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February 22, 1957

TREND OF OPINION AS TO THE INADEQUACY OF
EXISTING MEASURES FOR HUNGARIAN REFUGEES
NOT COMING TO THE UNITED STATES

Convincing evidence of the immediate need for a more adequate and vigorous U. S. policy to deal with Hungarian refugees who are not coming to America lies in the cumulative build-up of criticism of the condition of these refugees in Austria and Yugoslavia. This trend appears both in private statements from representatives of the principal religious agencies engaged in this resettlement work, as well as in various public statements. Illustrative of this trend are the following:

(A) Public statements: Within the past three days there has been the following press and radio comment.

- (1) The NEW YORK TIMES on February 20 contained a public statement by the field director of the Catholic Relief Services in Austria, Father Flynn, issued immediately upon his return from Austria. This included his assertion that:

"...if 'immoral and obscene' conditions in overcrowded refugee camps were not relieved, 'hundreds of Hungarians' would elect to return to their homeland.

"'One thing that cries to heaven in Austria these days is the condition of the refugees. '

"The overcrowding was described as 'morally indecent and without privacy' by Father Flynn.

"Virtually no Hungarians have responded to efforts of a repatriation commission to have them return to Hungary, Father Flynn said. However, he added, 'if the Government does not correct these evils of camp life, I'm sure hundreds will go back. '"

- (2) The WASHINGTON POST of February 21 contained a statement by Edward H. Meyerding, Chief of the Quaker refugee mission in Austria who also had just returned from refugee work in Europe. He said: -

"At least 70,000 Hungarians are still in Austria and the Hungarian food crisis may well bring another 100,000 or 200,000 by spring or early summer. It is a tremendous expense with the main burden still on the Austrian government. And there are signs of rapid deterioration of morale among the refugees, particularly those in the camps."

- (3) Charles Collingwood on the Ed Murrow radio program at 7:45 p.m., February 19, made a major statement on this subject containing the following highlights:

"...the speed with which the fires of concern die down sometimes amazes even a reporter who has seen it happen so many times before. A case in point is the plight of the Hungarian refugees who fled their country to what they thought was a bright new life of freedom. Few things so mobilized the sympathies of the world as the gallant, hopeless struggle of the Hungarians against their Communist government. And when 200 thousand of them crossed the border and came out, they were met with a great wave of sympathy and a fervid and frequently stated resolve that a place would be found for them and that life indeed would be better than what they left.

"The exodus from Hungary began in November. It is now February. Of the 170 thousand who escaped to Austria 60 thousand are still there...in camps...trying to get out...an increasingly heavy burden on little Austria which is still harboring 114 thousand refugees left over from World War II. But the Hungarians who fled to Austria are the luckiest. Two thirds of them have been settled. The United States has taken 26 thousand, Britain has taken 16 thousand, and smaller countries smaller numbers. At least the 60 thousand remaining have hope that they will find a house.

"17 thousand Hungarians escaped to Yugoslavia and they don't even have hope. The only place any of them have got to from Yugoslavia is back to Hungary. They are going back across the border to the land they left at the rate of 700 a week. This is not because the Yugoslavs have changed their attitude, they are taking care of them as well as they can, but there is nowhere for them to go. No country has taken any of the refugees from Yugoslavia. There's only one camp in Yugoslavia that the refugees could be put in. (Emphasis supplied.)

"...the United Nations Refugee authorities say the Hungarians aren't being pressed to leave, it's just that after awhile they get the idea that no one wants them and so they start the dreary trek back home. It's not a pretty picture and it's a gloomy contrast not only to all the hopes they had, but to the great outpouring of world sympathy and support which greeted the Hungarians when they sought freedom.

(B) Private statements include:

Protests made to me by the heads of the principal religious agencies engaged in Hungarian refugee resettlement. These include all of such agencies represented on the President's Committee. While I ruled as Chairman of the Committee that such a discussion was out of order at a recent meeting of the Committee as not being a subject within the Committee's functions, I received afterwards their statements made both orally and in writing.

