

On Nov. 12, 1969, I sent to TSV DRAFT dated April 29, 1968, entitled HUNGARIAN REFUGEE RELIEF 1956-1957, consisting of 34 pages (original only) with a notation stating "HRR - all notes transcribed. Still to be dictated: Financing of the resettlement, Nixon's trip, Publicity."

(This was revised in a draft dated Apr. 29, 1968, which was mailed to TSV in Brooklyn on Nov. 12, 1969.)

Extra copy —

HUNGARIAN REFUGEE RELIEF PROGRAM

NOT CORRECTED

Election Day 1956, when almost everybody voted for Ike but voted for few other Republicans, completed my work with the Republican National Committee in the ~~election~~ <sup>campaign</sup>. At Chairman Leonard Hall's request, I had spent full time since early September at the National Committee Headquarters, principally on the nationwide birthday party for the President, called "National Ike Day." I have written separately about my work on that project.

My work in the campaign had not been done with any idea of <sup>re</sup>ward through appointment to any Government job. To have this clearly understood, I told Governor Adams, The Assistant to the President, that I did not desire any Government job, but that, if there were any temporary "chores" which they might want me to do which did not involve taking an official Government position, I would be glad to consider <sup>doing them</sup> it. ~~Of course, I had no idea that there would be any such developments, and felt that the offer was little more than a formality.~~

On a Saturday morning late in November, the White House called me at my home in Brooklyn. Governor Adams was on the phone and asked me to meet him



that day at the White House. He thought I was in Washington and, on learning where I was, immediately said that Monday morning would be time enough. I met with him then, and he told me that President Eisenhower wanted to have me act as his personal representative in matters relating to the Hungarian refugee crisis. I told Governor Adams that I would be glad to do so if I could do it on the basis of an unpaid consultant without official Government position. He said that was all right, and asked when I could start. I said, "I am here now and will begin whenever you want me to." He said that there was a room upstairs in the White House <sup>building</sup> office which was available, and I started <sup>1</sup> immediately to work ~~at once~~.

After the abortive Hungarian revolution in October, which was brutally crushed by Russian tanks in Budapest early in November, 175,000 to 200,000 refugees fled from the terror to Austria before Soviet troops cut off the escape route. Most of these Hungarians had walked the last few miles to the border at night and through marshes in cold weather, with little if any money or possessions. <sup>Their</sup> The story is told in "The Bridge at Ankau." <sup>by</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

Austria - which was of course defenseless against the Russians - had with great courage permitted these people to come in and, at enormous sacrifice, had tried to care for them. <sup>There was obvious</sup> ~~It was impossible to estimate the~~ danger of the Soviet sending its forces into Austria to round up these people, and perhaps move the Iron Curtain westward. In part because they were fearful of this, the European countries, including the United Kingdom, made immediate, large scale efforts to evacuate the Hungarians from Austria and give them asylum. Switzerland, which wanted no common border with Russia, took some 10,000 refugees within a few weeks - an enormous number for such a small country to absorb.

As I recall the figure, there was a limit of about 6,500 under regular immigration <sup>procedures</sup> ~~practices~~ which the U.S. could take. <sup>there</sup> Of ~~this~~, some 1,500 had <sup>arrived.</sup> ~~come in.~~ Part of Camp Kilmer, near New Brunswick, which had been built as a staging area <sup>in</sup> ~~for~~ World War II, had been opened to receive these refugees and, in spite of the small number, matters were already in considerable confusion.



The Scripps-Howard Press was severely criticizing the Administration.

The New York Times published a bitter editorial entitled, "The Mess at

Kilmer." The ~~need~~<sup>to leave</sup> of the refugees, a sincere desire ~~that~~<sup>led to a</sup> the U.S. do its

part, and the impact of the press criticism, had apparently ~~moved the White~~<sup>led to a</sup>

~~House to~~<sup>Stoin</sup> recommend that the President take unusual action. This was needed

not only because there were still close to 5,000 more which would soon be

coming under the regular immigration quota, but because of a plan to use the

so-called "parole" provision of the immigration law to admit an additional

15,000. This was very promptly authorized, and the figure was later substan-

tially further increased.

The situation was unprecedented. No such large flood of refugees over

so short a period had come to the U.S. Further, under ordinary practices,

each immigrant had to have a sponsor to assure that he would not become a

public charge, and arrangements were customarily made, therefore, in advance

after long planning for arrival of ~~immigrants~~ refugees, ~~or otherwise~~.

The U.S. had not been as prompt to act on an effective scale as had the European countries, and there was no time for the customary preliminaries.

The International Red Cross, the International Rescue Committee, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, and others were seeking to help the Austrian Government and people.

