

MAY 13, 1955

1.

It is a great privilege for me to thank you from my heart on behalf of the Vietnamese Red Cross and of my country, for the very kind and friendly feelings you have just expressed.

Indeed, you are right in choosing Viet Nam to illustrate the utility and nobleness of the great organization of human solidarity founded by Henri Dunant: no other country has a greater need of help and no other one deserves it more.

If Henri Dunant had not created the Red Cross almost a century ago, I am convinced that some of you might launch a similar organization to help our refugees.

It is the honor of the United States to have many Dunants, to have so many citizens dedicated to the welfare of the community and even to the rescue of foreign people.

Viet Nam and her seven hundred thousand refugees must appeal to your imagination and catch your heart.

What is at stake is more than the fate of over 700,000 refugees who have abandoned everything and risked their lives to flee to freedom. For the whole world knows the story of their splendid courage---the whole world knows that thousands of them risked their lives on frail boats or were bold enough to resist regular Viet Minh troops with their bare hands and have been transported to freedom by French and American planes and ships. So it is that their success will be your success, and their failure your failure. The rest of Asia will see through their success or failure whether or not it is possible to flee the communists, and to choose freedom.

That is why you must help to save them.

*

Indeed our war torn country could not have coped with such a gigantic task had it not been mightily helped by friendly countries, especially the United States.

The refugee problem is certainly too big, too difficult, to be solved by our country alone, or by private initiative alone.

Yet, from a spiritual point of view, the sympathy and help of the Red Cross have helped sustain us in our hours of difficulty. From 23 countries in all parts of the world, this friendly expression of people of good will to our people will never be forgotten.

*

Our new Red Cross Society was only established in 1952. From the beginning it faced super-human tasks. Again and again my government has called on this group of people of good will to take over humanitarian tasks of relieving the suffering and improving the lot of refugees---men, women, and children. Each and every day, medical teams of the Viet Nam Red Cross visit our refugee camps. These teams, consisting of a doctor, a pharmacist, nurses, and volunteer aides, not only provide medical care, but also distribute food and emergency supplies. Soon, they will be able to perform their tasks more effectively because this week, two well-equipped mobile dispensaries--gifts from the American Red Cross---have arrived in Saigon. I can speak with some

knowledge since it was my privilege to receive these dispensaries in the name of the Viet Nam Red Cross as they were placed on a ship for my country last March.

I believe they will be of particular assistance to the loyal workers of the Viet Nam Red Cross. Our Society maintains other dispensaries and clinics in Saigon and conducts a graduate school for nurses---something for which we have great need. An additional task--but a most satisfying one---has been the distribution of Red Cross supplies such as cloth, soap, vitamins, food and clothing to those of our brethren from the north so often in great need. Each day, the equipment and medical supplies from the Red Cross world help us prevent epidemics and provide medical care to those who have fled from the north.

There is one special item that moves me deeply. It is the gifts of the American children through their Junior Red Cross to our children. This expression of friendship, so evident in the thousands of gift boxes, school chests and blackboards, means far more to us than just the material value. Of course, the educational and health items will be useful, but of even greater value is the message of sympathy, interest and encouragement they bring with them. Our children truly are learning very early the meaning of Red Cross, and it is my own belief that these tokens of love and good will will bring not only help now, but inspiration for the future. In the hands of all of our children, together with the hands of other children throughout the world, lies the hope for a better world. If the future can make greater use of the basic principles of the Red Cross, there is real promise for peace for all men everywhere.
