers. In this we could not fail, nor did we know how to succeed.

The President, who was in Augusta, announced my appointment from there, and I was immediately in the middle of things as there was broad and enthusiastic press coverage of my appointment. However,

the press was more confident of what I could do than I was.

The steps taken within the next two weeks were concurrent, not consecutive. They were all going on, or were in formative stages, in a jumble of activities at the same time.

My directive from the President was in substance to set up the machinery to handle this mass migration to the United States, and to coordinate the work of the voluntary agencies and of the Government Departments and agencies. As to all of them, I realized immediately that this could be done only by persuasive leadership, rather than by trying to order people around.

I needed a good man in an awful hurry to represent me at Kilmer as I was needed in Washington. Someone told me that the Ford Foundation had such a man. I telephoned Henry Ford, II, from the White House to get the man released for this purpose. The White House telephone is a wonderful thing, and Mr. Ford, who was in New York, came on the wire at once. I told him what we needed. He said, "I don't think the man you are asking for is the right man for the job, but I will get the right man for you." In about twenty minutes he called back to say that Mr. Leo C. Beebe was the man I needed; that he was the Ford Company's Assistant Chief of Public Relations; that he was in Detroit, and had been directed to go immediately to New York and meet Mr. Ford the next morning; and then would proceed directly to Washington. So Leo was on duty within twenty-four hours.

I realized that the only chance we had of resettling these

people was to get the Americans to love the Hungarian Freedom Fighters for the next four or five months, and to that end I needed the highest powered Public Relations organization I could get.

In the Presidential campaign, I had recruited and worked successfully with Communications Counselors, Inc. (CCI), which was the Public Relations part of the large McCann, Erickson advertising agency. It was necessary to have them go to work at once but, while their out-of-pocket expenses could be paid from Government funds, I knew that we would be inviting trouble if we used Government funds to pay large fees to a public relations firm. If we did, I could see vividly the day when somebody or some committee in Congress would howl to high heaven. So I pleaded with CCI to undertake this job as a public service for a flat fee of \$40,000. I told them that I did not have the money, but would be responsible for getting it, and wanted them to go to work immediately. This they did.

While no secret was made of this public relations project, we did not advertise it either. Consequently, nobody knew over the next period of several months how we obtained and maintained the tremendous, favorable, nationwide surge of enthusiasm for the Hungarian refugees reflected in the press, magazines, television and radio.

Dean Rusk, a friend and former colleague in the Pentagon where we had had adjoining offices shortly after World War II, was President of Rockefeller Foundation. I went to him for help. He said that without Executive Committee approval, he could only give \$10,000

of the \$35,000 for which I asked. I thought we could make up the balance of \$5,000 (above the \$35,000) in other ways. Dean immediately gave me the \$10,000 and sought his Executive Committee's approval to raise this to \$35,000. However, the Foundation's lawyers wanted a ruling from the Bureau of Internal Revenue that such a gift would not prejudice the Foundation's tax deductibility status. Since by the time this question arose, I had the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief set up, it puzzled me how any lawyer could think that a gift to the President's Refugee Relief Committee of a mere \$35,000 from the tremendous funds which the Foundation had could possibly risk its tax deductibility status. However, lawyers are lawyers.

I had another source of strength which helped me in many ways. This lay in the warm friendship and vigorous cooperation of members of the White House staff. This was possible because they knew I was not receiving any salary and because I emphasized the purely temporary nature of my post there. This gave me complete immunity from the jealousies which might so easily have developed from a new boy barging into an exclusive club.

So with powerful help from the White House, I was able immediately to see Mr. Fred Scribner, who was then Counsel for the Secretary of the Treasury, and later Under Secretary. I obtained the necessary ruling from the Bureau, but this took time so for a period of six weeks or more I carried about \$25,000 on my cuff.

The minutes of the President's Committee approving the appointment of CCI showed that they were engaged on my assurance that I would be personally responsible for their \$40,000 fee. Mr. Walter Maguire of Stamford, Connecticut, a friend of "Wild Bill" Donovan, and who had been a client of mine in one case, contributed \$2,500. Our small family charitable corporation put in \$1,500, and I got the remaining \$1,000 from a number of small donors. So in some way we covered the CCI payment without my going into bankruptcy. The most important thing of all was that, while this was going on, CCI was hard at work, and in fact we had turned the corner in resettling the refugees before we had the money to pay CCI's fee.

