

Transcript Of The Address Of

THE HONORABLE HUBERT H. HUMPHREY,
Vice-President of the United States

At The Reception Of
The President's Club of Texas

Monday, April 24, 1967

In The Grand Ballroom of the Rice Hotel
Houston, Texas

Introduction by Mr. Albert S. Golemon, President
of The President's Club of Greater Houston:

We are very happy and indeed highly honored that
we could have the Vice-President and Mrs. Humphrey here with
us on this occasion.

We have asked Mr. Humphrey to talk to us for a few
minutes and he has consented to do so. Ladies and Gentlemen,
the Vice-President of the United States.

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Thank you, Mr. Golemon, my friend Marlin, Mr. McCullough, and all the others that have been so kind as to come up and see that I got down to this gathering tonight.

Just a few moments ago, why one of my associates came up to me and said, "You have to do some eating. You better just take a few minutes off to eat now." He knew that I had a busy day. And I said, "I don't think this is the proper place to eat. It looks to me like this is the proper place to speak, when you see this many people." And if I ever have a choice between eating and speaking, I don't hesitate long, I make up my mind rather quickly, and decide if there's over three people in any one particular corner, that's no time to eat. That's the time to speak.

Can I just say on behalf of Mrs. Humphrey and myself how much we are indebted to all of you for a very interesting, delightful and happy afternoon in Houston. We've had a full day in Texas--not quite a full day, because

we left Minnesota early this morning and flew to Austin, where we were greeted and welcomed by your Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, and the Speaker of the House and Members of the Legislature, where I was privileged to address the Joint Session of the Texas Legislature. And I mean it very sincerely when I say I was privileged to address them, because a legislature in any state is a very important body, but a Legislature in this State with all of its heritage and with all of the responsibilities that this State carries in terms of its own destiny and the destiny of this Nation-- that Legislature, or that legislative body, is extraordinarily important.

I tried to bring to the Legislature a message not only from the mind, but from the heart, as to the days in which we live and the responsibilities that all of us carry in those days. I did review for them, as some of you may know, that Texas is a rather unusual place. Of course, for a Minnesotan to admit that is a great confession. I said that some Texan had told me, and I accused Congressman Jack Brooks of it, that this State had been slighted. That since 1930, it has only had two Presidents that were born in Texas. That it had two Speakers of the House of Representatives. That it had Chairmen of at least a half a dozen House Committees, and that while it didn't have the Chairmanship of Senate Committees, it was clever enough through its many operations to maneuver behind the scenes and really control things in the Senate too. I went on to say, then, that if you were complaining about that,

would you mind cutting Minnesota in on it. The best that we've had of late is the Teacher Of The Year. And then when I had the teacher over to the White House, I found out the wife of the teacher--her maiden name was Humphrey. And the President of the United States came out to the Rose Garden to bestow honors upon the Teacher Of The Year from the State of Minnesota, and when he found that Mr. Tenney's wife's name was Humphrey, he said, "Can you imagine what would be said if the Teacher Of The Year was a person by the name of Johnson from Johnson City?" He said, "They'd accuse me of wheeling and dealing. But," he said, "here comes Humphrey," he said, "with the Teacher Of The Year, whose wife is from Minnesota, and whose parents are from Minnesota, and whose maiden name was Humphrey, and they say it's all on merit." Well, of course, I agreed readily.

You've had an hour of sociability here, and I've kept you waiting, and I'm not going to keep you waiting much longer. There are two or three places that you ought never really to make a speech: One's at a rodeo, another one's at a barbecue, and the third is at a reception or a cocktail party. I want you to know that I have spoken at rodeos, barbecues and cocktail parties, and I have no intention of reversing my life at this late date, so you'll just have to lean back for a moment and let me talk to you.

Last evening Mrs. Humphrey and I were in Minneapolis at the President's Club Reception there. Can I tell you quite proudly that it was a wonderful Reception, and many of our

dear friends were present. And we had an evening of fun and sociability, a dinner and a dance. And I did well--I danced with every lady there with few exceptions. And then Mrs. Humphrey pulled the curtain down and said, "Don't you think it's time to go home?" At which point I said, "No!" And at that point we went home--showing who runs things at our house. But we had a wonderful evening, and tonight I have the same privilege again, with good friends.

