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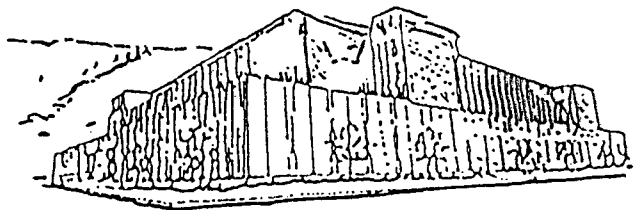
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FROM COTTON CURTAIN TO IRON CURTAIN:
BLACK AMERICANS' REACTION
TO THE HUNGARIAN CRISIS OF 1956 AND 1957

by

Rachel A. Wonder

B.A. The University of Montana–Missoula, 1993

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

The University of Montana–Missoula

1997

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From Cotton Curtain to Iron Curtain: Black Americans' Reaction to The Hungarian Crisis of 1956 and 1957 (112 pp.)

Director: Michael Mayer *MSM*

This thesis examines the reaction of black Americans to the Hungarian Crisis of 1956 and 1957. While most Americans poured forth their sympathy for the Hungarian victims of the Soviet Union's brutal invasion, black Americans called attention to both past and contemporary examples of aggression against the peoples of Asia and Africa. Black Americans also pointed to their own fight for equality, and the indifference and violent resistance that it so often encountered. Chapter I of this thesis examines the reaction of black Americans in light of their own unique historical experience. Chapter II provides an overall background to the Hungarian Crisis, a discussion of the Eisenhower administration's decision making during the Crisis, and an examination of the generally sympathetic response on the part of the mainstream press and general public. Chapter III provides the main body of this thesis. This chapter utilizes major black newspapers, the works of prominent black leaders, and letters sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower to present the often bitter and angry reaction of black Americans to their nation's decision to transport and provide asylum to some 32,000 Hungarian refugees. Underlying black Americans' unfavorable reaction to America's efforts to save the Hungarian refugees was their belief that their nation did not care unless the victims of oppression happened to be white. In addition, black Americans worried what the influx of a such a large number of white immigrants would do to their only recently acquired, and still very tenuous, socioeconomic and political rights.

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INTRODUCTION: HISTORY, ISSUES, AND SOURCES

The Hungarian Revolt of 1956 produced a wave of American sympathy unlike few other foreign events had before, or have since. The United States and the world watched in horror as the Soviet Union sent in troops to crush the rebellion sweeping through this small satellite nation. The Eisenhower administration first sought to employ the United Nations and personal diplomacy to secure the removal of Soviet troops. When these efforts failed and the Soviets continued their invasion, the Eisenhower administration was left with a difficult choice. Since the end of World War II, America had hoped for the eventual “liberation” of the Soviet dominated nations of Eastern Europe. Some critics even argued that the United States had directly incited the Hungarian Rebellion in an attempt to achieve this eventual end. However, by providing military aid to Hungary’s rebels, America would risk provoking an all-out war, or even a potential nuclear holocaust. For this reason, and others, the Eisenhower administration ruled out the use of force on behalf of Hungary. Instead, the administration proposed that thousands of Hungarian refugees be provided transportation to and refuge in the United States. This decision launched one of the most massive refugee relief efforts ever undertaken by the American government. The majority within the mainstream press and general public not only accepted this decision, they actively participated in the refugee effort and even pushed for greater action on the part of their government.

The unique history and experience of black Americans, however, led them to a very different perspective on the Hungarian Crisis. By 1956, when Americans began

their incredible outpouring of aid, praise, and sympathy for Hungary, black Americans had been waiting almost a century for a similar response to their struggle and plight. Black Americans had willingly answered their nation's call to go overseas and help save oppressed peoples in World War I and World War II. In both wars, black Americans' desire to serve their country was met with hostility and discrimination. While black Americans did achieve some substantial gains as a result of their participation in these conflicts, particularly World War II, these advances fell far short of the full and equal citizenship they had hoped for. Their nation's failure to grant them the privileges due them as citizens left many black Americans pessimistic about their role in American society.

With the emergence of the Cold War, however, black Americans once again lent their support to their nation. Like most other Americans of the 1950s, black Americans adopted the prevailing anti-communist stance of the day. However, in spite of their past and continued loyalty, the demands of black Americans for equality were often viewed suspiciously as being "communist inspired." Then, after many legal battles, the Supreme Court ruled segregated schools unconstitutional in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954). Once again, the hopes of black Americans soared. However, two years later in 1956, segregation in education and elsewhere remained a cruel reality. Instead of receiving support, or even grudging compliance, *Brown v. Board of Education* touched off a violent backlash and widespread resistance to desegregation.

The growing bitterness and frustration of black Americans would play an important role in their reaction to their nation's offers of aid and support to the

Hungarians, particularly the decision to assist thousands of Hungarian refugees in emigrating to the United States. The black community was not so much angry with the Hungarians themselves, as with the intense display of sympathy and support on the part of the United States government and the American people as a whole. Americans' support for the Hungarians came at a time when many individuals and groups, in and out of government, displayed indifference, or sometimes even outright hostility, to the fight against racism. Black Americans, understandably, felt hurt and betrayed that their own government and fellow citizens seemed to care more about the plight of foreigners thousands of miles away, than they did about the violence perpetrated against the American Negro in the South.

In addition to racism at home, black Americans resented what they saw as American support for imperialism overseas. As black Americans increasingly began to identify their plight with that of colored nations around the world, they began to view a clear racial line in both the foreign and domestic policies of the United States. Black Americans still remembered what they perceived as the rather indifferent attitude of their nation toward Benito Mussolini's brutal invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s. They also pointed to the continued indifference on the part of many Americans to more contemporary examples of brutality against colored peoples in Suez, Kenya, Algeria, and South Africa.