(IRC)  
^  
(ICEM)  
^

Various religious ~~refugee~~ organizations had been active and effective for years in arranging the ~~admittance~~ <sup>admission</sup> of refugees from various countries on a planned basis, as had the ~~interdenominational International Rescue Committee~~ <sup>IRC.</sup>

^

~~(IRC).~~

The largest and most effective of these groups was the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC), which had by far the ~~largest~~ <sup>greatest</sup> case load, as most of the Hungarians were of course Catholics.

All of these groups <sup>had</sup> sent representatives to Kilmer, and were doing the best they could in a confused situation for which there was no <sup>adequate</sup> plan.

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The President had allocated moneys from his Emergency Fund to open up Kilmer and pay the costs of housing and feeding the refugees. The American Red Cross was giving assistance with secondhand clothing, toilet articles, and in other ways.

As I estimated the situation, it seemed to me that there was every prospect that Camp Kilmer was likely to become a vast concentration camp in which many thousands of these refugees would remain indefinitely at Government cost and without assimilation into our economy. Only the most radical action, I felt, could avert this.

The Army Commander at Kilmer was Brig. General Sidney C. Wooten. He and the Army were doing a good job under trying conditions in housing and feeding these people, but they were obviously not equipped to resettle them. The religious and other voluntary agencies with experience in resettlement were too far over their heads financially and ~~in other ways~~ <sup>organizationally</sup> to be able to accept and resettle such a large number of persons who came with no relatives, no funds, few clothes, and very few of whom spoke English.

With these difficulties and with the press already critical of the Administration, I went into the situation with my eyes open to <sup>what was</sup> the far more than a possibility that I would become the goat as the "mess" became ~~very much~~ worse.

Including the regular quota available and the decision, which was soon made, to take the initial 15,000 on parole, we had to look forward promptly to at least <sup>20,000 more</sup> ~~21,500~~ penniless refugees, or well over a dozen times the <sup>already here - the handling of whom</sup> number ~~the arrival of whom~~ had already created so much public criticism.

I could find no precedent or pattern for dealing with such a problem, <sup>SO</sup> ~~and~~ <sup>through</sup> whatever was to be done had to be largely improvisation.

The State Department was of course deeply concerned that the U.S. do its share and do it well, but the Department was not an operating organization. The very able career ambassador Loy Henderson was in charge of it for the Department, but he was also burdened with many other cares.

Also, the injection of any new personality into the White House staff was bound to create chance of friction, not only within the staff but with



the State Department, the Army, and the Immigration Service, which was part of the Justice Department.

*at once*

There were so many ~~first~~ things to be done that it was hard, and in fact impossible, to determine what to do first. There was certainly no time for neat record keeping, and now ~~for the first time~~, five years *for the first time* later, I have a chance to try to reconstruct from memory - with some but not exhaustive reference to all of the documents - what did happen in those hectic days. This account cannot purport to be precisely historically accurate, but merely to give the substance of what happened in as objective a way as possible.

To some degree my memory was refreshed a year ago when, again at President Eisenhower's request, I undertook to work with a somewhat analogous although in many ways very different kind of refugee problem during the great influx of Cubans fleeing to Florida from the Castro terror.

*Kilmer*

While the press was critical of the operations, there was an overwhelming wave of public sympathy for the Hungarians and a desire to have the United States do its part in helping them. This was an asset of great value, and present ~~but~~ much greater potential value if properly fostered. However, in spite of this the *Hungarian* refugee problem before us seemed almost insurmountable.

*of these*

Yet five months later, 32,000 refugees had passed through Camp Kilmer, and the Reception Center there was closed, with less than one hundred refugees who had not been at least temporarily resettled; and with all critical phases of the task accomplished.

*Things*

As I look back, a series of factors made this possible: Some of these were:

~~to~~ I received complete cooperation from the White House staff, the State Department, the Army, the Immigration Service, the voluntary agencies, and the press.

One of the underlying circumstances in this was that, following former President Hoover's example in all his work for refugees, I ~~would~~ *did* not accept



any Government salary, <sup>and</sup> ~~as~~ this was well known. <sup>it</sup> ~~it~~ was much harder to shoot at someone who was working for free in a crisis than at a person holding a Government job who thereby <sup>became</sup> ~~becomes~~ a natural target. This unpaid status - with which I also emphasized the temporary nature of my White House connection - averted possible frictions in the White House staff and in the Departments and Agencies. The people with whom I had to work might feel sorry for me, but they certainly were not jealous of my position.