Another virtually simultaneous step was getting General J. Lawton Collins to help me. He certainly re-earned his famous sobriquet from World War II of "Lightning Joe." Nobody could have dealt with the Army, Air Force, Navy and Pentagon with the speed and effectiveness which Joe did. I had worked with General Collins in the Pentagon when he was Chief of Staff of the Army, and as soon as my appointment was announced he proved his friendship by a phone call--saying, "Tracy, I see that you have gotten yourself in trouble again. If I can help, let me know."

Almost at the same time, I recruited Mr. Hallam Tuck, an old friend who had been in relief enterprises under Mr. Hoover from World War I times, and who for some years after World War II had been United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Mr. Hoover correctly

said that Mr. Tuck was the best man there was in this field. He possessed breadth of experience, vigor, judgment, great prestige, and tact. He also recruited Major General Carl A. Hardigg, USA (Retired), who had been Mr. Tuck's Chief of Supply when Tuck was the High Commissioner for Refugees.

I started both of them off to Austria immediately for liaison with our Ambassador Llewellyn Thompson, and to seek to coordinate in Austria activities of the U.S. voluntary agencies there which were acting as sponsors for Hungarian refugees coming to the U.S. I also asked Mr. Tuck to make a broad study of the Hungarian refugee problem as it looked in Austria.

The mission of Mr. Tuck and General Hardigg stemmed from my realization that, if I were to set up machinery and coordinate the voluntary and Government agencies dealing with Hungarian refugees coming to this country, the coordination had to start in Austria.

At the same time the above steps were being taken, I decided that the best machinery for coordination would be a President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief. This would link up the representatives of the voluntary agencies with my own efforts and those of General Collins, Mr. Beebe, and Mr. Tuck, and would have the great advantage of centralizing the work outside of the White House.

General Collins immediately found and rented for the Committee a suitable office at 1413 K Street, and recruited Mr. Carusi, a former Commissioner of Immigration, as his assistant.

At my request, the President designated General Collins as Vice Chairman and Director of the Committee's operations in Washington; Mr. Beebe as Vice Chairman for Kilmer but reporting to General Collins; and Mr. Tuck as Vice Chairman with duties for the time being in Austria.

To assure strong labor support, Mr. George Meany was invited to become a member, and accepted.

We also brought in the heads of the larger voluntary agencies sponsoring the refugees.

To cover the education field, we had the Provost of Columbia University.

We also had Mr. Charles Taft, who was the head of the Advisory Commission on Voluntary Agencies--a kind of super group which in a way represented all of the Agencies.

Of course, in undertaking this work, almost the first thing I had done was to see Mr. Herbert Hoover and obtain his advice. I endeavored to get him to serve as Honorary Chairman of the President's Committee, but he declined because he felt that not enough was being done by the Administration for the Hungarian refugees. However, Mr. Hoover continued to help me with invaluable advice throughout the job.

We then recruited Mr. Lewis W. Douglas as the Honorary Chairman of the Committee, and he became so interested that he served actively in various meetings and with advice.

President Eisenhower's announcement of the appointment of the Committee was made from Augusta on December 12, 1956, and the Committee became immediately an effective operating agency. The machinery for coordination which I had been directed to set up was accordingly in full operation inside of two weeks of my appointment as the President's representative.

Prior to my appointment, the Hungarian refugees who had been brought to the U.S. had been transported by the International Committee for European Migration (ICEM). One of my first projects was to have the U.S. Air Force and Navy take over the largest possible part of the shipment of refugees to this country.