Added to their perception that their nation did not care unless the victims of oppression happened to be white, was black Americans' historical memory of the negative impact of white immigration on the status of the American Negro. In the early

years of industrialization, black Americans faced intense competition for employment opportunities with recently arrived immigrants from Europe. In this struggle, black Americans usually found themselves on the losing end. Much of the economic progress achieved by black Americans came as a direct result of the sudden decline in European immigration brought about by World War I. Their unpleasant experiences with European immigration left a lingering strain of nativism within the black community. This nativism would reemerge in full force with the Hungarian Crisis. By the 1950s, black Americans had made some important, though limited, advances. Thus, they greeted the news that thousands of Hungarian refugees would soon arrive on their nation's shores with fear and suspicion. Black Americans worried what the influx of a such a large number of white immigrants would do to their only recently acquired, and still very tenuous, socioeconomic and political gains.

This thesis primarily utilizes articles, editorials, and statements found throughout the black press. It also draws on the works of prominent black leaders and letters sent to President Dwight D. Eisenhower by black Americans opposing Hungarian refugee relief. When arguing that these sources represented black opinion, it is recognized that they leave out the very poor, illiterate, and rural blacks who did not have access to major newspapers and probably did not consider writing Eisenhower personally. It recognizes that it only encompasses the opinions of black leaders, editors and columnists for major newspapers, or those black Americans who cared enough and were able to take the time to either write to their newspaper or Eisenhower himself. Within these constraints, however, it seeks to represent a diversity of sources of black opinion. It includes

Southern as well as Northern newspapers. It further includes black newspapers which were traditionally Democratic and those which supported the Republican party. In addition, it also discusses the few cases where black Americans did voice support for and/or participate in Hungarian refugee relief.

While there are certainly some problems with arguing that the views of prominent black leaders, improvement organizations, and those voiced in major newspapers represented those of all black Americans, it remains reasonable to argue that they did in fact represent the opinions of a large majority of black Americans in the 1950s. By the 1950s, America's black population had gone from being overwhelmingly Southern and rural to Northern and urban. Even those blacks who remained in the South began increasingly to migrate to urban centers like Atlanta, Georgia. Urbanization played a vital role in increasing the power and influence of the black press and improvement organizations, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Prior to the urbanization of black America, improvement organizations and black newspapers tended to speak to a very small minority of elite black leaders. However, by the end of World War II, the circulation of black newspapers and membership in the NAACP had reached the hundreds of thousands.

Urbanization not only allowed institutions like the NAACP and the black press to expand their influence, it also, in turn, allowed increasing numbers of average black Americans to influence the direction and policy of such organizations. The NAACP, which depended on political support and cash donations from thousands of black Americans from all walks of life, could not simply ignore the views of such individuals.

By the 1950s, the black press had moved from being primarily supported by subsidies provided by a limited number of private individuals and organizations, to depending almost entirely on sales and subscriptions. The urbanization of black America required that its leaders, organizations, and media now remain more cognizant of the views and issues of importance to average black Americans. By the middle of the 1950s, these institutions both reflected and helped mold the opinions of a large majority, if not all, black Americans. As such, they stand as valid and reliable sources through which to examine the opinions of black Americans in general, and to the Hungarian Crisis in particular.

CHAPTER I: AN ANALYSIS OF THE HISTORICAL FACTORS CONDITIONING THE RESPONSE OF BLACK AMERICANS TO THE HUNGARIAN CRISIS OF 1956 AND 1957

The often angry and bitter reaction of black Americans to the United States' Hungarian refugee relief effort of 1956-1957 can best be understood in light of the historical experience of black Americans. The urbanization of black America allowed for the growth of key institutions, including the Negro press and improvement societies. However, urbanization also brought black Americans into increased contact and competition with European immigrants. The experiences of black Americans and immigrants in the early years of industrialization left a bitter and suspicious attitude toward white immigration on the part of many black Americans. The experience of World War I and World War II also helped condition the reaction of black Americans to arrival of the Hungarian refugees. Throughout these conflicts, black Americans sacrificed a great deal. However, despite the gains they did achieve, the social, political, and economic status of black Americans continued to lag far behind that of white Americans. By 1956 the Cold War had set in, the Afro-Asian block was coming into its own, and the frustration of black Americans was on the rise. In addition to their frustration with their own condition, black Americans came increasingly to believe that their nation only cared about oppression overseas when it involved a white European nation.

Black Americans first began moving North in substantial numbers in the decades following the Civil War. They came in search of better employment opportunities,

greater freedom of movement, and to escape the often violent resistance to the exercise of their newly acquired rights. This urbanization created the necessary conditions for the emergence of a number of black newspapers and improvement organizations. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw a tremendous growth in the number of black periodicals. The founding of the *Baltimore Afro-American* came in 1892; the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* in 1899; *Boston Globe* in 1901; and the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1905. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century also gave rise to organizations like the National Association of Colored Women in 1895; The National Business League in 1900; the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909; and the National Urban League (NUL) in 1911. These and countless smaller organizations provided a format in which black Americans could vent their frustration at their continued discrimination and formulate strategies by which to improve their condition. Throughout the twentieth century, the Negro Press and improvement societies would play a crucial role in both molding and giving voice to the opinion of black Americans.¹

While the migration of black Americans from the rural South to the urban areas of

