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THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
NATIONAL REPUBLICAN HERITAGE
GROUPS COUNCIL

THE EAST ROOM

5:11 P.M. EDT

Congressman Ed Derwinski, Mayor Ralph Perk, Anna Chennault, Jay Niemczyk, and all of you who are here as a part of the National Republican Heritage Group:

It is so nice to see you and I am very, very grateful for the warm reception, and I add very, very quickly my deep personal appreciation for your organization, your personal participation and for the work that I know that you are going to do between now and the next election in November of 1976.

Let me add most emphatically, during the course of my 13 campaigns running for the House of Representatives in the Fifth Congressional District in Michigan, I was beneficiary of the loyal support and the dedicated effort of many, many heritage groups.

The largest numerically and percentagewise, of course, had a background from the Netherlands, and believe me, they were tremendous; they were wonderful in the help that they gave me in these 13 elections.

But we also, in that area of Michigan, had the benefit of many other ethnic groups that had been there many years, some that had come most recently, and I only pick out one because it was more or less that of the last vintage, and I speak here of the Latvians.

They organized quickly after coming to this country. They established a wonderful area facility. Believe me, they were active and effective, and I am sure there must be some here from the Latvian group. Will you raise your hands?

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But I only use them as an illustration because we had Lithuanians, we had Poles, we had many others, and this is, in my judgment, what is true all over the country.

We have in America the blessing of the ethnic groups that have come to this country over a period of better than 300 years.

There is an old saying, that the beauty of Joseph's coat is its many colors. The strength of America's character, the strength of America's effectiveness comes from the fact that we all are a part, regardless of our ethnic background, of this great country -- a country that we can be so proud of and especially proud of because of what was done by our military in the last 48 hours.

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I am certain and positive -- without looking at the rosters -- that in the Air Force that covered the operations, by the Marines, and by the Navy, there were those who had many ethnic backgrounds.

I am sure in the roughly 500 Marines that either landed on the ship or landed on the island there were Marines who had many, many ethnic backgrounds.

I am positive that on the ships that participated there were those of heritages from many nations of the world.

The fact that they could all work together for their new country is, I think, a great tribute to them and to their dedication to America.

We were all welcomed -- and I use that in the broadest and most figurative way -- when we, or our parents, or our grandparents, came to this great country, and I am very proud that the overwhelming response, even after a few nitpicking criticisms by some, that America today is opening up its heart, their homes, to those that fought with us in Indochina.

Our best estimate is out of the 120,000, that only 35,000 were heads of families, 65 percent of them children, good people, that stood shoulder to shoulder with us as a country.

I have had an opportunity in the last week or so to talk to some GIs, and they have told me that while they were in Vietnam, they had the help and assistance, and their lives were saved, by a few South Vietnamese.

So, we are not only a society that welcomes people from other countries with other backgrounds, but we are indebted to them for the contributions that they have made to our country's policies and our country's efforts.

The group here today, you have made a choice. You believe in the philosophy of the Republican Party. You are dedicated to the expansion of that philosophy in our political system, or by the methods that come from the policies of freedom under our system.

I know that in the last election, under the leadership of my very good friend Eddie Derwinski, this group had a substantial impact on the results. It is my understanding, statistically, that this group, operating in every State of the Union, in one community after another, increased the vote for our cause by better than 12 to 15 percent.

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That is a good increase, but 1976 requires a bigger effort and more success. And so, I strongly urge that as a part of this get-together for the rest of this day and tomorrow, you start laying the plans to recruit people, to better organize, to raise money, to go out and be missionaries in selling a philosophy that is good for our country, for all our people -- young, old, those yet unborn.

I think we have a great, great opportunity to keep the policies of strength, the policies of humanity, the policies of a healthy economy moving so that we can have a better America and help to build a better world.

So, I thank you very much for coming. I had hoped that at the conclusion I could join you in the State Dining Room for a reception and some refreshments, but unfortunately my schedule got moved around a little bit.

You are welcome in the State Dining Room, you are more than welcome to the refreshments (Laughter), and let me say, you can have just as much fun, even if I am not there.

Thank you very much.

END (AT 5:22 P.M. EDT)