This had a very specific as well as a general purpose. In the forefront of my mind at all times in those early weeks was the unsolved problem as to how to resettle these refugees in America so as to avoid the nightmare of in effect a big concentration camp at Kilmer continuing indefinitely. Living over long periods in refugee camps had, I knew, been the lot of many, many refugees before, and such a result here would constitute a flat and glaring failure before the world in what should be a truly humanitarian effort. It would also be disastrous for the refugees themselves. Every step which I took was therefore pointed toward resettlement, and this of course required the utmost in favorable publicity. The word "airlift" had become favorably known from our "Berlin airlift." At a time when the Russian tanks and troops were ruthlessly shooting

down the Hungarians, sending some to Siberia, or making captives of those still in their home country, a United States military airlift would obviously stimulate public interest in the care of the refugees, and so aid in their resettlement when they got here.

In this I was insistent that we use the Military Air Transport Service (MATS), which included Navy as well as Air Force transport planes. It then developed that the Navy had sea transports which could also be used, and which would be most efficient, particularly as processing of the refugees could be done during the voyage. We therefore set up three trips by naval transports.

It was of course essential that the airlift by military planes begin in Germany rather than Austria to avoid the danger of a Russian move should U.S. military planes in considerable numbers appear in Austria. This, however, was easy to arrange as ICEM could bus the refugees from Vienna or Salzburg to Munich.

In the arrangements for the air and sea lift General Collins was absolutely invaluable, and carried the major part of the work, although I of course was in it all of the time also.

My first negotiations were with Deputy Secretary of Defense Reuben Robertson, who was completely cooperative.

One day in December Governor Adams called me in and said that some of Mr. Nixon's people thought it would be a good thing for him to make a trip to Austria and look at the situation firsthand. He asked what I thought of this. I believe he felt that it was not going to sit well with me as it would obviously become the principal

focus of publicity, and as I of course could not go, having too many problems here. However, the publicity I was interested in was the maximum coverage of our refugee program, not in any personal buildup.

I instantly saw that the President's sending the Vice President to Austria would have several great advantages:

It evidenced emphatically President Eisenhower's deep concern for, and desire to help, the refugees and his personal interest in them.

Next, in the existing climate it would create a great new flood of favorable publicity, both through the trip itself and the Vice President's report to President Eisenhower after it.

I said at once to Governor Adams that I thought this was a fine idea. I told him that I already had over there Mr. Hallam Tuck, one of the Vice Presidents of the President's Committee, who--next to Mr. Hoover himself--was the most experienced man in the world in dealing with refugee problems; that he would have been there for a week or two when the Vice President arrived, so that he would have appraised the situation and could give the Vice President an objective, dependable estimate of the problem.

Mr. Nixon's trip worked out just as planned. With characteristic personal courage, he went right down at night to the marshes at the Austro-Hungarian border. His trip attracted great public attention. When he arrived home he had not had time to complete

his report to the President. I recommended that before making his report he do two things which I felt would increase the credibility of his report, and be desirable both for him and for the refugees.

The first was to call on former President Hoover at the Waldorf Astoria, go over with him what he had found, and get Mr. Hoover's advice. Since the world knew that Mr. Hoover had done more to help refugees than any man alive, his blessing on Mr. Nixon's conclusions would certainly be valuable. Mr. Nixon at once agreed to do this, and the meeting was set up. It generated a tremendous and highly favorable burst of publicity, and I know that having Mr. Nixon consult him pleased Mr. Hoover. I thought afterward that this was the first time I had heard of anyone being anointed with oil in the Waldorf Astoria.

The second step which I proposed to the Vice President was that he follow the meeting with Mr. Hoover by a personal visit to Kilmer to see the situation and the refugees so that he could report on the entire operation from firsthand observation, and not merely cover the European end. This was arranged, and Mr. Nixon made a tour of Kilmer, mingled with the refugees, and ate with them in the cafeteria.

Following this, Mr. Nixon made his report to the President, which was a good one and most helpful to the whole program.

The success of this trip is an illustration of a principle which I had learned and utilized more than once--that as long as I did not seek publicity for myself, I could get great help through

publicity for the various jobs I was engaged in.

The President's Emergency Fund was adequate to cover any additional cost to the Services for this program. The International Cooperation Administration (ICA), of which my friend John B. Hollister was then the Director, was the administrator of the President's Emergency Fund, which was part of the Foreign Aid Program. I insisted on avoiding any delays through negotiation of the amounts of the cost by providing that these would be settled later by agreement between the Services and ICA under the direction of the Bureau of the Budget, and took the position that this was not part of my function.