¹John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, Third Edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967), pp. 435-436 & 444-451; E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, Revised Edition (New York: MacMillan, 1957), pp. 523-526; Langston Hughes, *Fight for Freedom: The Story of the NAACP* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962), pp. 22-23; Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 97-98; Arnold M. Rose, *The Negro in Postwar America* (Anti-Defamation League of B'Nai B'Rith: 1950), pp. 10 & 24-25; and Monroe N. Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook: An Annual Encyclopedia of the Negro, 1918-1919* (Alabama: The Negro Year Book Publishing Company, 1919), pp. 454-472.

the North brought some improvement in their condition, black Americans continued to encounter enormous obstacles in their search economic security. One of the greatest constraints on upward mobility for black Americans arose from their intense competition for employment and housing with white immigrants. Though immigrants often faced discrimination and hostility as well, their status nearly always remained above that of black Americans. Most employers expressed preference for immigrant over black workers. In addition, many immigrants seemed all too quick to adopt a hostile and racist attitude toward American blacks. This social ranking translated into greater economic opportunities for the white European immigrants, often at the expense of America's black citizens. Black Americans were almost universally excluded from the higher paying industrial occupations, and instead, confined to lower paying personal service professions. However, in times of economic downturn black Americans faced loss of even these occupations to white immigrants. These factors combined to make black Americans suspicious and resentful towards European immigration.²

The "new immigration" that began in the 1880s further aggravated the animosity between America's native blacks and its European immigrants. By the end of the 1870s, black Americans had begun to secure some socioeconomic mobility. Black Americans, though still severely limited in their opportunities for advancement, began in increasing

²Herman D. Bloch, *The Circle of Discrimination: An Economic and Social Study of the Black Man in New York* (New York: New York University Press, 1969), pp. 34-46; David J. Hellwig, "Black Leaders and United States Immigration Policy, 1917-1929," *Journal of Negro History* 66 (Summer 1981): pp. 110-127; and Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 88 & 100.

numbers to enter industrial positions from which they had previously been excluded. However, just as black Americans were on the verge of increased economic opportunities, a new wave of immigrants, mostly from Italy and Eastern Europe, arrived on America's shores. This new influx of white immigrants presented black Americans with even greater competition for unskilled to semi-skilled industrial employment. Fewer job opportunities, in turn, slowed the ongoing migration of black Americans to Northern urban centers. By 1910, what had been rapidly growing populations of black Americans in many Northern cities began to slowly level off.³

World War I, however, brought new opportunities for black Americans. Once again, they began migrating in large numbers to Northern industrial centers. By 1920, 330,000 black Americans had migrated either to the Northern or Western areas of the United States. This time, however, they had little to no immigrant competition. Almost overnight, World War I eliminated nearly all European immigration. World War I also generated a booming defense industry and a labor shortage. The lack of immigrant competition, combined with the manpower needs of World War I, opened up industrial employment opportunities that had previously been entirely out of reach of most black Americans. Large numbers of black Americans secured employment in munitions factories, steel plants, shipbuilding, foodstuffs, and many other war related industries. A particularly striking example of the inroads made by black workers can be seen in

³John E. Bodnar, "The Impact of the 'New Immigration' on the Black Worker: Steelton, Pennsylvania, 1880-1920," *Labor History* 17 (Spring 1976): pp. 214-229 and Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, p. 190.

Pittsburgh's steel industry. In 1910, Pittsburgh's steel plants employed fewer than 100 black workers. By 1923, this number had skyrocketed to 17,000.⁴

The Negro press played an important role in persuading Southern blacks to move Northward and take advantage of the opportunities afforded by World War I. The *Christian Recorder* declared that "if a million Negroes move North and West...it will be one of the greatest things for the Negro since the Emancipation Proclamation."⁵ The overwhelming response to the call to come North created the conditions in which the black news media and improvement organizations could expand their influence to larger numbers of black Americans. However, the growing importance of the black press also generated hostility and suspicion. In some areas of the South, possession of a black newspaper meant possible jail time, mob violence, or both. The federal government also kept a close eye on the black media. Fearful of the growing power of the black press, the War Department and the Committee on Public Information requested a meeting with leading members of the black media. At this meeting, government officials suspiciously questioned those present as to just where the black press stood on the war effort. In addition, the United States' Attorney General, Mitchell Palmer, placed a number of black periodicals on his list of "subversive" organizations. Palmer also had A. Philip

⁴Theodore Hemmingway, "Prelude to Change: Black Carolinians in the War Years, 1914-1920," *Journal of Negro History* 65 (Summer 1980): pp. 212-227; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 472-473; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, pp. 193 & 598-599; Hellwig, "Black Leaders and United States Immigration Policy, 1917-1929," p. 110; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 100 & 110-111; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 8-12.

⁵Quoted in Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, p. 9.

Randolph, editor of *The Messenger*, arrested for alleged disloyalty.⁶

Rather than encouraging disloyalty or subversion as so often accused, most black leaders instead urged their fellow black Americans to remain loyal and do all they could to further America's war effort. Through his writings in *The Crisis*, W.E.B. Du Bois advised his readers that it was time to "forget our special grievances and close ranks shoulder to shoulder with our white citizens and the allied nations that are fighting for democracy."⁷ In May of 1917 the NAACP, meeting with other improvement organizations, adopted a series of resolutions which called on black Americans to "join heartily in this fight."⁸ In spite of Germany's repeated efforts to sway the loyalty of America's black citizens, particularly those of Southern origin, black Americans remained relatively indifferent to German propaganda.⁹ Thomas Lykes, a black poet

⁶August Meier and Elliott M. Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto: An Interpretive History of American Negroes* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966), pp. 191-192; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 462-463 & 472; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, pp. 509-512 & 527-528; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 47-48; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 8-10.