- (1) Monsignor Edward E. Swanstrom, Executive Director of the National Catholic Welfare Conference, in addition to even more emphatic oral statements, has written me a letter containing the following excerpts:

"I am writing to you not so much as a member of the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, but as the Director of one of the large voluntary resettlement agencies that has had the privilege of working with you in the resettlement of the Hungarian refugees who have come into the United States in recent weeks.

"... This letter is primarily to reemphasize some of the remarks I made at the informal meeting we held yesterday to discuss Mr. William Hallam Tuck's very excellent report on the situation as he found it in Austria in regard to the care, integration and resettlement of Hungarian refugees. I am sure that everyone who read it was struck with the thoroughness of the report and the wisdom of his observations.

"Mr. Tuck's report and the reports that our agency has been receiving from Austria serve to emphasize again the inadequacy of governmental and intergovernmental effort toward a proper solution of this newest refugee problem.

"... The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief has done an excellent job in helping some twenty odd thousand people to find homes in the United States. This is only the barest segment of the problem. Hungarian refugees who have been located in France, Germany, Italy and other Western European countries are far from permanently resettled, and the coming months will witness many pressures upon all of us to more adequately meet their needs.

"Austria cannot possibly cope with the seventy to eighty thousand refugees still remaining in that country. Recent reports indicate that in many of the Austria refugee camps there has been little improvement in the deplorable conditions I personally witnessed there in December, 1956.

"... I know that I can say with justification that many of the leaders in the field of refugee relief and resettlement feel that a new serious look should be taken at international effort and American effort in regard to refugees. How it should be done, of course, is something for our leaders in Washington and in the State Department to decide.

"... These are just a few suggestions, and I place them before you as one of our leaders who has demonstrated a sincere sympathy, understanding and a willingness to cope with the problem."

- (2) Mr. Moses Leavitt, Executive Vice-Chairman of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, Inc., says in a letter:

"I feel I should share with you some of the thoughts which I expressed at the informal meeting that we had last Friday. This is not an official letter from me to you as a member of the President's Committee, but represents the experience and the knowledge that I have of the Hungarian situation as reported to me by our field staff and from what I saw myself in Austria last month.

"... At best, the conditions in the camps are horrible beyond words, if one were to take one simple requirement of every human being, that is privacy. The massing together of men, women and children - 60, 70 and 80 in a room - breaks down normal inhibitions which human beings have absorbed in their upbringing and which we take for granted. Inaction, the lack of work, the rumors, true and false, that sweep the camps, all create a bad atmosphere which develops into what we know as the "DP psychology." The longer human beings stay in these camps the worse and the longer is their readjustment in a normal society.

"Despite the extraordinary results obtained by the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief in resettling 25,000 refugees in the United States in two months' time, and despite the generous reception given to Hungarian refugees by Germany, Switzerland, France, England, Canada and Australia, the fact remains that there are over 100,000 refugees still in need of permanent resettlement for whom coordinated and large scale planning should be done. I speak of the 60,000 to 65,000 refugees in Austria, 20,000 in Yugoslavia and 20,000 to 30,000 that have gone temporarily to countries like Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium and Holland.

"I have seen many refugee groups in the last 20 years and I must say that this group of Hungarian refugees represents the most promising from the viewpoint of resettlement in a new country. They are young, they are healthy, they are trained and they are enthusiastically aware of the benefits of freedom and liberty that they will find in the Western world.

".all of the refugees in Austria must be treated equally and given a minimal decent place in which to live pending their emigration out of Austria. Only the United States can be expected to meet this crying need. The break in the iron curtain signalized by the Hungarian revolt and the movement of 170,000 people out of the country, has been utilized, but there can be no diminution in effort until the problem of these 170,000 people has been solved. Otherwise we would undo all of the great work that has been done so far. "

- (3) Dr. R. Norris Wilson, head of the protestant Church World Services, who has just returned from a first hand study of the situation in Austria was almost violent in his oral comments to me criticising conditions in various of the camps in Austria.

It is my belief that the above comments fully confirm the report made by Mr. Tuck and General Hardigg a month ago about the inadequacy of a substantial part of the camps in Austria and of the need for effective U. S. action. (The Yugoslavia situation developed after Mr. Tuck and General Hardigg had departed and they, therefore, did not comment on it.)