The favorable publicity and the tremendous public interest in the Hungarian refugees were of course helpful factors in making the Military Services interested in sharing in this work, which they recognized as both a fine humanitarian action and as excellent publicity for themselves. However, before they seemed fully to realize this, they proposed chartering civilian planes for the shipment of the refugees. (MATS was using such chartered planes to some degree at all times anyway.) However, this was not what I wanted, as that of course could be done just as well through ICEM. I wanted the Army and Navy planes themselves.

There was a reserve alert in effect which had tied up a substantial number of military planes, but I was able to get this lifted to make enough planes available for my purposes without MATS having

to charter additional civilian planes. This broke one bottleneck.

I was also insistent that Navy aircraft as well as Air Force planes be used so that the public would see that all of the Services were in this relief project:- The Army on the ground at Kilmer, the Air Force and Navy in the airlift, and the Navy also in the sea lift. This was done.

Military planes and ships were made available just as fast as refugees could be processed in Austria and be ready for shipment.

The military planes came to Maguire Air Force base in Central New Jersey. To greet the first of them, I had the Acting Governor of New Jersey present. A welcoming statement signed by President Eisenhower, with facsimile copies and a translation into Hungarian, was delivered to each refugee on the bus on the way from Maguire to Kilmer. My draft of this statement contains in the right-hand corner the five most important letters: "O.K. D.D.E."

The first plane was greeted by a large collection of television operators, cameras, photographers, and reporters. The refugees--some of them carrying babies--came down to be greeted by a handshake by the Acting Governor and by me as the President's representative, among others.

In the general enthusiasm and excitement, some amusing incidents occurred. The Air Force scooped the President himself by telling the press about its participation in the airlift before the President had announced it. However, this did no harm.

The Air Force also loaded one of its planes going East with half a plane load of reporters and photographers. When I got to Maguire Air Force Base the morning of the arrival of the first plane load of refugees, I learned from the Commanding General that the first plane coming in had this cargo of reporters and photographers, and that they were going to be the first ones to get off. The plane was then circling the field. It was not hard to see what would happen if the first "refugees" which appeared on television turned out to be a bunch of American reporters.

Through the cooperation of the Commanding General, I got the message aloft to the plane to keep the reporters inside until the refugees had gotten off. So the ceremony went off completely successfully as planned, but it was a close call.

I had insisted that for the first landing there be at least one Navy plane. However, due to some mistake, when the planes got to Newfoundland there was no Navy plane. So some bright individual, in order to carry out our instructions, held up the refugees in Newfoundland until the Navy could fly a plane from the U.S. up there. One reporter, who was on one of the flights, learned of the cause of this delay in Newfoundland, and told me that it was shocking--which it was. However, fortunately not too much of a story was made of it.

Stemming from my desire to get the utmost publicity from the airlift, I had arranged for my friend Ambassador James B. Conant to fly from Northern Germany to Munich to give a personal send-off for

the start of the airlift. Dr. Conant had a private train, but no plane. So I asked a three-star General, who was in command of MATS, to arrange to get a plane to fly Dr. Conant to Munich for the ceremony, and then take him home. Harry Carter, shortly after that, received a message from an officer speaking for the Commanding General of MATS: That he would be glad to do his best to get a plane to bring Mr. Voorhees' friend, Dr. Cohen, to Munich, and take him back. Dr. Conant may have had some fame in this country as the President of Harvard, as the head of the program which developed the atomic bomb, and as High Commissioner and Ambassador to Germany, but his fame had apparently not penetrated to the Commanding General of the Military Air Transport Service.

As to the sea transport, General Collins and the Navy acted so fast that, although it was a ten-day voyage from the U.S. to Bremerhaven, with approximately a two-day turn around there, and of course a ten-day trip back, the first Navy transport reached Brooklyn on January 1, and the second and third followed shortly thereafter. ICEM arranged for the transportation of the refugees from Austria to Bremerhaven. The Red Cross had people aboard each ship to give assistance. Medical care was provided. Representatives of the Immigration and Public Health Services were aboard as teams to do the processing and avert the congestion which would have occurred at Kilmer by such large numbers arriving at one time.

