

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

YALE UNIVERSITY

New Haven, Connecticut

April 6, 1975

It is a great pleasure to be here this evening at this distinguished university.

Originally I had planned to speak to you about the role of college students and universities in solving some of the great social problems which beset our nation -- problems such as poverty, racism and worker alienation.

However, because of the tragic events of the past weeks in Southeast Asia, I have decided to turn toward this critical foreign policy issue instead and share my views with you.

Events in Cambodia and Vietnam are occurring so rapidly that it is impossible to look beyond the horizon of the coming days and weeks.

And the collapse of the South Vietnamese effort has been so precipitous that questions such as "Why?" and "What should have been done?" cannot be answered with any certainty.

But I have a responsibility as a United States Senator to ask, and then answer the question: "What should our country do now?" During the past days, while traveling in Europe, talking with leaders and discussing this issue with American officials, I have come to several conclusions which I want to share with you.

The first task for America should be to alleviate the great human suffering which now is occurring in Cambodia and Vietnam. This relief should primarily take two forms.

First, the government of the United States should announce that it stands ready to help feed and provide shelter and medicines for all Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees.

I do not believe that our government should abstain from its moral obligation to all the people of South Vietnam and Cambodia. There is absolutely no justification for denying emergency food and medicine to those Vietnamese and Cambodians who suddenly find themselves outside of the control of Phnom Penh or Saigon.

They are not the enemy.

They are the sudden and unwitting victims of a long and tragic war.

To this end I will introduce a bill which will provide at least \$200 million in emergency assistance for refugee relief. The provisions of the bill call for the distribution of relief supplies by the United Nations, its specialized agencies, the Red Cross, and other private multilateral groups. The time has now passed for the American government to be the primary organization which supervises and distributes humanitarian relief.

I feel certain that the Congress will endorse this effort. I call upon the President and the Secretary of State to join with the Congress to speed this emergency relief measure through.

the Congress in the coming days and to work with the United Nations, the Red Cross and others to assure that those who need help receive it promptly.

Supplying American food and medicines to starving refugees through international relief agencies cannot be interpreted as an endorsement of North Vietnamese and Khmer Rouge military tactics.

It simply is a recognition of our moral commitment to suffering peoples who are desperately in need. The governments in Saigon and Phnom Penh never will reconquer the territory they have lost. I do not believe the American people look upon those who have suddenly come under control of Communist forces as the enemies of our country.

They should be helped now with the same resolve that we help those in Phnom Penh and in the remaining areas around Saigon and the Mekong Delta.

America's second obligation in the coming days and weeks is to assist those Vietnamese and Cambodians to leave Indochina who may be in danger of losing their lives when their present governments change hands.

There are, of course, no precise methods of determining who these people are. But after years of war and American involvement, we should have a reasonable idea of which individuals may be marked for reprisal.

There may be too many of these people and not enough time to evacuate all of them. But I urge tonight that the Executive Branch recognize the crisis nature of the situation and begin to take the necessary measures now to provide assistance and a safe haven for those Vietnamese and Cambodians who need to leave their country in order to stay alive.

I believe we must help anyone who wants to leave -- especially the very young and the refugees. But it is not likely that the United States and the international community will evacuate and resettle millions of Vietnamese and Cambodians.

I endorse President Ford's desire to help all of those to leave whom we can physically handle with available resources, and I stand ready to vote for funds to achieve this goal.

If our first obligation is to alleviate human suffering, the second is to take steps to halt the fighting in Cambodia and Vietnam.

Quite frankly, in view of the intransigence of all sides and the present military situation, I do not know whether this now is possible.

In Cambodia, the departure of Lon Nol and others at long last has provided the Phnom Penh government an opportunity to negotiate with the Royal Government of National Union for a ceasefire and an orderly transition of power based on the political realities of the situation.

There is little expectation that the Congress will provide additional military assistance. However, the Foreign Relations Committee has recommended the provision of emergency food assistance.

It is my firm belief that the United States has failed in years, months and weeks past to recognize the political

and military realities in Cambodia and has failed to turn our full efforts toward a negotiated settlement there. Today, we are seeing the tragic fruits of this lack of initiative.

In Vietnam, the goal of obtaining a halt to the fighting through negotiation seems remote.

But this does not mean that the United States should not try to obtain a ceasefire.

It seems that there are two choices. The United States can sit back and watch the North Vietnamese surround Saigon, battle President Thieu's forces and then occupy the capital after what might be a prolonged and devastating siege. Or, we can urge those Vietnamese of reason and good sense to begin the process of negotiation with the other side.