I was just saying to Marlin as we came in here that I recall this room. I believe this is the room, isn't it, Marlin, for sure? And when I came to Houston in the month of, I believe, October--or late September, or early October, 1964, I recall we had a press conference out here. And, my goodness! Our friends The Press asked me some of the most embarrassing questions. And I gave some of the most elusive answers. But it was a very good visit, and we came into this room and it was jam-packed. And Ladies, I am sorry that it wasn't co-educational, as I recollect. Never should this be permitted again. One of these experiences is enough. It was filled with men of distinction, with men of influence, men of great success, men of every walk of life. And I was privileged to speak to them. And we had quite a night. I went away from here feeling very good. And I remember we flew that night all the way to Fargo, North Dakota, as if we couldn't schedule better than that. I thought that if people ever found out that we were that poor in arranging a schedule, they'd say, "Anyone that doesn't know any more than that ought not to be

Vice-President."

They weren't paying much attention to where we were going anyway, so we could fly any place we wanted to. And we arrived in Fargo at about three a.m. in the morning. And there were over a thousand people out at the airport at that time. I had no doubts from that moment on that the Ticket of Johnson and Humphrey would be successful, because when you can get a thousand people in Fargo, North Dakota, out for any meeting at any time, you are a success. And it was just a delightful day here, and a great evening for us, and then a magnificent morning and following day in that State of North Dakota.

In the past few days Muriel and I have traveled for your Country and my Country--our Country--to several countries in the European area. A year ago we were in Asia. One of our friends here tonight said to me, "Mr. Vice-President, you'll feel good today." And I said, "Why?" And he said, "Well," he said, "General Westmoreland really laid it on the line in his speech before the Associated Press in New York." And then his wife was kind enough to say, "Well, it was very--you helped too down at Austin today." But let me just put it this way to you, that three times last year we journeyed to the Far East. Three times to visit with leaders of the free countries of Asia. And I came back from those visits convinced that something new was happening--something different, at least, and it was new. I came back that there was a process of emancipation underway. A process of freedom underway. I came back not convinced that it would be easy, not that it would take a

short time, not that it would be cheap; but rather, that it would be hard, that it would take time, and it would be costly, but that all of it was worth it--with all of the pain and the sacrifice, and all the costs, and all the doubts and all the worries. And I can say to you in the few moments that I have here tonight that I am more convinced of this than I was a year ago.

I remember it was as if I were committing an act of heresy to tell people, as I did when I arrived a year ago late February on the White House Lawn, as we stepped out of the helicopter, I said to the Press there that I had reason for restrained optimism about our course in Viet Nam. I said, "I believe that we are on the way towards a whole new life and new spirit in Asia." And I characterized that the spirit of regionalism, the spirit of identification, the spirit and a feeling that people were going to live their own lives and live it in freedom. I haven't changed at all. As a matter of fact, I even feel more so tonight. I am not a militarist. I do not know how to run an army. I am privileged, as the Vice-President, to know what our Country does. And, as I have said to some of my colleagues in government, sometimes maybe to at least read more about what our Country does than some of those who talk a great deal about what our Country should do. I get every cable, every report--far beyond what one can absorb--as a member of the National Security Council and a member of the President's Cabinet. I believe that it's fair to say that I'm privileged to read almost everything and to

hear almost everything that your President hears and reads. And because of this, I am convinced beyond shadow of a doubt that great developments are underway. The political process in Southeast Asia of nation-building is underway. And, my dear friends, you're all mature, you're all grown people. It's not easy to build anything quickly. You do not rear a family overnight. Mrs. Humphrey and I were with our children last night, and they're grown now. The youngest is a Freshman in the University. And it's kind of nice to see them grow up to be healthy, responsible, intelligent, decent young people. I am sure that every parent has had a few doubts as we went along life's way as to whether this would all happen. It takes a long time to get a nice family and it takes a long time to build a business. There are very few instant successes in business, and there are fewer instant successes in diplomacy or in nation-building.