The ships were designed to carry about 2,100 troops. To avoid

overcrowding, we first reduced this to 1,700 refugees, and later to about 1,500 because it developed that approximately one-half of the refugees were women and children, and temporary canvass partitions had to be set up to take care of them and to keep families together on the ships.

When the first ship arrived on New Year's day, the temperature was just above zero. Yet these people, many of them poorly clad, stood out on the deck singing their national anthem, which they had of course been prevented from singing at home, and they literally sang their hearts out as the ship was tied up.

I recall seeing one grown boy in his shirt sleeves as I went aboard the ship to greet the refugees. I got him inside away from the reporters or other eyes, and peeled off a sweater which I had worn under my overcoat and gave it to him without anybody being the wiser. I don't think he knew who I was anyway.

This reception was a truly heart warming event. The Army was ready with busses for all the refugees. There were no formalities, and the whole business went off with great enthusiasm and, most important of all, no criticism.

There were of course extensive press stories and photographs about this mass migration. One incident was that the number of refugees who landed from the first Navy transport was one greater than the number who embarked at Bremerhaven. A baby was born as the ship was anchored off Staten Island, and became the first American citizen among the Hungarian refugees.

Two other Navy transports were enroute, and we were prepared to extend this service and could have done so successfully. However, Governor Adams gave instructions early in January not to use the sea lift further, and to bring the refugees in by plane. At the time, both General Collins and I felt that this was a mistake, but I think that our handling of it illustrates why our whole effort proved to be successful. This was that we were simply trying to do what the White House wanted done, and did so unquestioningly.

On the whole, therefore, the airlift and sealift were a great success. Again and again we were told from refugee sources of the kindness and thoughtfulness to the refugees on the part of the Air Force and Navy crews on both their planes and ships. This was an expression of the tremendous emotional surge about these refugees, which was shared by America as a whole, and which lifted the entire operation from a routine procedure to one performed in almost a crusading spirit.

Another incident illustrates this: I happened to learn that President Eisenhower's plane, "The Columbine," was in Europe, and, with his permission, arranged to have it loaded with Hungarian refugees on its return flight. So the President's plane arrived on Christmas Day with its load of Hungarian refugees. This was another significant public relations move with unquestioned effect both here and abroad. It was easier to persuade people here to take the Hungarians into their homes if the President was willing

to use his personal plane to bring a lot of them over.

So many things were happening at the same time that it is impossible to make out of this any really orderly statement. Take, for example, the organization of the Kilmer operation; the arrangement to give the resettlement agencies the necessary financing; and Vice President Nixon's trip to Austria, with its intensive publicity. These could be recounted in any order for they all were happening at once, and in a very real way each was a part of the other.

I shall start with the organization at Kilmer: After the New York Times' editorial, "The Mess at Kilmer" above referred to, there was almost no criticism of the Kilmer operation. While everyone helped with a spirit which would be hard to duplicate, the primary person responsible for this success was Leo C. Beebe, who was Vice Chairman at Kilmer of The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief.

There were twenty-two Government and private agencies operating at Kilmer, all--as I have noted--reporting separately to their own people. Beebe divided these into the sponsoring agencies, that is, those which were doing resettlement; the Government agencies; and the cooperating agencies, such as the Red Cross, which were doing essential and effective work, but--at Kilmer at least--were not engaged in resettlement.

Leo designated one assistant of his as a coordinator for each of these three groups, and had regular meetings with the active

heads at Kilmer of each of the groups.

Although the organization was in effect substantially before January 7, 1957, Mr. Beebe published on that date an outline of the organization and work at Kilmer, with a formal organization chart; flow charts pictured in cartoons; forms for offers of housing and employment; and a report on the refugees received and resettled.

We had appealed to IBM, which had sent down a team and a lot of equipment to help so that we could classify on IBM cards the skills, ages, and other necessary information as to the capabilities, of the refugees, and also the essential information as to the job and housing offers.

Although there was no interference with the agencies sponsoring resettlement--which from now on I will call the sponsoring agencies--all of this IBM material was given to them to assist in the incredible job of trying to find what to do for these enormous numbers of people.