In other words, the choice is between total military conquest and resulting bloodshed, or some more humane path of negotiation without the possible destruction of Saigon and killing of great numbers of helpless innocents.

But these choices are not ours. The choice is up to the Vietnamese. We can only guide, urge, offer advice and serve as a moderating influence. We cannot make the decision for them.

If there was a time for the government of the United States to assess realistically the situation in Vietnam and to urge a course of action upon our ally which would lessen the suffering, it is now.

We cannot afford as a nation or a people to be tied to the false wisdom of the past as we witness the agonies of a people we have given so much to help.

Finally, I want to turn very briefly to the domestic ramifications of the sudden reversal of American policy in Vietnam and Cambodia.

At a time of desperate economic crisis at home and increasing difficulties in the Middle East and Europe, those political leaders who blame the Congress for the events in Indochina are wrong. They are irresponsibly sowing discord among our people.

The American people know that the Congress is not to be blamed for military incompetence and irresponsible military strategies.

It can't be blamed for the lack of will, loyalty and stamina of the Vietnamese armed forces.

And it can't be blamed for being ungenerous. For over the years it has been responsive to Presidential requests for billions in funds and it has provided the Executive Branch with the authority to send our people to die in Indochina.

I call upon all those who have indulged in the tactic of blame-setting to stop. The American people are ashamed by it, and we offer the world a sorry spectacle of our government and political system by such conduct.

The scar of Vietnam has been etched too deeply into the American body politic to begin a new era of blame and

recrimination. It is counterproductive and has poisoned our political process far too long.

Let us turn now toward the task of mobilizing our resources to help the victims of years of war.

Let us urge a course of negotiation in Indochina to stop the killing.

And let us tell the world not to misinterpret the tragedy of Indochina. Our allies, friends, and adversaries need to know that America will remain true to its commitments and faithful to its friends in their hour of need.

In turning away from the horror and tragedy of Indochina the American people must not turn their backs on the world. American involvement in the affairs of this planet does not have to be a destructive process. This nation has a critical role to play in helping to provide for the security of others. America has a role to play in assisting in the alleviation of hunger, the eradication of disease and the ending of illiteracy.

We must now turn our attention and energies to developing a bipartisan foreign policy which can be supported by the American people, because it has as its goal the humane and responsible pursuit of legitimate American interests.

# # # # #

① Jim Mansfield

Yale Law School Four  
Chubb Fellow

X Master Homer Babbidge  
to Marsha

X Shelley & Jim Fishkin

REMARKS BY SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

X Timothy Dwight College  
YALE UNIVERSITY

NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT

APRIL 6, 1975

James Costello ✓  
Boris Feldman } Phil  
Limon

IT IS A GREAT PLEASURE TO BE HERE THIS EVENING AT THIS  
DISTINGUISHED UNIVERSITY,

L ORIGINALLY I HAD PLANNED TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT THE ROLE  
OF COLLEGE STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITIES IN SOLVING SOME OF THE  
GREAT SOCIAL PROBLEMS WHICH BESET OUR NATION -- PROBLEMS SUCH

AS POVERTY, RACISM AND WORKER ALIENATION, *Energy, Environment*

L HOWEVER, BECAUSE OF THE TRAGIC EVENTS OF THE PAST WEEKS  
IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, I HAVE DECIDED TO TURN TOWARD THIS CRITICAL  
FOREIGN POLICY ISSUE ~~INSTEAD~~ AND SHARE MY VIEWS WITH YOU.

L EVENTS IN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM ARE OCCURRING SO RAPIDLY  
THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LOOK BEYOND THE HORIZON OF THE  
COMING DAYS AND WEEKS.



L AND THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE EFFORT HAS  
BEEN SO PRECIPITOUS THAT QUESTIONS SUCH AS "WHY?" AND "WHAT  
SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE?" CANNOT BE ANSWERED WITH ANY CERTAINTY.!

L BUT I HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY AS A UNITED STATES SENATOR  
TO ASK, AND THEN ANSWER THE QUESTION: "WHAT SHOULD OUR COUNTRY  
DO NOW?" DURING THE PAST DAYS, WHILE TRAVELING IN EUROPE,

TALKING WITH LEADERS AND DISCUSSING THIS ISSUE WITH AMERICAN *✓ European*  
OFFICIALS, I HAVE COME TO SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS WHICH I WANT  
TO SHARE WITH YOU.

L THE FIRST TASK FOR AMERICA SHOULD BE TO ALLEVIATE THE  
GREAT HUMAN SUFFERING WHICH NOW IS OCCURRING IN CAMBODIA AND  
VIETNAM THIS RELIEF SHOULD PRIMARILY TAKE TWO FORMS.