It has taken a long time to build Houston. It has taken a longer time to build what we have in America, and we were not always as we are. We were once a very disorganized, weak--yes, even uncertain--people and country. I sometimes enjoy telling our young friends when they come through my office at the Capitol about the early days of American life. Our Capitol changed its location eleven times from 1776 to the year 1800. We had to have two Constitutions in this Country--the Constitution of the Articles Of Confederation that didn't work, and our Country was divided and torn apart; and then the Constitution that is ours today. We even had a war between

the States. We had movements of secession long before 1860. It wasn't easy to build a nation. And by the way, we didn't do it alone. As I said when I was in the presence of General de Gaulle, that whatever our differences, whatever the differences between the United States and France today, that we will never forget that many of those buried at Yorktown were Frenchmen. That France gave us seven thousand five hundred of her sons in the battle at Yorktown, and had more of her sons there than ours, as we fought for our freedom. That it was her fleet that bottled up the fleet of the English. I think Americans ought to remember this when they think about other countries, because nation-building is hard business and takes time, and is taking time in Southeast Asia. It's taking time in Viet Nam. It has taken time in Korea. If I were to have been here ten years ago and told you that Korea would be what it is today, you would have said, "Run him out of here. The fellow is out of his mind." Korea was considered hopeless, a mess; and yet, Korea in 1967 is one of the great economic and political successes of Asia.

If I were to have told you five years ago that Australia would have conscription, even though it never had it in World War I or World War II--neither War did it have it--you would have said, "What's wrong with that fellow?" But today it has it. And the Prime Minister of Australia won his greatest victory supporting American policy in Southeast Asia and South Viet Nam. If I were to have told you a few years back--a few months back--that Indonesia and Malaysia

would no longer be at war--and by the way, they lost thousands of people in that war. You don't know it, because there were no Americans involved, so we didn't cover it with five hundred reporters. But thousands of people were lost. It was a terrible war, and it had the makings of a great war. A nation of over a hundred million people determined to destroy --at least a regime over a country of a hundred million people--determined to destroy a little country called Malaysia. And yet, it's all over. Malaysia today is a free country. Rid itself of Communist domination. The Chinese Communist Movement has been defeated. It's cleansed itself. All of this has happened since I last saw you. All of this has happened in the last year. Many wonderful things have happened. A Constituent Assembly has been elected in South Viet Nam. A Constitution has been written. The regime that governs South Viet Nam today has agreed to that Constitution written by elected officials in a free election. Your Constitution was never written by men who were elected. It was written by men who were appointed. District and village elections have been held in every village in South Viet Nam in the last month. Four hundred of them were under attack by the Viet Cong, and yet, over eighty-five per cent of the eligible electorate voted in those village elections. And there were seven candidates for every office, just as there were five for every office in the Constituent Assembly last September. A great process is underway. A General Election will be held this September in a country torn by war for twenty-seven

years, dominated by the French Colonialism for a hundred years, ruled by Mandarin Chinese rule for a thousand years. Think of it: One thousand years the Mandarin rule; a hundred years of French Colonialism; and twenty-seven years of constant warfare. And yet, they are making the steps, one by one; little steps, sometimes faltering steps, halting steps towards their freedom. And why? Because we're there.

I had the President of Italy tell me only about four weeks ago that, while Mr. Truman's Truman Doctrine was, in his mind, the greatest decision that America had ever made up to that point, that he considered President Johnson's stand in Viet Nam would go down in history as the most important decision that America had ever made for world freedom. That's the President of Italy. And I might add that this President of Italy is no old Conservative. You know, because people always say, "Well, they're the hawks, you know. They're the Conservatives; and the Liberals, they're the doves." This man is a Social Democrat. He's as liberal as they come, if you know what I mean. And he understands the stakes--the stakes that are on the table, so to speak, of world politics.

Now, I'm going to just briefly, and then I'm going to conclude, just say a word about the little visit that Mrs. Humphrey and I and others had in Europe.

We went there at the request of our President, as a representative of this Nation, to talk to the representatives and the leaders of seven nations. Our first stop was in Geneva, Switzerland, for the purpose of acquainting ourselves with some

of the tough negotiations that are underway there. One of those negotiations, one of those high items--high-priority items--was the Non-Proliferation Treaty Of Nuclear Weapons. Well, anything that we can do in this world to stop the spread of nuclear weapons is in the interest of your children. It's in your interest, because the more fingers that are on the nuclear trigger, the more difficult it will be for this world and the more dangerous. And therefore, we seek to restrict that. And I think we are going to succeed. I know that more people have told you that it wouldn't succeed. I'm here to tell you that it will. I think that we are on the way to getting that understanding, and there's a reason for it. In this instance, both ourselves and the Soviet Union have common interest. Common interest. And when nations have common interest and mutual interest, there's a chance to make an agreement. The common interest is that both of us have everything to lose by the madness of somebody, and it's enough to have five nations with nuclear weapons, as we have today, rather than to have twenty. Because, if there were twenty, I don't know where you'd be sitting.