Mr. Beebe's outline of January 7, 1957, above referred to, contains one column which more conspicuously than anything else shows the success of the operation.

In the first five days of December, the rate of refugees who left for resettlement was about 100 a day. In each of the last five days of the month, the number which left for resettlement was 823, 575, 542, 445 and 463.

The resettlement rate had increased by 500% in thirty days. By that time we knew that the hard core problem had been solved; that

we could resettle the refugees, and that we would have no concentration camp.

The inflow of refugees, with the airlift and the three Navy transports, was so rapid that at one time the refugee population at Kilmer reached about 9,000, but it was rapidly cut down.

By February 1, 1957, 80% of all refugees had been resettled, and by May, when 32,075 refugees had passed through the Center, there were only 26 who were not at least temporarily resettled.

With complete safety, MATS (Military Air Transport Service) had transported 13,120 refugees on 214 flights. MSTS (Military Sea Transport Service) transported 8,945 on three ocean voyages. The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) transported 9,664 on 133 flights.

As the President's Committee said in its final report to President Eisenhower: "While Russian tanks were firing on Hungarians, U.S. military planes and ships were carrying many thousands of them to the safe haven of our free land. Like the Berlin airlift, the meaning of this operation was not lost on the peoples of the world."

One striking factor in the organization at Kilmer was the American Red Cross operation. Tremendous quantities of secondhand clothing were sent in as one result of the nationwide interest in the refugees. As I learned from President Hoover, ordinarily the most difficult and least worthwhile type of relief is secondhand clothing. However, at Kilmer the Red Cross in some way dealt with

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this successfully:- sorting the clothing; throwing away what was useless; separating the garments according to size and type for men, women and children; hanging them in a long barracks building, and letting each refugee take a free shopping trip through this department store. I have never seen more order brought out of greater chaos in less time.

The thoroughness with which Mr. Beebe and his team developed and operated the organization at Kilmer is shown by one striking illustration: Realizing that this kind of thing might happen again, and that the lessons learned the hard way at Kilmer should not be lost, Mr. Beebe and his team developed a complete manual of the operation of such a center. Copies of this were of course distributed to places in Government and refugee relief where they would be most useful.

No statement about the organization at Kilmer can adequately do justice to what was done there, but I must at least mention General Sidney C. Wooten, the Commanding General. The speed with which he acted; his complete cooperation and his commonsense, were among the great factors which led to success. He was in command of it all. He took these tremendous numbers of people into these old broken-down buildings, cleaned up the buildings, painted them where feasible, fed the refugees well, and above all maintained order with no harsh measures.

Of course the central problem of the Hungarian Relief Program was, as noted above, the resettlement of the refugees. The unbelievable success in this was due to a variety of causes. Some of these have been mentioned above but there were others.

Very early in the work I saw that the resettlement agencies were far beyond their depth financially in finding homes for the number of refugees which it was essential to us to have them take. Since almost all of these resettlement agencies were religious groups, I saw that any outright contributions to them from the President's Emergency Fund would be out of the question for obvious reasons. However it was a government policy, established by the President himself, to bring these refugees to our shores and to take care of them and to fit them into the life of our country. To do this the religious sponsoring agencies were the principal organizations to whom we could look.

Since the United States was paying from the President's Emergency Fund the cost of bringing these people across the Atlantic and of caring for them at Kilmer, their prompt resettlement would represent a great dollar saving for the Government. Also it was imperative for the future lives of the refugees themselves. It seemed to me that, since the United States could pay for the transportation across the Atlantic and the care of the refugees at Kilmer, it also could properly pay the cost of their transportation within this country from Kilmer to whatever places they would have

to go to be resettled. Also I felt that some modest sum could properly be made available to the organizations resettling the refugees for each person accepted by them for resettlement to cover some of the expenses for their immediate care on arrival.

Accordingly, I held a meeting with the representatives of the three largest religious resettlement agencies, who were all members of the President's Committee. I told them that the Government would pay the domestic transportation, plus \$40 or \$50, for each refugee accepted for resettlement. This was of course a very small sum compared to the cost of the Government's keeping them at Kilmer. All agreed to accept refugees on this basis.