Another circumstance which resulted in cooperation was <sup>my</sup> ~~the~~ policy of not <sup>trying to</sup> ~~issuing~~ instructions but <sup>only</sup> ~~making~~ requests of the different Government Departments and Agencies, and by personally calling on the various persons responsible to obtain their ~~willing~~ cooperation. This was of course greatly helped by the fact that I was the President's personal representative and was operating from the White House, as well as by the intense interest which everyone then had in the Hungarian refugees - "the Freedom Fighters."

~~22~~ A second factor which helped to accomplish the results achieved was my unbelievable good fortune in obtaining almost immediately uniquely able advice and assistance:-

Mr. Hoover, with his vast knowledge and experience, ~~and~~ under whom I had previously served, stood ready to give me needed advice.

I drafted from the Pentagon Harry T. Carter, a lawyer\* who knew his way around Washington, and possessed excellent judgment and tact. Harry and two secretaries - all of us crammed into one small room on the second floor of the White House office <sup>building (space late</sup> ~~later~~ used as a reception room for one of the President's Assistants) - constituted my only White House staff. They were assembled almost overnight, and made it possible to start to handle the deluge of correspondence, telephone calls, offers of help, and inquiries, in a procession of at least twelve hour days.

When the news of my appointment by the President was announced, General J. Lawton Collins, with whom I had worked when he was Army Chief of Staff,



called up and said, "Tracy, I see you have gotten yourself into trouble.

If I can help, let me know." <sup>His</sup> ~~This~~ offer was immediately accepted. At

the time I had an office in the Pentagon with two secretaries, and these facilities were made available to General Collins. His participation was also, of course, of inestimable value in securing complete cooperation and rapid action by the Department of the Army.

Also, I needed a representative immediately at Kilmer, and was told that there was a man from the Ford Foundation who would be excellent for this purpose. I phoned to Henry Ford, II, from the White House about 6:00 o'clock <sup>in the</sup> ~~one~~ evening to ask him to arrange to have this man loaned to us for the emergency. It developed that Mr. Ford was in New York, and he was of course tied up. However, the interest in the Hungarian refugees was so great that he called me back within ten minutes. He said he thought the man I had in mind was not the best <sup>one</sup> ~~man~~ for the job, but that he would give me the best man ~~that~~ the Ford Motor Company had, and would let me know promptly. ~~By~~

*Within twenty minutes,*

~~630~~ Mr. Ford phoned me again, saying that the man whom he <sup>Mr</sup> would make

available was Leo C. Beebe, Assistant Director of Public Relations for

the ~~Motor~~ Company; that Beebe was in Detroit; that he would report to Mr.

Ford in the morning in New York and would be in Washington, if I wanted him,

by the middle of the day ready to go to work. I of course accepted this,

and Leo Beebe became my strong right arm, responsible for much of the success <sup>SD</sup>  
of the operation at Kilmer.

It is hard to write about these things without their appearing to have occurred chronologically, when in fact they were happening almost simultaneously. Tumbling over each other, several additional key actions happened fast:

From years of experience with Government Departments, I knew that each had a tight budget, and that getting anything done which involved expenditures for unexpected purposes of departmental money already budgeted was a tough and slow process. We dreamed up a plan to meet this which Harry Carter <sup>told me</sup> ~~said had~~ ~~had~~ *was without precedent.* ~~never been used before.~~

It was a directive from the President to all Departments and Agencies requesting their cooperation with his Representative for



Hungarian Refugee Relief, and providing reimbursement from the President's Emergency Fund for any actions taken at the request of the President's Representative. This was issued on December 6, 1956. ~~It is such an~~

~~important part of this story that I attach a copy.~~

5 In effect, it meant that the Departments could do what I asked in behalf of the President without financial sacrifice, and could obtain without cost ~~any~~ favorable publicity from their help to the refugees. Yet they could have these advantages only if they did what I ~~requested~~. This single piece of paper, and especially its financial implications, ~~gave me~~ *wanted done.* *my real source of power.* *were* *for* almost unique powers. No orders were necessary, merely requests, and the Departments' bread was all buttered on the side of complying.

(Four years later in the Cuban refugee crisis, ~~I~~ *I* pulled this old paper out of the file and got a similar order, which again worked magic.)

*in the government,*  
To keep things running smoothly, I set up an informal working committee consisting of acting representatives of all Departments and Agencies which

were active in the program. This included the State Department; Defense

Department; Immigration Service of the Justice Department; Department of

Health, Education & Welfare (because the U.S. Public Health Service was

responsible for ~~the~~ control of disease brought in by ~~the~~ immigrants, and

also because many of the refugees were students and continued education, and

particularly <sup>because</sup> immediate instruction in <sup>English</sup> ~~the language~~ was important <sup>The</sup> Department

of Labor since its Employment Service throughout the country could be helpful

in getting jobs for the refugees; the International Cooperation Administra-

tion, and the Bureau of the Budget, and possibly some others. Within the

Defense Department, all three <sup>of the Military</sup> ~~services~~ had to be dealt with individually,

the Army because of its ~~big~~ role at Kilmer, and the Air Force and Navy in

arranging transportation from Europe for the refugees.