⁷Quoted in Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 476 and Paul Gordon Lauren, *Power and Prejudice: The Politics and Diplomacy of Racial Discrimination* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), p. 73.

⁸Quoted in Jane L. and Harry N. Scheiber, "The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black Americans, 1917-1918," in Milton Cantor (comp.), *Black Labor in America* (Westport: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 115.

⁹Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 464-465; Hemmingway, "Prelude to Change," pp. 217-218; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 45-46; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 73; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 193-194; Scheiber, "The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black Americans 1917-1918," in Cantor (comp.), *Black Labor in America*, pp. 114-119; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 45-46.

writing from South Carolina, gave somewhat comical expression to the loyal intentions of black Americans: “Two lands alone I know and love [o]ur country and the one above...these were his answers to...the enemy...German spy doggone, begone [o]r I will smack your face with a liberty bond.”¹⁰

The massive response to the call of black leaders to “close ranks” and “join heartily in this fight” can be seen in the large numbers of average black Americans who actively sought out military service. These individuals knew that in order to claim full citizenship in America, they had to gain the right to fight for their country. Black Americans seldom sought military exemption, and in fact, expressed disappointment and resentment when draft boards turned them away. By the time World War I ended, over 300,000 black Americans had served in their nation’s armed forces. When allowed to participate in combat, black Americans proved willing to risk their lives to prove their loyalty and ability as soldiers. A substantial number of black soldiers received official commendation from the French High Command, including the prestigious “Croix de Guerre,” for bravery in battle.¹¹

Despite their willingness to serve, black soldiers often faced tremendous discrimination and hostility in the armed forces. They were excluded entirely from the marines and aviation, and allowed to serve only as cooks or messmen in the Navy. In

¹⁰Quoted in Hemmingway, “Prelude to Change,” p. 217.

¹¹Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 455-470; Hemmingway, “Prelude to Change,” pp. 214-216; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 45-46; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 109-110; and Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, p. 193; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 98-99 & 215-232.

whatever capacity they served, black servicemen encountered menial assignments, slow promotions, and almost entire separation from white soldiers. Black soldiers who served under white command often endured daily insults and unnecessarily harsh working and living conditions. The presence of black soldiers in training camps around the nation also met with intense hostility on the part of many local communities. Black soldiers found themselves excluded from eating and recreational facilities, ridiculed, harassed, and even assaulted by white civilians. However, perhaps the most demeaning example of discrimination came from the United States government itself. On August 17, 1918 America's military commander, General Pershing, informed the French High Command of the "differing nature" of black American soldiers. Pershing went on to request that French military personnel strictly limit their social contact with black American soldiers and avoid praising them too profusely.¹²

Black Americans on the home front demonstrated a similar eagerness to contribute to the war effort in spite of continued discrimination. Though World War I vastly increased the economic means of many black Americans, they still remained one of America's poorest groups of citizens. Despite this lower economic status, however, black Americans contributed heavily to the United States' efforts to raise money for the war. They were heavily represented in the purchase of Liberty War Bonds and War

¹²Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 458-461; Hemmingway, "Prelude to Change," pp. 215-216; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 38-42; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 109-110; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 73; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 192-193; Scheiber, "The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black Americans, 1917-1918," in Milton Cantor (comp.), *Black Labor in America*, pp. 119-126; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 79-81 & 94-96.

Savings Stamps. In addition, as a group, black Americans donated large amounts of time and money to organizations like the Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and the United War Work Campaign. All told, black Americans contributed over two million dollars to their nation's war effort. This massive financial contribution came at a time when the administration of Woodrow Wilson did little to respond to the pleas of black leaders to step in and take action to stop the lynchings and race riots occurring around the nation.¹³

The black community had sacrificed along with the rest of America, and naturally expected that the end of World War I would bring rewards for their patience, loyalty, and service. W.E.B. Du Bois expressed the sentiments of many black Americans when he declared: "We return...Make way for Democracy! We saved it in France, and by the Great Jehovah, we will save it in the U.S.A or know the reason why."¹⁴ However, despite some economic gains as a byproduct of the labor shortage, black Americans received few direct returns for their efforts in World War I. When the rewards for their contributions did not materialize, the hopeful optimism with which many black Americans had greeted World War I rapidly gave way to disillusionment and pessimism over their future as American citizens. For black Americans, the discrepancy between Woodrow Wilson's pledge to "Make the World Safe for Democracy" and the harsh reality of racism at home

¹³Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 470-471; Hemmingway, "Prelude to Change," pp. 216-217; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 110-111; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, p. 192; and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, pp. 45-51.

¹⁴Quoted in Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 99.

became increasingly difficult to ignore.¹⁵

Black soldiers felt this frustration even more profoundly than those on the home front. Their service in France provided them with a stark contrast to their lives at home. Though their treatment of colonial peoples left much to be desired, the French government imposed no racial restrictions on black American soldiers. The French, in fact, treated black American soldiers as heroes, just as they did white American soldiers. This social equality and easy mixing of the races came as a shock to many black Americans, and forever affected their willingness to accept anything less. As a result of their wartime experience, black soldiers returned home with a growing determination to not rest until their nation accepted them as full social, economic, and political equals. It was no accident that many of the leaders of the later Civil Rights Movement spent time overseas in the United States military.¹⁶

World War I also served to increase the knowledge and interest of many Americans, including black Americans, in international affairs. While some black Americans had always recognized the link between the condition of the American Negro and events overseas, World War I deepened this recognition and brought it to an

¹⁵Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 476-479; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 110-113; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 194-196; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 99-100; and Scheiber, "The Wilson Administration and the Wartime Mobilization of Black Americans, 1917-1918," in Milton Cantor (comp.), *Black Labor in America*, pp. 135-136.