We spent two weeks in Europe. I've been there several times, and I want to say that Europe is as different today as Houston is today from twenty years ago. Just think of your own city twenty years ago. By the way, the first time I really knew anything about Houston was my father deciding one day up in a little town in South Dakota, called Doland, South Dakota, that he was going to the Democratic Convention

down here in 1928. And he got in a car, he and a friend of his, in an old Chevy, a 1928 Chevy, and they drove all the way to Houston. And my father came on down here to attend that Convention. He was a brave man. He was one of five known Democrats in our town. It was not only illegal to be a Democrat in Doland, South Dakota; it was considered immoral. But dad was a Democrat, and he told me when he came here, he said, "I have heard the next President of the United States," or, "I heard a President of the United States." And I said, "Well, who was that, Dad?" "Well," he said, "I heard Franklin Roosevelt nominate Al Smith." My father was the County Chairman or the leader in his county for Al Smith in 1928. My dad was for Franklin Roosevelt in 1932, and his son voted for him for the first time in 1932. And I became Young Democrat County President in 1936, so my Democratic heritage is rather far back.

I should say that I have a great tolerance for people though that are not on our side politically, because in our family there was always some doubt about some of these things. I'll never forget my father--and this is a true story--taking me literally to the woodshed one day and saying to me, after I had been rather abusive to my mother in language that was unbecoming a young man of my age at that time--he said, "I want you to know something, young man. The woman that you've just insulted is my wife and my sweetheart. She happens to be your mother." He said, "I want you to know that she's a wonderful woman. She has only one weakness.

She's politically unreliable."

Muriel, I can hear her laughing. She knows that's true, because dad was never quite sure just how mom was going to vote. But I think we had her by the 1930's, pretty sure. It took a lot of time.

But this isn't the 1930's, this is the late 1960's, and those 1960's are very different from those '30's....The Europe that we saw was entirely different from the one that I saw in 1951, when we first visited after the War. Or 1957, or 1961, or 1963. It was a Europe that was modern and dynamic and competitive. And some of the businessmen here today and some of the others that are here know that I speak factually. It's a Europe that is more independent, more self-reliant, and it is a Europe that is thinking in terms of Europe, not just in terms of little countries of Europe. And yet, that same Europe on occasion seems to affront us, seems to disagree with us; that same Europe that many times is written up in the columns as going its own independent way, is a Europe that knows it needs us. And might I say with equal candor, we need them. The one thing that we need to keep in mind is the need of each other. The alliance between Western Europe and the United States is a shield of protection. To be sure Eastern Europe today seems to be much more peaceful than it was ten years ago, but I think it would be wrong to tempt them into any kind of unfortunate act by showing signs of weakness on our side. The surest way to keep Eastern Europe-- and I speak of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union as a

group. The surest way to keep them being more prudent, more cautious, more careful is for us to be united and strong and equally careful. And that's what we're trying to do.

So, if you read in the paper once in a while that Europe doesn't seem to agree with us, just remember yourselves. Europe is like a young man. As a matter of fact, I said to a European friend of mine, "What have you been eating over here? You're supposed to be an old civilization, and you're young, you're vital, you're new. I'd like to get some of that juice, some of those pills." Really and truly, it is a modern Europe and it is a vital Europe. And they're going to be independent. And they're going to on occasion go their own way. And we shouldn't expect people to follow us in goose-step fashion.

But on the great issues, on the fundamental issues, we should consult and we should try to find a common policy. And I won't linger on it any longer except to say that that's the position of this Administration. That is the position of this Government. We're not particularly concerned if people don't agree with us on every little comma, period, semicolon, dash and what-have-you. What is most important is, do we agree on fundamentals? And do we agree and do we have common policy on the basic major things? And the answer is, "Yes". And it will continue to be "Yes," if the leaders in Europe understand their role in common defense and if we understand ours.

Somebody said to me, "Well, why aren't they more interested in Viet Nam?" Because they have lost their empires.