Another plan, which was quickly put into effect, was to get the President

to set up the President's Committee <sup>FOR</sup> ~~on~~ Hungarian REFugee Relief to guide the

program instead of having it done by one individual in the White House. This

had many advantages. It was a way to provide an organization in a hurry;



*a way*

to set up offices outside of the White House where there was more space;

*^ a means of welding*

and ~~to weld~~ together, by representation on the Committee, the more impor-

tant non-governmental organizations concerned. The President approved

this promptly and announced the appointment of the Committee from Augusta

*Georgia*  
*LA*

on December 12, 1956.

We got Mr. Lewis W. Douglas to serve as Honorary Chairman. I became

Chairman; General Collins was Vice Chairman and Director in Washington;

Mr. Beebe was Vice Chairman at Kilmer, and Mr. W. Hallam Tuck, who had

had the broadest experience with refugees both under Mr. Hoover and as

Director General of the International Refugee Organization of the United

Nations, was Vice Chairman to make a first-hand study of the situation in

Austria, ~~to see what was needed.~~

Mr. George Meany, President of AFL/CIO, whose support in connection

with obtaining jobs for the Hungarians was a "must," was appointed as a

member of the Committee. General Gruenther represented the Red Cross.

*American*

*LA*

Other members were Msgr. (now Bishop) Swanstrom, head of NCWC, and representatives of the other principal religious groups engaged in resettlement; and also of the International Rescue Committee. General Donovan, although he was in failing health at the time, served as Counsel.

*reason for*  
One ~~feature~~ of the Committee was that all of the most active groups were in this way brought into ~~the~~ *a* position of sharing the responsibility for what was done *with* ~~and~~ had a voice in decisions. Put more bluntly, those who were most likely to criticize were brought in as participants in the job on a cooperative basis, and *I* it was natural, therefore, that *serious* criticisms failed to materialize.

The Committee also had the advantage of making it clear to everyone in the White House and in the Government Departments and Agencies that I was making my stay on the White House staff as temporary as possible, and that I was not seeking to build up a position there.

General Collins promptly obtained a suitable office for the Committee *in Washington,* on K Street ~~and~~ got it furnished, and was in business.



My assistant in the Pentagon, Colonel Robert E. Huneycutt, was assigned as General Collins' aide, and my former secretary, Mrs. Philip, who had worked with me on the Ike Day project, became the General's secretary.

Mr. Beebe immediately set up a Committee office at Kilmer, and his leadership there ~~as~~ representing the President's Committee was automatically accepted by the twenty-two or twenty-three agencies, governmental and non-governmental, which had all been milling around there. This was one of the big steps. General Wooten unreservedly cooperated.

While Mr. Beebe was a built-in public relations man himself, I arranged for a full time public relations man to be at Kilmer.

Because of its importance for the success of the enterprise, I attach <sup>ies</sup> a copy of OUTLINE OF THE ORGANIZATION AND WORK at Kilmer, <sup>and of The Manual of Policies</sup> ~~which was prepared~~ by Mr. Beebe, and ~~which includes both a manual of operations and an organization chart, both of which did so much to bring order out of confusion.~~ <sup>and procedures there were</sup>

*shall refer to them again later.*

Concurrently with all this <sup>broader</sup> ~~was~~ our public relations program <sup>got under way.</sup> Ernest  
Lindley, the noted columnist of Newsweek, arranged a luncheon for me with  
some two dozen of <sup>Washington's</sup> ~~the~~ leading reporters and columnists. These included,  
among others:

This gave me a chance to tell the story of what we were doing, ~~of the~~  
~~novelty~~ of the problem, and of the urgency.

As the press realized the difficulties in resettling these people, and  
the importance that the U.S. not fail, their cooperation in our work was  
freely given. Press criticisms disappeared almost overnight.

However, we needed much more than an absence of criticism. The question  
was whether we could fire up the imagination and interest of the American  
people over the next several months to get them to accept these Hungarians,  
to find jobs for them, and to help them. To do this a high powered publicity  
program was necessary. Congress is traditionally opposed to the expenditure  
of Government funds for publicity purposes, and I felt that it would be a



grave mistake to use the President's Emergency Fund for any compensation to a public relations firm.