¹⁶Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 476-479; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 45-46; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 110-111; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 99-100; and Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 194-196.

expanded, though still limited, number of black Americans. This increased knowledge of world events, in turn, generated a greater sense of identification with colored nations around the world. The organization of the first Pan-African Conference by Du Bois and the NAACP demonstrated a growing awareness among leading black Americans that their success in fighting racism at home depended on the end of racism and imperialism everywhere. However, at this point in history, Pan-Africanism remained the purview of a relatively small group of elite black leaders. It would take Italy's invasion of Ethiopia in the 1930s, and later World War II and the Cold War, to bring a more international perspective on racism to the majority of black Americans.¹⁷

In the years directly following World War I, however, black Americans returned to concentrating primarily on domestic issues. One of the most important concerns of black Americans in the 1920s was preserving the economic opportunities secured in World War I. Black Americans clearly recognized the link between their socioeconomic status and European immigration. This recognition generated strong nativist sentiments within the black community. These sentiments can be seen in the words of Philadelphia's *Christian Recorder*: "The Negro...speaks the language...knows the customs...and is physically the equal and morally the superior of the immigrant from Europe."¹⁸ The understandable desire of black Americans to preserve their economic gains, ironically, led

¹⁷Franklin Williams, "Blacks and American Foreign Affairs," *The Crisis* (December 1980): pp. 533-538; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 470; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, p. 50; and Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 77-79.

¹⁸Quoted in Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, p. 9.

many to support the efforts of racist organizations, like the Klu Klux Klan, to tighten immigration laws. Black Americans, however, also experienced enormous conflict on the immigration issue. While recognizing the economic benefits of ending immigration, black Americans felt very uncomfortable with the tendency of others supporting immigration restrictions to emphasize racial characteristics. For black Americans, the solution lay in increasing the percentage of immigrants coming from Asia and Africa, while at the same time, reducing the numbers arriving from Europe.¹⁹

The Great Depression slowed industrialization and urbanization for all Americans, including black Americans. However, as a result of the earlier mass migrations of the industrial era and World War I, large numbers of black Americans remained concentrated in urban areas. In addition, black Americans continued to migrate to the cities, albeit at a slower rate than they had in the previous decades. In spite of the Depression, the economic and political awareness of urban blacks continued to grow throughout the 1930s. This growing awareness can be seen in the successful use of economic coercion to protest inequitable treatment. Of the numerous black sponsored boycotts of the 1930s, St. Louis' "Jobs-for-Negroes" movement and Harlem's "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" or "Buy Black" campaigns drew the most attention and had the greatest impact. These and other, similar, boycotts targeted white businesses which, while catering primarily to black customers, refused to employ black workers. Through picketing, word of mouth, and news releases, black leaders put the word out that their communities

¹⁹Hellwig, "Black Leaders and United States Immigration Policy, 1917-1929," pp. 110-127 and Work (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1918-1919*, p. 9.

should immediately discontinue patronage of such businesses. These economic boycotts, coming in the midst of the Great Depression, had a devastating effect on white businesses which continued to discriminate. In turn, these economic campaigns provided a much needed boost to black business.²⁰

The 1930s also witnessed an early example of the increasingly important role of the Negro vote. In 1930 Herbert Hoover nominated John J. Parker, a little known federal judge, to the Supreme Court. The NAACP, however, learned that earlier in his career Parker had made racist statements regarding the participation of black Americans in the democratic process. The NAACP first attempted to discover if Parker still held such views. When Parker failed to disavow his earlier statements, the NAACP mobilized black voters to come out against his nomination. The NAACP recognized that if enough black Americans, particularly those concentrated in Northern urban areas, put pressure on their Congressmen to oppose Parker's nomination, they could keep him off the Supreme Court. Though other forces, particularly labor, played a role as well, the defeat of the Parker nomination clearly indicated the growing power of the Negro vote.²¹

During the 1930s, the NAACP also stepped up its efforts to secure greater employment and educational opportunities for black Americans. The NAACP challenged the discriminatory employment practices of the Tennessee Valley Project. The NAACP's

²⁰Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 539-540 and Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 81-82

²¹Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 529; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 74-75; and Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 141-144.

Thurgood Marshall launched a series of court battles on behalf of equal pay for black teachers. However, of all its diverse activities during the 1930s, the NAACP's attack on the legal principles upholding segregation had the greatest long term impact. Since the Supreme Court's ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which upheld Louisiana's Public Accommodation Law requiring separate accommodations for black passengers, the legal doctrine of "separate but equal" had stood firm. However, beginning in the 1930s, the NAACP's legal staff, concluded that *Plessy* might be best challenged by attacking not the separateness, but rather the inequality, of various educational and transportation facilities throughout the South. The NAACP could easily point to case after case where facilities reserved for blacks remained clearly unequal. Throughout the 1930s, the NAACP would successfully argue a number of cases before the Supreme Court based on this formula. The NAACP also pointed to the possibility that racial separation could, in the future, be challenged as inherently unequal. The activities of the NAACP, continuing even in the midst of the Depression, demonstrated the growing political consciousness of black Americans. Their legal battles also laid the groundwork for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).²²

In addition to actively seeking to improve their own status, black Americans in the 1930s also concerned themselves with their colored brethren in the small African nation of Ethiopia. For black Americans, Ethiopia stood as the ultimate symbol of the achievement of colored people. Of all the African nations, only Ethiopia had remained

²²Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 74-75 & 134-139 and Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 131-138, 163-165, 168-172, & 186-195.

independent after the onslaught of European imperialism. In December of 1934, fighting between Italian and Ethiopian troops broke out. It became increasingly clear that Mussolini intended to use this fighting as a pretext to invade Ethiopia. Black Americans desperately sought to convince their government to do something to prevent this impending invasion. While many Americans may have felt some sympathy for Ethiopia, the intense fear of another world war led many Americans to press their government to stay completely out of this conflict. Instead of initiating action on behalf of Ethiopia, the United States government passed neutrality legislation, instituted an arms embargo, and looked the other way as Mussolini proceeded with his merciless invasion.

