



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII
TO THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARLIAMENTARY AMERICAN MISSION****

Sunday, 2 October 1949

Your visit, Gentlemen of the House of Representatives, revives many a pleasant memory, and kindles to new brightness a hope that has long lain very close to Our heart.

Our repeated public expression of anxious concern for the liquidation of what has come to be called all too unfeelingly the refugee problem will attest that to fact-finding investigations such as yours We are ready to attach the importance of a critical professional errand and the dignity of an urgent mission of mercy.

Neither justice nor mercy, obviously, will be served if fact-finding is to lead merely to fault-finding. Clearly it is too late and too futile merely to be shocked and even righteously indignant. The blight of the detention-camps in time of peace, which is the blight of innocent brother's and sisters' frustrated lives, and the plight of millions who now must answer to the hideous appellation of « expellees », are no longer simply a subject for humiliation and regret. There is more here even than a stark challenge to Christian compassion. You have been able to see and judge for yourselves: more insistently than ever at this hour the agony of the so-called « displaced » is a summons to prompt and responsible community action.

An immense treasure of good will and enlightened, if at times faltering, social effort has already been dedicated to the provision of decent homes and employment for this legion of homeless and disheartened hostages. The devoted labours of the immigrant and welfare organizations, with which you are wisely maintaining close and fruitful contact, are beyond all human praise, and they have not lacked such paternal encouragement and material support as We could find it possible, out of a full heart and straitened means, to give them.

The lasting good thus far accomplished for hundreds of thousands, in face of the awkwardness,

discrimination and vacillation perhaps inevitably bound up with legislative and administrative action in so complex and delicate a field, should leave you, as We are happy to assure you it leaves Us, confident of ultimate victory soon and doggedly determined to see this giant specter of human dereliction forever banished from the conscience of mankind.

One further and controlling observation, dictated by the sacred trust committed to Our charge, you will not fail to understand. Political, economic and even social dangers are involved in a policy of further delay or exaggerated caution. But these dangers, real and serious though they be, are derivative and secondary. Our prime anxiety—as We are sure it is yours deep down in your hearts,—touches the judgement of history and of history's Lord on the fulfillment of that gravest duty of man to man and of nation to nation, which calls for respect for the image of God in even the weakest and most abandoned of his children.

No reason of State or pretext of collective advantage, as We had occasion to emphasize once more only a few days ago, can avail to justify the contempt of that human dignity and the denial of those elemental human rights which the Creator has imprinted on the soul of each of His creatures.

Again be assured, Gentlemen, that Our heartfelt sympathy and supplication before the throne of Divine justice and mercy attend your best endeavours, and those of your colleagues and collaborators of every nation, to deal vigourously with the last remaining obstacles to full human freedom for Our beloved refugees, prisoners of a hope that cannot, that must not be allowed to wither and die in their hearts.

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