As explained, I had just previously been through the successful National Ike Day program, the public relations for which had been handled by Communications Counselors, Inc. (CCI), a subsidiary of the <sup>very influential</sup> McCann-Erickson advertising agency. Almost immediately after starting work in the White House, I made an agreement with CCI to do the Hungarian job for a fee of \$40,000, <sup>public relations</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>this</sup> I told them I did not ~~yet~~ have but would get in some way, and that it ~~could~~ not involve Government money.

Dean Rusk was President of The Rockefeller Foundation at that time. I called on him and asked for \$35,000 for this purpose. The Foundation approved this, subject to obtaining a Bureau of Internal Revenue ruling that the Foundation could contribute this amount to the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief without ~~its~~ affecting the Foundation's tax-deductible status.

This was lawyers' caution, but it meant that I had either to take the risk of obtaining <sup>favorable</sup> ~~such~~ a ruling, or fail in the job the President had given me. So I told CCI to go ahead.

Fred Scribner, later Under Secretary of the Treasury, was then Counsel for the Treasury Department, and I sought his help in getting a prompt ruling from the Bureau. However, it was not until February 26, 1957, that <sup>the</sup> ruling came through, and in the meantime I was carrying \$35,000 to \$40,000 on the cuff. But if the work of CCI had been deferred until the ruling <sup>was</sup> ~~came~~ <sup>made</sup> through, we would simply have lost the battle, and this was ~~simply~~ one of the risks which had to ~~be~~ taken. I recall the intense feeling of relief that I experienced when the ruling did come through.

We promptly thereafter received a check for \$35,000 from The Rockefeller Foundation. A friend of mine, and a former client, each made a contribution toward the additional \$5,000 needed, and I made up the balance from a small family charitable corporation which we operate.

While we made no effort to conceal CCI's role, we of course did not advertise it, and few realized, when the tremendous favorable flood of publicity in the press, magazines, television and radio started pouring out,



that there was a high powered public relations effort going on. As part of this, there was, as mentioned above, a full time representative at Kilmer to head off possible criticism and to build up publicity which would help the resettlement agencies in the mass handling of so many people.

Also <sup>our participation</sup> illustrative of the kind of publicity which could not have been arranged without the aid of CCI was ~~the televising of~~ a New Year's Eve program, in which Bob Considine acted as Master of Ceremonies. General Electric had

bought the entire NBC Network for the last five minutes of the old year and

the first ten minutes of the new year. <sup>had</sup> It set up a party for quite a large <sup>the refugees</sup> group of <sup>in a room</sup> Hungarians at the Astor Hotel overlooking Times Square. This was of <sup>party</sup> course televised. The ratings later indicated that there was roughly an

<sup>over thirty</sup> audience of <sup>thru CCI</sup> 33 million who watched the program. I was given four minutes

in the middle of the program just after midnight for what was in substance <sup>straight</sup> a commercial for the Hungarian refugees. As this tells some of the story,

I quote it here:-

Address of Tracy S. Voorhees, Chairman, President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, on NBC Television Network New Year's Eve Program at Midnight January 1, 1957

On behalf of the people of the United States, I extend to you, our Hungarian friends, now also our new-found neighbors - a warm welcome to our shores, and our wishes for a Happy New Year in a free land.

And, my fellow Americans, I also wish for all of you health and happiness in the New Year. Notable among the tasks you have already begun for the year to come is the welcome of these homeless people to our country.

Our nation was created by refugees from many lands who sought a new home where they might worship in their own way, speak their convictions and pursue a way of life of their own choosing.

Today these Hungarian refugees bring to us the culture and traditions of the Old World plus an eager desire for opportunity in the New World.

But what about these refugees who are here tonight and who are daily arriving at the Joyce Kilmer Reception Center? That is the question I am most frequently asked. I can answer that, once you have met them as I have, you will feel, as I do, that they are good people; that they are strong and self-reliant people. You will know, as I do, that they have come to our land - as many of our own ancestors did - to escape tyranny and to make a new start in life in freedom.

In the next few days we hope to release a list of the specific job skills of these refugees. We know that included among them are doctors, scientists, engineers, skilled technicians and promising students. I am sure that the number of job offers will greatly increase when this list is available. But job offers alone are of little immediate use unless accompanied by offers of at least temporary homes.

Here in the center of our traditional New Year's Eve festivities in Times Square, we pause to share our own celebration with this group of our new Hungarian neighbors, as they welcome the New Year in their own traditional way.

And let us now renew our resolve in these the first moments of this, the first day of 1957 to accept these homeless folks into our homes and hearts as an example, which will be reflected throughout the world, of the spirit of democracy in action, of the spirit of America in action!