When they failed to move their government toward favorable action on behalf of Ethiopia and the dreaded invasion came, black Americans took numerous steps to provide aid and comfort to the Ethiopian victims of Italian aggression. They sent resolutions to the League of Nations, held rallies to raise money, sent medical supplies and personnel, and launched a massive public education campaign. Some black Americans even set out to raise volunteer fighting units. Even as black Americans sought to save Ethiopia, Italian-Americans instituted their own campaign to raise money for Italy's armies. This display of support for Mussolini, who was clearly the aggressor, infuriated black Americans. To register their opposition, thousands of black Americans boycotted businesses of Italian-Americans, which they believed were funneling funds to Mussolini. The mass participation among the black community alerted a greater number of black Americans to events overseas and enhanced their sense of international racial solidarity. It also represented one of the earliest cases where black Americans vocally and forcefully

opposed the foreign policy of the United States.²³

For black Americans, the coming of World War II meant renewed urbanization and economic opportunities. Once again, large numbers of black Americans began migrating from Southern rural areas to urban areas in the North and West. In many ways, this migration looked very similar to the earlier migrations of black Americans. However, the numbers of black Americans leaving the South during World War II far exceeded what had come before. Despite the earlier migrations, two-thirds of America's black population still lived in the South in 1940. The vast majority of these Southern blacks still lived in isolated rural areas and worked in low paying agricultural occupations. Between 1941 and 1945 nearly one million black Americans left these rural areas in search of industrial employment. The labor shortage created by World War II enabled large numbers of these migrants to secure the employment they sought. As a direct result of World War II, the estimated number of black Americans working in manufacturing or related industries rose by 600,000.²⁴

²³Jake Miller, *The Black Presence in American Foreign Affairs* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1978), pp. 247-248; Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Policy, 1935-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 37-53; Red Ross, "Black Americans and Italo-Ethiopian Relief 1935-1936," *Ethiopian Observer* 15, no. 2 (1972): pp. 122-131; and Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 119-120.

²⁴Richard M. Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," *Journal of American History* 55 (June 1968): pp. 90-106; Jessie Parkhurst Guzman (ed.), *Negro Year Book: A Review of Events Affecting Negro Life, 1941-1946* (Alabama: The Department of Records and Research Tuskegee Institute, 1947), pp. 134-136; John Modell, Marc Goulden, and Sigurdur Magnusson, "World War II in the Lives of Black Americans: Some Findings and an Interpretation," *Journal of American History* 76

As in World War I, black Americans faced discrimination and hostility in their efforts to secure employment in America's war industries. During the early years of World War II, defense plants either turned black Americans away or placed them in low paid menial occupations. For example, in 1940 the rapidly expanding aircraft industry enunciated its policy that: "The Negro will be considered only as janitors and in other similar capacities."²⁵ Hostility towards the employment of black Americans in war industries also sparked race riots around the nation. One of the worst of such riots occurred in Detroit, Michigan. The beginnings of this riot lay in a strike at a Packard factory making jet bomber engines for the war effort. In protest against the employment of black workers, over twenty thousand white workers walked off the job. One striker was reported to have declared: "I'd rather see Hitler and Hirohito win the war than work beside a nigger on the assembly line."²⁶ The strike aggravated the already tense racial climate in Detroit. By June of 1942, these elevated racial tensions erupted into a riot which left 34 people dead and around a million dollars of property damaged.²⁷

(December 1989): pp. 838-848; Neil A. Wynn, "The Impact of the Second World War on the American Negro," *Journal of Contemporary History* 6, no. 2 (1971): pp. 42-53; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 597; and Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, pp. 196 & 214-218.

²⁵Quoted in Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," p. 91.

²⁶Quoted in Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 95-96.

²⁷Dalfiume "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," pp. 91-106; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 95-98; Frazier, *The Negro In the United States*, pp. 606 & 613; Guzman (ed.), *Negro Year Book, 1941-1946*, pp. 349-350; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 95-98; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 227-228; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 217-219; and Wynn, "The Impact of the Second World War on

In spite of such examples of resistance toward their employment in war industries, black Americans had far greater success in fighting employment discrimination in World War II than they had in World War I. The increased power of black Americans to fight discrimination can be seen in the March on Washington Movement. Even before America entered the war, A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to lead thousands of black workers in a massive march on the nation's capitol in an effort to secure more equitable treatment in the nation's defense industries. The prospect of such a march presented President Franklin D. Roosevelt with a potentially embarrassing display of low morale on America's home front. Roosevelt urged Randolph to think of America's international image, and begged him to call off the march. Initially, Randolph stood his ground and refused to do any such thing. However, after extensive bargaining, Randolph and Roosevelt reached an agreement. In return for Randolph calling off the scheduled march, Roosevelt issued Executive Order #8002, which forbade discrimination in government employment and in companies receiving government contracts. Roosevelt also set up the Fair Employment Practice Committee (FEPC) to oversee the enforcement of this order. While the FEPC had little real power, it did provide some increased economic opportunities for black Americans.²⁸

the American Negro," p. 46.