Tracy S. Voorhees

March 5, 1957

TREND OF OPINION AS TO CURRENT HUNGARIAN REFUGEE PROBLEMS IN AUSTRIA & YUGOSLAVIA

This supplements my memorandum of February 22 entitled "TREND OF OPINION AS TO THE INADEQUACY OF EXISTING MEASURES FOR HUNGARIAN REFUGEES NOT COMING TO THE UNITED STATES." The latter illustrated what I felt at the time - and still feel - is a cumulative build-up of criticism of the inadequacy of the measures taken by the U.S. for these refugees in Austria and Yugoslavia. Since the above date, the following, among other papers, have come to my attention: -

First - A special report to the Board of Directors of CARE, Inc., dated February 27, by Richard W. Reuter, Executive Director of CARE. Following are excerpts from this (underlining mine): -

"Austrian Refugee Picture Stabilized -

"As of the end of February there are approximately 58,500 Hungarian refugees still in Austria. The Austrian Interior Minister feels that they can absorb into the Austrian economy about 20,000 of this number, which will leave 38 to 40 thousand still to emigrate. I.C.E.M. plans to move a minimum of 5,000 per month. The Hungarian border is now pretty tightly sealed. The U.S. Embassy said about 200 refugees came across last week; the Austrian authorities put the figure much lower; at the main reception point at Andau they told me seven had come through in the preceding seven days.

"In Austria the picture has definitely stabilized and is starting to run more nearly like the smooth operation for escapees in Berlin. Even the numerous officially appointed coordinators are beginning to coordinate among themselves.

"II - THE OPERATION IN YUGOSLAVIA

"A - No Emigration Morale and Program Determinant

"The Yugoslav picture is less promising. I believe I was the second American (the first was Bob Meyer, our Mission Chief in Belgrade) and the fourth westerner to visit with the refugees in Yugoslavia (A representative from the U.N. High Commissioner and a representative of the League of Red Cross Societies have been active previously).

"Of 18,185 refugees who arrived in Yugoslavia through February 22nd, 16,979 are now in refugee centers. (976 repatriated to Hungary; 397 were integrated by choice into the Yugoslav economy; 231 emigrated to western countries). Of the some 17,000 now in Yugoslav camps, about 14,000 want to go western countries, 111 more wish to go back to Hungary and 39 would like

"to stay in Yugoslavia. The rest have not yet decided where to go or what to do. (All figures are from the Yugoslav Interior Ministry).

"Morale is sagging among the refugees in Yugoslavia because none seem to be leaving and information is so meagre. They want to know what will happen to them. The Yugoslavs would like to know too."

"C - Yugoslav Care of Refugees Excellent

"The Yugoslavs, it seems to me, have tried to be very correct in this situation but made a bad blunder originally in not allowing outside observers and newspaper eyewitness reports. The refugees in Yugoslavia are living primarily in summer hotels on the coast, at inland spas, and in the mountains. Actually they are housed and fed better than their counterparts in Austria and probably better than the majority of the Yugoslav population. But the Yugoslavs now need the hotels back for the tourists and their own people under their social security program. The refugees will have to be transferred to camps that now largely do not yet exist. Morale will drop seriously when this happens because of the implications of such a transfer to a camp. This is one reason the vastly stepped up CARE program seems so important to us and is urged so strongly by the Yugoslav officials. We are transferring Bud Brady from our Austrian staff to work with our regular Yugoslav staff. His experience should be particularly helpful to Bob Meyer."

"D - Emigration Program Still Not Set Up

"There is no U.S. or western nation program for moving blocks of these Hungarians out of Yugoslavia. Apparently, the long Hungarian - Yugoslav border is also being sealed more effectively. Again, figures are hard to check but apparently from a top figure of 2,000 a day in January, the stream of refugees has now dropped to a level of about 200 a week."

Second - A by-line story by Charles Lucey in the February 28 NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM. I presume that this was a syndicated story appearing also in other Scripps-Howard papers. The following are the highlights:

"HUNGARY REFUGEE PROBLEM AWAITS U.S. MOVE

"By Charles Lucey

"Vienna, Feb. 28 - Nearly 60,000 Hungarians are still in Austrian refugee camps.