Let us recognize that the tragedy which has happened to them in recent weeks creates both a great moral obligation upon us, as a humanitarian people, to give help, and beyond that an unparalleled opportunity to prove by action what America has always - and will always - stand for in the world.



CCI had also arranged to have Bob Considine come to Kilmer on Christmas Eve to put on his television program from there following our Christmas Eve party for the refugees. This was only one of many activities.

CCI and Mr. Beebe also were steadily giving up to date information to the press and pictures of events at Kilmer. As an illustration of this, attached is a press kit which CCI prepared and which was sent to editors all around the country. It contained in form usable by the newspapers a wide range of items of interest about the refugees and the program.

Even for one who lived through it, it is hard to recreate the real sense of excitement which the country experienced over the Hungarian refugees for a period of several months.

How much of <sup>this</sup> ~~the~~ public reaction across the country was spontaneous, <sup>and CCI,</sup>  
how much was the result of the efforts of the President's Committee, and  
how much flowed from the work of the resettlement agencies, no one can ever  
tell. However, there was no mistaking the fact that there was a nationwide  
surge of keen interest in the Hungarians, and efforts everywhere to help  
them, and that this paved the way for the resettlement agencies' work.

<sup>promptly</sup>  
~~During December~~ <sup>It</sup> became evident that the financial load on the re-  
settlement agencies was greater than they could possibly swing alone. In  
this connection it is necessary to understand the curiously mixed responsi-  
bilities of the Government and private agencies in a situation such as this.  
The bringing of this mass of refugees here was a Government policy; the  
trans-Atlantic trip and the housing and feeding at Kilmer were paid for by  
the Government. The Government was, therefore, basically responsible for  
this vast assemblage of helpless people who were already here, on their way,  
or soon to come.



Yet the religious and other ~~refugee~~ <sup>resettlement</sup> agencies existed to give help of  
~~to refugees, and organizations~~ <sup>both</sup>  
this kind, and were the only ~~ones~~ <sup>ones</sup> with connections across the country and

with the experience, qualifications and personnel to do the resettlement

job. However, their ordinary, regular, carefully planned refugee immigra-

~~tion~~ <sup>programs were</sup> was wholly different from a crash situation such as this.

I realized that the Government was going to have to help the agencies

on a large scale, and I at once secured through Governor Adams and the

Director of the Bureau of the Budget informal approval of allocating

<sup>for</sup> \$1-1/2 million to this purpose. However, giving Government money to religious

<sup>obviously</sup> agencies was a sensitive matter, and to avoid any complications <sup>we</sup> worked out

a plan for reimbursing the agencies for transportation costs within the

United States of persons whom they resettled. I arranged ~~to have~~ a meeting

in Washington with Msgr. Swanstrom of NCWC, Mr. Wilson of the Church World

Service, and Mr. Leavitt of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee,

all members of the President's Committee, and who represented the principal

religious agencies engaged in the resettlement job.

I told them of the help I could give and worked out <sup>a</sup> ~~the~~ formula with them for reimbursement for domestic transportation costs. Mr. Leavitt <sup>being</sup> realized that since most of the Jews were resettled near New York, he would be getting less than the others proportionately to the number of refugees handled, but he agreed. With no written authority, I then assured them that they could go ahead on the basis that their agencies would be reimbursed. ✓

→ Of course, this applied to the other agencies also, <sup>We had the funds</sup> and I set up a ~~fund~~ <sup>STATE</sup> in the State Department, and arranged for ~~it~~ to handle the reimbursement on proper vouchers. <sup>from the</sup>

Without this action we would have had an inevitable sit-down strike on the part of the voluntary agencies. ~~Fortunately this was avoided in time.~~ In retrospect I believe that this was one of the principal turning points in making the program a success.



As the annexed Outline of the Organization and Work and the Manual of Procedures show in detail, a systematic punch card system was worked out giving all essential information about each refugee or the head of each refugee family. To set this up promptly and operate it, the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) loaned us without charge the machines and the personnel to operate them. In this way the resettlement agencies were given in usable form full information about the refugees on which to proceed.

At the time I started work, all ocean transportation was being furnished on a contract basis through the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM). While the Russian tanks were shooting down Hungarians in the streets of Budapest, it seemed to me that we could not miss the tremendous propaganda advantage of having our military planes and naval ships engaged in helping the refugees. Accordingly, with General Collins, I turned at once to the Air Force and the Navy.

The Air Force, for a substantial part of its ocean transport operations entirely outside of the refugee program, was contracting for civilian planes.