Because all of them are, in a sense, almost really withdrawing from the rest of the world. They had a hundred and two hundred years' experience with it. They have lost tremendous investments, tremendous prestige, and there's a withdrawal. And it's our task to bring them back to that world, to help them and help us, and we to help them in our efforts to help other people.

I want to sign off with just these thoughts with you: You know, the world isn't "going to pot," as we used to put it. The tide of this time is not the tide, as I said to your Legislature, of reaction, of Communism, of collectivism. That's not the tide. The tide is one of liberation. The tide is one of freedom. The tide is one of progress. The tide is one of free enterprise. Free enterprise. Ten years ago there was Socialist doctrine all spread through Asia and Europe and Africa and Latin America. It didn't work. You need motivation. You need incentive. You need to have some identification of individualism. And now we are beginning to see that people are not just returning to what I think are fundamentals and basic values, but they are beginning to sense that you can make a better world if people are given a chance to exercise their own capacities, to develop their own businesses, to develop their own countries, to develop their own way. And this is what we have been talking about. This is what it's all about.

The present prosperity and freedom of Europe is a testimonial to the success of our policy. That's what we

wanted. The recent meeting at Punta del Este in South America with President Johnson and the leaders of the South American countries is a testimonial to the success of our policy, because we've been promoting just exactly what they agreed to there. The success, may I say, of regionalism in Southeast Asia, the awareness of their own identification and of their own importance is testimony to the success of our policy.

I just want Americans not to be braggadocio, not to be arrogant, not to be belligerent or bellicose, but don't sell yourselves short. Don't sell our Country short, and don't sell your Party short, and don't sell your President short. I know that these are days when everybody feels it's just about his duty to tell the President how to run the Country. And I know that these are the days when everybody wants to be popular, but I want to let you in on a secret about politics. Popularity and principle are not necessarily synonymous. Harry Truman wasn't very popular, and a lot of people in this audience didn't like him on many an occasion, but if you were to ask today the average American to name you three important Americans, one of them would be Harry Truman. And you know why? Because he had principle and he had courage and fortitude, and he was willing to make the tough decisions. Oh, everybody thinks it was easy. The Berlin Airlift--you know that most everybody was against it. You know that the wise columnists said it was ridiculous, suicidal. And now we look at Korea, and we say, "Oh, well,

he did that, and that was all right. That came out all right." But I can tell you, I served in Congress. They were against it. And as I have said to some of our friends, that some of the very people today who are the sharpest critics of the President of the United States, the present President, were the people who said in 1940, that Hitler had won, the Lowlands would have to go in Europe to Germany; that Britain couldn't stand it; that Dunkirk meant her defeat; that the Luftwaffe was all-powerful; and that what we had to do was make our peace. Well, we didn't. We didn't do that. And because we didn't, we're a great people.

And I happen to think that great Presidents are generally the ones who go through a terrible period--a period of agony. And you can name them: The Andrew Jacksons who was bitterly hated and attacked; the Abraham Lincolns; the Woodrow Wilsons; and the Franklin Roosevelts. Don't forget them. Every one of them suffered every insult, but every one of them and many more--I've only mentioned a few--have lived in the pages of history as great men. And they have lived there because they made decisions not of political convenience, but they made decisions of political principle.

And I want this audience to know that the President of the United States and the Vice-President are much less interested in making decisions of political convenience and political expediency--we are not interested in that. We are not interested in such cheap dogma. We are interested in taking our stand on what we believe to be right and to

suffer the consequences.

Thank you much for your helpfulness. My goodness, you've all been so helpful to us. No man in public life is able to do a thing by himself. You make it possible for us to do what we try to do, and I know that at times you are worried and concerned and disturbed. May I ask you to leave this meeting tonight, as you go--but don't go right away--may I ask you to leave it in confidence, to leave it in strength, to leave it in determination. You have nothing to apologize for. Never has this Country done so well, at home and abroad. Never have we enjoyed such unbelievable wealth and prosperity. Never have we done so much for the least of these as we are doing now. Never has this Nation meant so much to the rest of the world. Why don't you be proud of it? Make it your business to tell others. Don't join the clique when somebody says, "I think it looks bad." Just stand up and be a little different. You'd be surprised how good you will look. Tell them that you think it looks right. And if it looks right, I think you'll be around a little later to tell people that it looks good.

Thank you very much.



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