(1) h FIRST, THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES SHOULD ANNOUNCE

THAT IT STANDS READY TO HELP FEED AND PROVIDE SHELTER AND

MEDICINES FOR ALL VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIAN REFUGEES.

h I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT OUR GOVERNMENT SHOULD ABSTAIN FROM

ITS MORAL OBLIGATION TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM AND

CAMBODIA. THERE IS ~~ABSOLUTELY~~ NO JUSTIFICATION FOR DENYING

EMERGENCY FOOD AND MEDICINE TO THOSE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS

WHO SUDDENLY FIND THEMSELVES OUTSIDE OF THE CONTROL OF PHNOM

PENH OR SAIGON.

h THEY ARE NOT THE ENEMY.

h THEY ARE THE SUDDEN AND UNWITTING VICTIMS OF A LONG AND

TRAGIC WAR.



L TO THIS END I WILL INTRODUCE A BILL WHICH WILL PROVIDE

AT LEAST \$200 MILLION IN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEE

RELIEF. L THE PROVISIONS OF THE BILL CALL FOR THE DISTRIBUTION

OF RELIEF SUPPLIES BY THE UNITED NATIONS, ITS SPECIALIZED

AGENCIES, <sup>*International*</sup> THE RED CROSS, AND OTHER PRIVATE <sup>*charitable*</sup> MULTILATERAL GROUPS.

L THE TIME HAS NOW PASSED FOR THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO BE THE

PRIMARY ORGANIZATION WHICH SUPERVISES AND DISTRIBUTES HUMANITARIAN

RELIEF.

L I FEEL CERTAIN THAT THE CONGRESS WILL ENDORSE THIS EFFORT.

- L I CALL UPON THE PRESIDENT AND THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO JOIN

WITH THE CONGRESS TO SPEED <sup>*this Emergency*</sup> THIS RELIEF MEASURE THROUGH THE

CONGRESS ~~IN THE COMING DAYS~~ AND TO WORK WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

AND OTHERS TO SEE THAT ~~THAT~~ <sup>*THAT*</sup> THOSE WHO NEED HELP RECEIVE IT.

h SUPPLYING AMERICAN FOOD AND MEDICINES TO ~~STARVING~~ REFUGEES

THROUGH INTERNATIONAL RELIEF AGENCIES CANNOT BE INTERPRETED AS

AN ENDORSEMENT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE AND KHMER ROUGE MILITARY

TACTICS.

L IT SIMPLY IS A RECOGNITION OF OUR MORAL COMMITMENT TO

SUFFERING PEOPLES WHO ARE DESPERATELY IN NEED. THE GOVERNMENTS

IN SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH ~~NEVER WILL~~ <sup>will not</sup> RECONQUER THE TERRITORY

THEY HAVE LOST. <sup>and</sup> I DO NOT BELIEVE THE AMERICAN PEOPLE LOOK UPON

THOSE WHO HAVE SUDDENLY COME UNDER CONTROL OF COMMUNIST FORCES

AS THE ENEMIES OF OUR COUNTRY.

L THEY SHOULD BE HELPED NOW WITH THE SAME RESOLVE THAT WE  
HELP THOSE IN PHNOM PENH AND IN THE REMAINING AREAS AROUND  
SAIGON AND THE MEKONG DELTA.

#2 L AMERICA'S SECOND OBLIGATION IN THE COMING DAYS AND WEEKS  
IS TO ASSIST THOSE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS TO LEAVE INDOCHINA

WHO MAY BE IN DANGER OF LOSING THEIR LIVES WHEN THEIR PRESENT  
GOVERNMENTS CHANGE HANDS.

*above all*  
*the people who have*  
*worked with us -*

L THERE ARE, OF COURSE, NO PRECISE METHODS OF DETERMINING

*all?*  
WHO THESE PEOPLE ARE. BUT AFTER YEARS OF WAR AND AMERICAN

INVOLVEMENT, WE SHOULD HAVE A REASONABLE IDEA OF WHICH

INDIVIDUALS MAY BE MARKED FOR REPRISAL.

L THERE MAY BE TOO MANY OF THESE PEOPLE AND NOT ENOUGH  
TIME TO EVACUATE ALL OF THEM, BUT I URGE TONIGHT THAT THE  
EXECUTIVE BRANCH RECOGNIZE THE CRISIS NATURE OF THE SITUATION  
AND BEGIN TO TAKE THE NECESSARY MEASURES NOW TO PROVIDE  
ASSISTANCE AND A SAFE HAVEN FOR THOSE VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS  
WHO NEED TO LEAVE THEIR COUNTRY IN ORDER TO STAY ALIVE.