At first it wanted to do this for the transportation of the Hungarian refugees. However, this would have virtually entirely lost the desired propaganda advantage. Utilizing the President's directive, and with ready help from Deputy Secretary of Defense Reuben Robertson and Secretary of the Air Force Don Quarles, the Air Force agreed to transport a very substantial number of the refugees in U.S. Air Force transports. Similarly, arrangements were made to have Navy air transport planes also included.

The Navy further had excellent troop transport ships which could carry more than 1500 refugees on a sailing. Largely through General Collins, arrangements were made for three such sailings from Bremen to New York.

It was made plain to the world that our military strength was being used for the humanitarian purpose of helping the refugees who had been able to escape the Russian terror in Budapest.



I recall especially two incidents in connection with the arrival of the refugees:

We had planned to have the first Air Force and the first Navy planes carrying refugees arrive at the same time, and to obtain as much favorable publicity as possible from the launching of this service. We had arranged for the Acting Governor of New Jersey and for the New Jersey Congressmen to meet the first planes on their arrival at McGuire Air Force Base, and I was there representing the President.

We had prepared, in both English and Hungarian, a welcoming message from the President, a copy of which was delivered to each refugee upon arrival, including the children. Copies of these are attached.

When I arrived at McGuire I found that two things had gone wrong: First, instead of there being one Navy and one Air Force plane to bring in the first refugees, there were in fact two Air Force planes. To correct this, someone had kept the refugees waiting in Newfoundland while a Navy plane was sent up from the U.S., to which on arrival the refugees were

transferred from one of the Air Force planes. This was obviously a phony, and we did get some criticism of it, but escaped rather more easily than the people responsible for this move deserved.

This would not have been too bad except for the fact that the Air Force public relations people had over-reached themselves and, without letting me know, had flown to Europe a number of press correspondents to make sure that the Air Force role in this humanitarian project was fully publicized. They brought back a half dozen of these correspondents on the initial trip, for the arrival of which we had planned the welcoming ceremony above mentioned.

On reaching McGuire Field about a half hour before the planes were to land, I learned of this, and could picture the television cameras picking up, not Hungarian refugees but a parade of U.S. newspaper men leading the way off of the plane. With immediate help from the Commander of McGuire Air Force Base, we got instructions to the plane to keep the correspondents aboard until the refugees had debarked and had been properly greeted.



This was rather a close call, but not much harm was done except that the correspondents themselves had been delayed at Newfoundland, and one or two of them were loaded with criticism about the delay in order to substitute a Navy plane for the last part of the trip, as above described. However, this criticism was largely lost in the other news, and no serious harm was done.

One feature of this military airlift was that the civilian contract planes had been flying from Austria, and I was unwilling to take the risk of letting the military planes on this mission go into Austria, which was in a dangerous enough situation anyway without doing anything further to stir up the Russians. Accordingly, we arranged for train transportation for the refugees to Munich, and for the military airlift from there.

The other incident which I remember vividly was the arrival of the first Navy ocean transport with between 1,500 and 2,000 refugees. It had anchored in the Lower Bay and came up to the Army Base pier in Brooklyn in

the morning. The ship then disembarked one more refugee than had been taken on at Bremen. This was a baby boy born while the ship was anchored in lower New York harbor, and he was an American citizen.

The weather was bitterly cold, about zero, and as the ship was warped into the pier it seemed as though almost all of the refugees it carried were standing on deck, many with very inadequate clothing, singing their hearts out in the Hungarian national anthem.

I recall going aboard the ship and seeing one young Hungarian man with neither sweater nor coat. I took him inside where no one could see what was going on, and gave him the sweater I had been wearing. This was probably rather a futile gesture but is illustrative of the deep feeling of sympathy we had for these people at the time.



Another feature of the program was Vice President Nixon's trip to Austria.

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.

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

First, *It* evidenced emphatically President Eisenhower's deep concern *for*, and desire to help *his* the refugees and *a* 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.



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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 ~~was one of~~ the most experienced

<sup>in</sup> men in the world dealing with refugee problems; that he would have been there

for a week or two when the Vice President <sup>arrived,</sup> ~~got there~~ so that he would have

appraised the situation and could give the Vice President an objective,

dependable estimate of the <sup>problem</sup> situation.

Mr. Nixon's trip worked out just as planned. With characteristic

personal courage, he went right down <sup>at night to the Marshes at the</sup> ~~to 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.

at the Waldorf Astoria,

The first was to call on former President Hoover/ 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



publicity for myself, I could get great help through publicity for the various jobs I was engaged in.