The National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC) agreed, at my request, and with the approval of Cardinal Spellman whom I saw personally, to take large numbers of refugees on the above basis by assigning quotas to the priests in many different localities, requiring that they take and absorb a certain number. As at least two-thirds of the refugees were Catholics, this furnished the key to the resettlement program.

No criticism was ever made on the basis of the Government's paying money to religious agencies. Of course the same assistance was offered to the nonreligious groups such as the International Rescue Committee. In retrospect it was this basic step without which the success of the resettlement program would not have been possible.

To handle the accounting for such expenses, I made arrangements with the State Department and the agencies for the latter to advance the funds initially themselves and then file their vouchers with State and be reimbursed. This method worked smoothly.

While names are less important than actions, it seemed desirable to change the name "Camp Kilmer" to "The Joyce Kilmer Reception Center." This was done without formalities and had obvious advantages.

A question arose as to the danger of spreading tuberculosis from the arriving refugees. This was dealt with by having the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) send doctors to Kilmer to make routine examinations of any suspected cases. I then made arrangements to have those found to have active tuberculosis treated in USPHS hospitals.

What seemed initially to be a more serious question was that there were some press stories that our emergency program was covering the introduction of Communists into this country. I at once made an appointment to see Mr. J. Edgar Hoover, informed him of the press criticism, and stated that we would take whatever action he desired in order to avert such a result. He assured me that he was entirely satisfied on the subject as all of the refugees whom we brought in were examined and fingerprinted before leaving Austria, therefore that he knew the facts about all of them and that I need have no concern. I told him that we stood subject to any further

instructions he might care to give us to protect against any infiltration of Communists through the Refugee Relief Program. This ended the press criticism and also any danger from this cause.

As there were several different Government Departments and agencies which had an interest in or responsibilities for different features of the Refugee Relief Program, I organized an informal ad hoc working group of which I was chairman. During the critical phases of the program we met at frequent intervals to explain what we were doing and to have a frank and full discussion. This resulted in a harmonious working relationship with the different Government Departments and agencies.

In referring as I have to the formal steps taken, a very informal but important one should be mentioned. This was the work of Harry T. Carter as my assistant. Mr. Carter, although a generation younger than I, had had a broader experience in Congressional matters. (He had been for several years the Administrative Assistant of Senator H. Alexander Smith of New Jersey.) The natural relationship between an older and a younger man would be that the former should be the more cautious one. In my relationship with Mr. Carter this role was reversed, and he repeatedly provided the good counsel which saved me from serious mistakes. He also maintained a friendly and cooperative relationship between my office and all of the persons and agencies, public and private, with which I had to deal during this critical period.

One of the most important decisions in such a job as I had, or as the President's Committee had, is to know when to end its work. We were created for an emergency. As previously noted, by February 28, 1957, I felt that the President's Committee could deal with the remaining emergency aspects of the problem, and resigned my White House position as the President's personal representative. From then on the Committee carried forward. In April it held a conference of persons active in the resettlement problem from all over the country. This was held at Kilmer. The problem was then well in hand.

Since The Joyce Kilmer Reception Center was itself an emergency organization, and since by May 1st it was clear that the emergency phase was over, we decided to close the Center. The few refugees who arrived after May 1st were lodged temporarily in the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn. Kilmer was closed on May 14th with only 26 refugees who had not been resettled and these were transferred to the St. George.

On May 14th the Committee made its final report to the President which in substance was "mission accomplished." (A copy of this report is attached.)

Four years later under date of January 11, 1961, I received a letter signed "Dick Nixon" which included the following:

Dear Tracy:

As I end my fourteen years of government service in Washington, I want to tell you that I shall always be proud of the fact that I was privileged to have your friendship and support. I want you to know too how deeply grateful I am not only for your support in this campaign, but for the splendid service you have rendered to the Administration and the nation during the time I have been in Washington. Of all of the assignments I have undertaken there is none which gave me more satisfaction than our work with the Hungarian refugees. I will always be proud that we were associated in this project and I hope there will be times in the future when we can work together for a good cause.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Dick Nixon