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AT THE WHITE HOUSE

WITH RON NESSEN

AT 9:40 A.M. EDT

MAY 6, 1975

TUESDAY

MR. NESSEN: Let me give you one or two more things before you go. Let me just make a couple of other points that did not come out this morning.

Q Was Kissinger there?

MR. NESSEN: No.

I just want to talk on one or two other factual points. Ambassador Brown was asked whether any of these refugees would go to other countries. He talked about the Canadians having their immigration officials out on Guam to take some of the refugees. He also said some of the small countries of French Africa had indicated they would take 100 families each. He did not name the countries, but as I say, he is having a news conference of his own at noon at the State Department.

Ambassador Brown, as I say, also pointed out that the normal annual immigration into the United States without any Vietnamese refugees has been 400,000 a year.

Ambassador Brown said a computer has been donated in which the personal information about these families is being printed and their job skills are being imprinted on this computer to help them find jobs in the United States.

Ambassador Brown said 60 percent of the refugees are children not seeking jobs. Only 35,000, or less, are heads of households.

On the question of people going back, Ambassador Brown said --

Q That was 60,000 children or 60 percent?

MR. NESSEN: Sixty percent of the refugees are children and 35,000 are heads of households.

MORE

The question of refugees wanting to go back came up. Ambassador Brown said on Guam there were 45 people who wanted to go back. These are the 45 airplane mechanics who were in Thailand. They were hustled aboard a plane by the Thais, not knowing exactly where they were going and they ended up on Guam. They do want to go back.

They are being turned over to the United Nations today. The United Nations will see that they get back to Vietnam.

Q Are they Cambodians or Vietnamese?

MR. NESSEN: They are Vietnamese airplane mechanics who evacuated, I guess, in Thailand and were swept onto the evacuation plane. They are being turned over to the UN today and they will go back.

Each refugee on Guam, before he is moved on to the United States, is asked, "Do you want to go back?" And so far, he had indicated none had said yes, but if any do say yes, there will be arrangements for them to go back.

The President, as I say, was strong on this issue as he has been from the beginning. He said it is morally right to take in these refugees and help them.

The one other point -- and I am going to mention it now and try to get some additional information for you in the next few hours -- the President said he had received two communications urging that the United States take in and care for the refugees. One came from George Meany and the other came from Pope Paul. I will try to get those for you.

MORE

Q In that order?

MR. NESSEN: I will try to get the texts of those letters for you.

Q When did they come, today, yesterday?

MR. NESSEN: In the past several days. I will try to get the texts for you.

Q Were they letters?

MR. NESSEN: He described them as communications. They could have been letters or telegrams. Again, Ambassador Brown has a news conference at the State Department.

Q Were these Cambodian children who were brought out of the country on the pretense of being brought to education facilities, vacation homes, not adoptable, will they be permitted to return to Cambodia?

MR. NESSEN: I don't know the answer to that, Tom. As I say, Ambassador Brown is having a news conference at noon where he could perhaps address some of the more detailed questions.

Q Is this "damn mad," quote, is that accurate?

MR. NESSEN: It was approximately that. The President used "damn" twice. The quote I got was "It just burns me up -- these great humanitarians. Now, damn it, they want to turn their backs. We did not do it with the Hungarians. We did not do it with the Cubans, and damn it, we are not going to do it now."

Q Ron, is this in response to Congressional critics or to people, citizens who were critical? Who was he talking about?

MR. NESSEN: It was in the course of the discussion and it was not directed at anyone.

Q Was there any direct criticisms or indirect criticism of Senator McGovern?

MR. NESSEN: No, that never really came up at the meeting.

Q McGovern's name was not mentioned?

MR. NESSEN: Nobody's name was mentioned.

Q Is the President planning to meet any of these refugees or go see them?

MR. NESSEN: Not at the moment.

Q Ron, were those Hungarians or Cubans in that quote?

MR. NESSEN: Hungarians.

Q Will there be a statement tonight before the press conference?

MR. NESSEN: He will not have an opening statement.

Q Ron, how many are still on Guam?

MR. NESSEN: I think Ambassador Brown said 50,000, but you better check.

THE PRESS: Thank you, Ron.

END (AT 9:48 A.M. EDT)