The total number of refugees to be accepted was raised from time to time so that, as I recall it, by the middle of January it was clear that we were going to have to deal with some 30,000. There were obviously cross currents of thinking in the Government as to how many refugees should be accepted. I felt that this was not my business; that my job was to try to take care of the ones whom it was decided to bring in. However, as there had been no detailed terms of reference for my work, I felt that it should include an authoritative study of the situation in Austria, and at least a temporary representative of the President's Committee there. To this end, I had sent, as above explained, Mr. Tuck, and with him a retired Major General, Carl A. Hardigg, to Vienna.

Although it was not for me to try to determine how many refugees should be brought in, we did have to have some guide lines in order to plan. For instance, there were many advantages in use of the Navy ocean transports



and these of course had to be planned for substantially ahead. I was therefore trying to find out what the extent of the program would be.

About January 17, Governor Adams told me about the decision ~~on these~~ matters, <sup>to</sup> ~~which in substance called for~~ gradually tapering off the program. He said that there was, therefore, no need for continuing Mr. Tuck and General Hardigg in Austria. Accordingly I sent them word to come home, following which they submitted a most helpful and constructive report on the situation there. ~~How much use was made of this by the various Govern-~~ment agencies concerned, I do not know. However, <sup>from</sup> ~~this~~ was a facet of the President's Committee's work which was clearly called for ~~in~~ the beginning, and which was ~~finished~~ and well done.

While it is easy in telling about this to get lost in these various aspects of a complex program, the heart of the whole matter was how to keep the flow of refugees going out of Kilmer to other parts of the country for resettlement.



While the Labor Department's Employment Service was a great help, this work fell squarely on the voluntary services, and most of all upon the Catholics - the National Catholic Welfare Conference (NCWC). Even with the aid of the funds for domestic transportation, and with all the publicity, this was still for each of the resettlement agencies a tremendously difficult and unprecedented kind of job.

With the planes and ships pouring in refugees in large numbers, we watched the population of Kilmer grow to a maximum of 8,500 to 9,000. But at the same time we were greatly encouraged to see that the outflow was also rapidly stepped up. So vigorous was this work by the voluntary agencies - aided of course by all of the other aspects of our program - that it is my recollection that the average stay of refugees at Kilmer was only about two weeks.

The tremendous task performed by the voluntary agencies, and especially by NCWC which resettled about two-thirds of all of the refugees, was an inspiring example, both of humanitarian action and of life in a free democracy.



Our fears of Kilmer becoming a concentration camp gradually faded, but we kept the pressure up on all fronts to move the refugees out, and yet to deal with each as a human being.

*As noted above*  
Special programs were set up for university students. The largest of these was at Bard College at Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, where an extensive course of two or three months was given in English while arrangements were being made for scholarships and for longer study.

A special program for scientists was set up at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, whose campus adjoined Kilmer.

Through the Institute of International Education and the World University Service, a program for obtaining scholarships and placing university students was developed. This continued long after Kilmer was closed. I know that I continued to work on this phase of it throughout the summer. Roughly, 750 students were provided with scholarships and necessary supplemental funds.

By the latter part of February, I felt that we were organized through the President's Committee to do the rest of the job, and that there was no need for me further in the White House. Accordingly, I resigned from my position as the President's Personal Representative for Hungarian Refugee Relief on February 28, telling the President that we would continue to do the job through the Committee.

Copies of the President's letters to me of February 28 and May 14 are attached; also a large but necessarily incomplete collection of pictures and photographs.



Another important step in making resettlement possible was the organization of state Governor's Committees. At our instance, President Eisenhower sent a telegram to the Governors of all states requesting that each set up, in his own state, a Governor's Committee for Hungarian Refugees. This was done by a majority of the Governors, and some of the Committees were most effective.

This also resulted in a good deal of additional local publicity and interest.

In the spring, arrangements were made for a resettlement conference at Kilmer which was attended by representatives of the Governor's Committees and others interested in the resettlement of refugees from all over the country. Traveling and living expenses of the delegates were paid from the Emergency Fund. This conference, which was very largely attended, resulted in increased interest in the refugees and in a much better understanding of the problem, and stimulated renewed efforts back home.

My May 1, the influx of new refugees had tapered off to a very small number. Those arriving after May 1 - approximately 75 - were not taken to Kilmer but were cared for by the Government at the St. George Hotel in Brooklyn.

Between May 1 and May 9, the resettlement activities continued at Kilmer, and when the Refugee Center was closed on May 9 there were only 33 refugees there awaiting resettlement. Of this number, 25 joined the group of 75 which had been cared for since May 1 at the St. George Hotel.

In summary, of a total of 32,000 Hungarian refugees who had come in to the country since November, only about 100 remained to be resettled.

One important thing about any President's Committee is to terminate it promptly when its work is done. This the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief did, meeting with President Eisenhower on May 14, 1957, and filing its final report.

TRACY S. VOORHEES