²⁸Dalrymple, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," pp. 98-99; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 578-579; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, pp. 631-614; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 85-86; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 217-219; and Wynn, "The Impact of the Second World War on the American Negro," pp. 46-46.

The experience of black Americans in the armed forces during World War II resembled the somewhat mixed bag of substantial advances mixed with continued discrimination that characterized their search for equality on the home front. During World War II, black Americans had far greater opportunities for military service than they had in the previous war. The Selective Service Act of 1940 contained an important amendment forbidding discrimination in the drafting and training of servicemen. Though frequently ignored, this clause represented a crucial step toward official condemnation of racial discrimination in military life. Unlike in the previous war, black officers received training at the same facilities and on an integrated basis with white officers. In addition, the Navy, Marines, and Army Air Corp, all of which had previously either excluded black Americans entirely or confined them to non-combat areas, accepted black Americans into general service. In January of 1945 the War Department, acting in response to the desperate need for infantrymen during the Battle of the Bulge, announced that a number of Negro infantry platoons would be integrated into previously all white units and shipped to fight on German soil. Though a temporary wartime measure, this announcement provided black soldiers with an invaluable chance to prove themselves.²⁹ At the conclusion of the fighting, the War Department declared that the Negro platoons had “established themselves as fighting men no less courageous than their white

²⁹Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 580-92; Guzman (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1941-1946*, pp. 351-358, 361 & 368-372; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, p. 226; Meier and Rudwick, *From Plantation to Ghetto*, pp. 218-219; and Wynn, “The Impact of the Second World War on the American Negro,” pp. 44-46.

comrades.”³⁰

Despite their many gains, black servicemen in World War II still faced considerable discrimination. Though officially welcomed in integrated white training schools, black Americans often found it difficult to get the necessary recommendations from their commanding officers. In addition, though black Americans had gained the right to serve in all branches of the United States’ armed forces, their admission remained on a segregated basis. Army command also deemed all black newspapers subversive and banned their presence on army bases and facilities. The Red Cross’ separation of blood according to the race of the donor and recipient provided yet another example of official, institutional racism. As in World War I, the presence of black servicemen continued to generate hostility on the part of some white civilians. Hostile white civilians once again harassed, beat, and sometimes even murdered black servicemen. The most galling examples of discrimination came when Jim Crow eating and recreational facilities continued to deny access to black soldiers, at the same time they provided such services to German prisoners of war. This forever imprinted on the minds of many black Americans that their nation favored white foreigners, even if they be the enemy, over its own black citizens.³¹

The improved status of black Americans during and after World War II resulted,

³⁰Quoted in Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 586.

³¹Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” pp. 91-92; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 589-591; Guzman (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1941-1946*, pp. 351-352, & 372; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 91-95; and Kluger, *Simple Justice*, p. 226.

in part, from a new, more activist approach to achieving racial equality. During World War I, black Americans, while never forgetting their own fight for equality, patiently waited and remained optimistic that the end of the War would bring them their long-awaited chance to improve their status in American society. Having failed to acquire the full and equal benefits of American life, black Americans entered World War II with a far more skeptical and impatient outlook. While still remaining loyal, the Negro press and improvement agencies highlighted the continued existence of racism to a far greater extent. Black Americans also vowed that this time around they would not wait until the end of the war to wage their fight for equality; They would begin immediately. This new approach became crystallized in the *Pittsburgh Courier's* now famous "Double V" editorial of February 14, 1942. This editorial declared that black Americans would simultaneously fight for "victories over our enemies at home and victory over our enemies on the battlefields abroad."³² This increasingly vocal approach of the black community made their demands for equality harder for America to ignore.³³

World War II created a favorable climate in which black Americans could press their demands. Even more so than World War I, World War II was a total modern war. Such a war necessitated the full participation and support of all American citizens.

³²Quoted in Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," p. 96.

³³Ralph N. Davis, "The Negro Newspapers and The War," *Sociology and Social Research*, 27 (May-June 1943): pp. 372-380; Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," pp. 91-106; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 598-600; Guzman (ed.), *Negro Yearbook, 1941-1946*, pp. 386-87; and Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 138.

Eleanor Roosevelt, a longtime advocate of civil rights, pointed out that “the nation cannot expect colored people to feel that the United States is worth defending if the Negro continues to be treated as he is now.”³⁴ In addition, the horrific culmination of Hitler’s racism made it increasingly difficult to dismiss racism within the United States. The clear irony of fighting to defeat the definitive example of racism overseas while continuing to ignore racism at home became too obvious and disconcerting for many Americans to ignore. This growing awareness of racism could also be found throughout the international community. The growing power and visibility of the United States in international affairs, combined with the heightened awareness of race, further necessitated that America take steps to solve its racial problems. By failing to do so, America left too many perfect propaganda opportunities by which its enemies could attack its credibility as a moral leader.³⁵

While the rest of the world turned a critical eye toward the racial problems in the United States, black Americans looked hopefully toward the newly emerging nations of the Afro-Asian block. Black Americans had long felt a deep empathy with colored people struggling to free themselves from white rule. This sense of identification with colored people in other lands can be seen as early as World War I and Du Bois’

³⁴Quoted in Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 140.