"Any real solution of what is to happen to them seems likely to be delayed until the United States decides on a long-range policy in regard to these homeless people."

"There are two reasons: First, some Western countries apparently are waiting to see what the leader of the free world proposes to do. Second, many refugees are disinterested in heading for other countries now for fear they'll miss a later chance to go to America.

"Up to now, Austria, an example of generosity to the world, has spent \$16 million buying food and rehabilitating former army camps to shelter refugees,

"It is absorbing 30,000 refugees into its own economy, more than any other country so far -- and this in a nation which took a half-million refugees from other countries after World War II."

* * *

"Austrian officials are beginning to suggest that the United States could take many more. They praise President Eisenhower and the Americans for setting an example to the world in the airlift. But they say the ratio isn't quite right when Austria, with a population of 7 million, takes as many refugees as the United States."

* * *

"Here in Austria, the refugee is having it hard. The Austrian family which opened its doors to share already cramped space with a Hungarian family, thinking this would last only a couple weeks, finds itself with permanent guests. Refugees' free streetcar rides are gone. Life in some camps has been made more restrictive. And there's irritation about Hungarians taking jobs."

Third - A letter to me from Mr. Lewis M. Hoskins who is a member of the President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief and also Executive Secretary of the American Friends Service Committee, Inc.:

"Regarding the Committee's operations at Kilmer, to me this has been an amazing and remarkably effective program. Under severe emergency conditions a crash program was set up promptly which combined the best of America's humanitarian hospitality, individual treatment and efficiency. There were, of course, many rough spots and no doubt errors, but for such an emergency program a remarkable job was done. The massing of diverse voluntary agencies, governmental bureaus with the Army into a coordinated team was exceedingly well done. Through the pressures of the emergency period a great deal of team work emerged that precluded the kind of blow-up or disaster that might have occurred.

"Now that machinery has been set up for smooth operations, we face a new problem. We are tooled up at Kilmer for efficient operation of a rather large, continuous flow of refugees. The IBM equipment has organized the data of job offers and available refugee personnel. Through the efforts of voluntary agencies and community organizations as well as governors' committees there are thousands of valid sponsorship offers, including job opportunities and housing, throughout the country. The communities, too, are now ready to receive refugees in a way they have not been previously.

"But there is only a trickle of refugees to be serviced at Kilmer and to be sent on to the communities awaiting them."

"There appears to be inadequate coordination between the executive and legislative branches on immigration policy. Both appear to fear what the other may do, or is, doing. Perhaps this can be looked at afresh by a government united on its foreign policy implications. Immigration aspects may actually be a minor portion of the total policy that needs to be clarified and enunciated. I am inclined to think that Congressmen would welcome initiative and leadership from the Executive Branch in formulating a foreign policy which covers Hungarian and all other refugees and spells out America's responsibility for them. This would be in close harmony with Vice

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"President Nixon's report and the President's immigration message. It could include reference to the United States welcome of refugees from East Europe and to American assistance in helping them find new homes in various parts of the world. Once such a policy were enunciated the various governmental branches would be able to find their appropriate role under it.

"The urgency of such a step, it seems to me, is emphasized by the deteriorating morale and declining regard for American leadership in Austria. Refugees in overly-large camps are getting bitter and find it difficult to understand what are the criteria that operate to get them to this country. Refugees from second countries of asylum who want to emigrate to America ask about their chances. No one is sure how many emigres will be permitted to come to the United States and at what point individual refugees should resign themselves to alternative options. Authorities can't advise regarding Australian offers of asylum without knowing about U.S. dollars towards transportation costs. If these questions are not clarified soon our staff in Austria are inclined to fear a reluctant, voluntary repatriation to Hungary through disillusionment at American practice. This would be a major catastrophe for the United States and the West, as well as to those individual refugees who chose that step. I am so concerned on this question that I am considering flying to Austria for a brief visit in the near future."