~~L I BELIEVE WE MUST HELP ANYONE WHO WANTS TO LEAVE --  
ESPECIALLY THE VERY YOUNG AND THE REFUGEES. BUT IT IS NOT  
LIKELY THAT THE UNITED STATES AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY  
WILL EVACUATE AND RESETTLE MILLIONS OF VIETNAMESE AND CAMBODIANS.~~

L I ENDORSE PRESIDENT FORD'S DESIRE TO HELP ALL OF THOSE  
TO LEAVE WHOM WE CAN PHYSICALLY HANDLE WITH AVAILABLE RESOURCES,

AND I STAND READY TO VOTE FOR FUNDS TO ACHIEVE THIS GOAL.

*But  
we must act now!*

L IF OUR FIRST OBLIGATION IS TO ALLEVIATE HUMAN SUFFERING,  
THE SECOND IS TO TAKE STEPS TO HALT THE FIGHTING IN CAMBODIA  
AND VIETNAM.

L QUITE FRANKLY, IN VIEW OF THE INTRANSIGENCE OF ALL SIDES  
AND THE PRESENT MILITARY SITUATION, I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER  
THIS NOW IS POSSIBLE.

L IN CAMBODIA, THE DEPARTURE OF LON NOL AND OTHERS AT LONG  
LAST HAS PROVIDED THE PHNOM PENH GOVERNMENT AN OPPORTUNITY TO  
NEGOTIATE WITH THE ROYAL GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNION FOR A  
CEASEFIRE AND AN ORDERLY TRANSITION OF POWER BASED ON THE  
POLITICAL REALITIES OF THE SITUATION.

L THERE IS LITTLE EXPECTATION THAT THE CONGRESS WILL PROVIDE  
ADDITIONAL MILITARY ASSISTANCE. HOWEVER, THE FOREIGN RELATIONS  
COMMITTEE HAS RECOMMENDED THE PROVISION OF EMERGENCY FOOD + *medical*  
ASSISTANCE.

L IT IS MY FIRM BELIEF THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS FAILED  
IN YEARS, MONTHS AND WEEKS PAST TO RECOGNIZE THE POLITICAL  
AND MILITARY REALITIES IN CAMBODIA AND HAS FAILED TO TURN OUR  
FULL EFFORTS TOWARD A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT THERE. TODAY,  
WE ARE SEEING THE TRAGIC FRUITS OF THIS LACK OF INITIATIVE.

h IN VIETNAM, THE GOAL OF OBTAINING A HALT TO THE FIGHTING  
THROUGH NEGOTIATION ~~SEEMS REMOTE~~ *may seem remote - but*

BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES SHOULD NOT  
TRY TO OBTAIN A CEASEFIRE.

L IT SEEMS THAT THERE ARE TWO CHOICES. THE UNITED STATES  
CAN SIT BACK AND WATCH THE NORTH VIETNAMESE SURROUND SAIGON,  
BATTLE PRESIDENT THIEU'S FORCES AND THEN OCCUPY THE CAPITAL  
AFTER WHAT MIGHT BE A PROLONGED AND DEVASTATING SEIGE L OR,  
WE CAN URGE THOSE VIETNAMESE OF REASON AND GOOD SENSE TO BEGIN  
THE PROCESS OF NEGOTIATION WITH THE OTHER SIDE.

L IN OTHER WORDS, THE CHOICE IS BETWEEN TOTAL MILITARY  
CONQUEST AND RESULTING BLOODSHED, OR SOME MORE HUMANE PATH  
OF NEGOTIATION WITHOUT THE POSSIBLE DESTRUCTION OF SAIGON  
AND KILLING OF GREAT NUMBERS OF HELPLESS INNOCENTS.



L BUT THESE CHOICES ARE NOT OURS. THE CHOICE IS UP TO THE  
VIETNAMESE. WE CAN ONLY GUIDE, URGE, OFFER ADVICE AND SERVE  
AS A MODERATING INFLUENCE. WE CANNOT MAKE THE DECISION FOR  
THEM.

L IF THERE WAS A TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED  
STATES TO ASSESS REALISTICALLY THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM AND  
TO URGE A COURSE OF ACTION UPON OUR ALLY WHICH WOULD LESSEN  
THE SUFFERING, IT IS NOW.