* * *

"May I reiterate that this seems to be essentially a foreign policy decision and not only an immigration one and that it should be within the responsibility of the executive branch to formulate. I think the appropriate committees in Congress - Foreign Affairs Committees - would be eager to consider and, hopefully, approve such formulations."

SIGNED

Tracy S. Voorhees

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EDITORIAL FROM THE WASHINGTON POST AND TIMES HERALD

SUNDAY MARCH 10, 1957

90-DAY WONDER

In three months, the people of America have taken into their homes, their factories and offices, their churches and their community activities more than 27,000 refugees from the Communist terror in Hungary. With few exceptions, these people came here with nothing but the clothing they wore. They came unable to speak English and with no advance notion of how or where they would take up life again in a strange land. Yet so fully and rapidly have they become a part of this Nation that few of us are conscious of the truly amazing dimensions and unusual aspects of this tremendous resettlement effort.

There is no need to assign "credit" for the success of this venture. Many could have prevented it, or seriously complicated the task. None did. American immigration laws were ill-suited to the unexpected need, but they have been made to serve. The two dozen or more religious and other private agencies which have found the homes and the jobs and guided the refugees to them were not equipped for so gargantuan an effort, but they have brought it off in a heartening display of cooperative, voluntary endeavor. The employers who have provided the work, the countless private citizens who have opened their homes and their hearts to these folk might easily have found reasons to evade the opportunity, but they did not. The President's Committee for Hungarian Refugee Relief, which under direction of Tracy Voorhees has helped to coordinate the resettlement, might have given in to early fears that thousands of the refugees would be left stranded at Camp Kilmer and might have called for a slow-down of the whole program. But it did not, and a mere handful remain at the reception center awaiting settlement.

This is, as Herbert Hoover has noted, the third wave of Hungarian immigrants to come to this country in 25 years. First to escape Hitler's terror, then Stalin's, thousands from Hungary have turned to America for haven and a new life. Those who have come before have helped to strengthen and revitalize the spirit and the culture of their adopted land. Those who have come now from a new terror will do likewise, as many of them already have demonstrated.

Some 18,000 Hungarians remain in Yugoslavia, where they fled when Russian troops sealed the Austrian border more tightly. This country's task will not be completed until it has helped to resettle these refugees now in Yugoslavia, an appropriate share of the 54,000 remaining in Austria and perhaps some of the 115,000 who have found at least temporary refuge in other European countries. As Mr. Voorhees reported to the President, the "emergency phase" of the program has been met, however, and the handling of the remainder of the resettlement program ought to be "routine." The United States, while it can be proud of the role it has played, ought, above all, to be thankful for this renewed demonstration that its humanitarianism is deep-rooted and strong, equal to the challenges of a shrinking world in which all men are, indeed, neighbors.

THE WASHINGTON POST AND TIMES HERALD
Sunday, March 17, 1957

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
* * * * *

"90-Day Wonder"

Your lead editorial on Sunday, March 10, about American action for Hungarian refugees is the most constructive and helpful piece of writing on this matter that has come to my attention. Most of the time we all keep our minds so largely on things which are going wrong that it is unusual to stop and take a look at something which has gone right. The latter is what your editorial does so well.

Nobody knew, when it was decided to take in these large numbers of refugees, how they would be accepted by America. The fact that they have been absorbed so readily is indeed an inspiring indication that our country is not lost in materialism but retains, when it understands the facts, a high measure of idealism.

I am having copies made to send to a large number of people who have been working on the resettlement of refugees.

As one who has had some responsibility for these matters, I am deeply indebted to The Washington Post for its most helpful and constructive action.

The real problem before us now is to get adequate legislation passed to stabilize the position of the refugees and to give the President clear authority to act swiftly should another crisis -- and therefore opportunity for the free world -- present itself.

As to the Hungarian refugees, you might be interested in the following figures as of midnight March 14: These, it seems to me, are completely convincing proof that what your editorial said about the action of the American people is the simple truth.

Received at Joyce Kilmer Reception Center, 29,434; left Kilmer for resettlement under the sponsorship of religious and voluntary agencies, 28,248; remaining at Kilmer, 1,186.

TRACY S. VOORHEES
Chairman, The President's Committee
for Hungarian Refugee Relief