L WE CANNOT AFFORD AS A NATION OR A PEOPLE TO BE TIED TO  
THE FALSE WISDOM OF THE PAST AS WE WITNESS THE AGONIES OF  
of the Vietnamese People.  
~~A PEOPLE WE HAVE GIVEN SO MUCH TO HELP.~~

FINALLY, I WANT TO TURN VERY BRIEFLY TO THE DOMESTIC  
RAMIFICATIONS OF THE ~~SUDDEN REVERSAL OF AMERICAN POLICY IN~~ *recent turn of events in*

VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA.

AT A TIME OF DESPERATE ECONOMIC CRISIS AT HOME AND  
INCREASING DIFFICULTIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND EUROPE, THOSE  
POLITICAL LEADERS WHO BLAME THE CONGRESS FOR THE EVENTS IN  
INDOCHINA ARE WRONG. THEY ARE IRRESPONSIBLY SOWING DISCORD  
AMONG OUR PEOPLE. *Aid since 1973 - \$5.8 Billion*

THE AMERICAN PEOPLE KNOW THAT THE CONGRESS IS NOT TO  
BE BLAMED FOR MILITARY INCOMPETENCE AND IRRESPONSIBLE MILITARY  
STRATEGIES. *and inept Political leadership.*

*The Congress*

IT CAN'T BE BLAMED FOR THE LACK OF WILL; LOYALTY AND  
STAMINA OF THE VIETNAMESE ARMED FORCES.

L AND IT CAN'T BE BLAMED FOR BEING UNGENEROUS. FOR OVER THE  
YEARS IT HAS BEEN RESPONSIVE TO PRESIDENTIAL REQUESTS FOR  
~~5.8 B. M. I. D.~~  
BILLIONS IN FUNDS AND IT HAS PROVIDED THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH  
WITH THE AUTHORITY TO SEND OUR PEOPLE TO DIE IN INDOCHINA.

L I CALL UPON ALL THOSE WHO HAVE INDULGED IN THE TACTIC  
OF BLAME-SETTING TO STOP. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE ASHAMED BY  
IT, AND WE OFFER THE WORLD A SORRY SPECTACLE OF OUR GOVERNMENT  
AND POLITICAL SYSTEM BY SUCH CONDUCT.

L THE SCAR OF VIETNAM HAS BEEN ETCHED TOO DEEPLY INTO THE  
AMERICAN BODY POLITIC TO BEGIN A NEW ERA OF BLAME AND  
RECRIMINATION.

IT IS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND HAS POISONED OUR POLITICAL PROCESS  
FAR TOO LONG.

L LET US TURN NOW TOWARD THE TASK OF MOBILIZING OUR  
RESOURCES TO HELP THE VICTIMS OF YEARS OF WAR.

L LET US URGE A COURSE OF NEGOTIATION IN INDOCHINA  
TO STOP THE KILLING.

AND LET US TELL THE WORLD NOT TO MISINTERPRET THE  
TRAGEDY OF INDOCHINA. OUR ALLIES, FRIENDS, AND ADVERSARIES  
NEED TO KNOW THAT AMERICA WILL REMAIN TRUE TO ITS commitment  
AND FAITHFUL TO ITS FRIENDS IN THEIR HOUR OF NEED.

IN TURNING AWAY FROM THE HORROR AND TRAGEDY OF INDOCHINA  
THE AMERICAN PEOPLE MUST NOT TURN THEIR BACKS ON THE WORLD.

Reassessment of Policy -  
Priorities

AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE AFFAIRS OF THIS PLANET DOES NOT

HAVE TO BE A DESTRUCTIVE PROCESS / THIS NATION HAS A CRITICAL

ROLE TO PLAY IN HELPING TO PROVIDE FOR THE SECURITY OF OTHERS.

L AMERICA HAS A ROLE TO PLAY IN ASSISTING IN THE ALLEVIATION

OF HUNGER, THE ERADICATION OF DISEASE AND THE ENDING OF

ILLITERACY.

L WE MUST NOW TURN OUR ATTENTION AND ENERGIES TO

DEVELOPING A BIPARTISAN FOREIGN POLICY WHICH CAN BE

SUPPORTED BY THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, *a policy that has* ~~BECAUSE IT HAS AS ITS~~

*as its* GOAL THE HUMANE AND RESPONSIBLE PURSUIT OF LEGITIMATE

AMERICAN INTERESTS.

#####



# Minnesota Historical Society

Copyright in this digital version belongs to the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, link to, or email content, however, for individual use.

To request permission for commercial or educational use, please contact the Minnesota Historical Society.



[www.mnhs.org](http://www.mnhs.org)