³⁵Roy Wilkins “The Negro Wants Full Equality,” in Raymond W. Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944), pp. 113-115; Dalfiume, “The ‘Forgotten Years’ of the Negro Revolution,” pp. 96; Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, pp. 592 & 599; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 12-13; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 136-143 & 163-164; Rose, *The Negro in Postwar America*, pp. 13-14; and Wynn “The Impact of the Second World War on the American Negro,” p. 49.

organization of the first Pan-African conference. As World War II came to a close, Du Bois once again set out to place racism in an international context. When the San Francisco Conference met in 1945 to draft the United Nations' charter, Du Bois, acting in conjunction with the NAACP and other black leaders and organizations, attempted to persuade the American delegation to take a firm stand against imperialism. Du Bois also tried unsuccessfully to introduce a proposal which forbid racial discrimination in any member state.³⁶

An ever increasing number of black Americans adopted the pan-racial and anti-colonial stance of Du Bois in the belief that their fate would always be intertwined with that of colored people everywhere. A. Philip Randolph declared his belief that "the interest of the Negro people in America [was] the interest of Negroes all over the world."³⁷ Walter White, Secretary of the NAACP, expressed similar sentiments when he noted that the plight of black Americans was "part and parcel to the problems of other colored peoples."³⁸ In the post-war years, nearly every major Negro improvement organization placed the fight against colonialism onto their agenda. In addition, leading national black newspapers, like the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, began

³⁶James L. Roark, "American Black Leaders: The Response to Colonialism and the Cold War, 1943-1953," *African Historical Studies* 4, no. 2 (1971): pp. 253-270; Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 152-153; and Williams, "Blacks and American Foreign Affairs," pp. 533-536.

³⁷A. Philip Randolph, "March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro," in Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants*, p. 152.

³⁸Quoted in Roark, "American Black Leaders," p. 261.

devoting increased attention and editorial space to anti-colonial struggles occurring around the world.³⁹

Coinciding with their increased awareness of international affairs, black Americans began increasingly to utilize crises occurring around the world to highlight both their own plight and that of colored peoples everywhere. In doing so, they began to draw analogies of the sort they would later use so heavily in the Hungarian Crisis. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the mainstream newspapers vowed to always “Remember Pearl Harbor.” When an angry white mob lynched a black man in Sikeston, Missouri on January 25, 1942, the *Chicago Defender* declared that American must “Remember Pearl Harbor...and Sikeston too!” and “Japan Lynched Pearl Harbor; Sikeston Lynched Democracy.”⁴⁰ Similar use of international events can be seen in the comparison George Schuyler, editor for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, drew between Nazism and imperialism: “Negro countries have been overrun...and their peoples chained and exploited like those of the European lands currently under Nazi rule.”⁴¹ Roy Wilkins of the NAACP even went as far as to compare the plight of Germany’s Jewish population

³⁹Mary McLeod Bethune, “Certain Unalienable Rights,” pp. 248-258; A. Philip Randolph, “March on Washington Movement Presents Program for the Negro,” pp. 134-135 & 152-153; George S. Schuyler, “The Caucasian Problem,” pp. 281-89 & 294; and Roy Wilkins, “The Negro Wants Full Equality,” pp. 113-114 (all in Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants*); Plummer, *Rising Wind*, pp. 89, 125-126, 133-135 & 157; Roark, “American Black Leaders,” pp. 253-262; and Williams, “Blacks and American Foreign Affairs,” pp. 533-536.

⁴⁰Quoted in Davis, “The Negro Newspapers and The War,” p. 374.

⁴¹Schuyler, “The Caucasian Problem,” in Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants*, p. 282.

with the presence of black ghettos in America: “If it was cause for international weeping that Jews were beaten in Berlin and scourged into a loathsome ghetto in Warsaw, what about a tear for black ghettos in America.”⁴² In none of these and other similar statements did black Americans really wish to imply that they felt no sympathy for the victims of such tragedies. Rather, the purpose of these statements seems to have been to draw attention to, and emphasize the seriousness of, the plight of black Americans.⁴³

The experience of black Americans in World War II would have repercussions far beyond the immediate war years. For the most part, black Americans were able to hold onto and build upon the economic opportunities secured in World War II. As with earlier periods of urbanization, the black press and improvement organizations achieved increased growth and influence. In 1940 the black press had a total circulation of approximately 1,300,000. By 1945, circulation had skyrocketed to 1,809,000. World War II also enabled the NAACP to broaden its influence. In 1941 it had a total membership of around 50,000; By 1946 it had well over 400,000 members.⁴⁴ The growing power of the NAACP enabled it to gather increased financial support to launch a series of court cases which, added to the legal precedents set in the 1930s, eventually dealt the

⁴²Wilkins, “The Negro Wants Full Equality,” in Logan (ed.), *What the Negro Wants*, p. 115.

⁴³See also Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 102 & 107 and Kluger, *Simple Justice*, p. 25.

⁴⁴E. Franklin Frazier argues that this tremendous growth enabled the NAACP to more accurately reflect the opinions and concerns of the mass of average Negroes than it had at any time in its previous history.

final blow to legal segregation. The immediate post-war years also saw the return of thousands of highly determined black veterans who, thanks to the G.I. Bill, had the economic means to pursue higher education. This situation presented Jim Crow states with two real options. Either they could build more facilities specifically intended for blacks students, a very costly option, or they could desegregate existing white facilities.⁴⁵

The coming of the Cold War had both positive and negative implications for black Americans' fight for equality. On one hand, the Cold War created an atmosphere where any demand for change was seen as potentially "communist inspired." However, the Cold War also provided black Americans with increased opportunities to highlight the incongruity between the United States' claim of moral world leadership and the pervasive presence of racism at home. It became very difficult for the United States to point accusingly towards the Soviet Union's disregard for human rights when its treatment of its own colored citizens remained so poor. The Soviet Union, of course, seized upon every opportunity to exploit the America's racial problems for its own ends. It became increasingly clear that the United States would have to take firm steps toward rectifying these problems, or risk losing the respect of the international community, especially the emerging Afro-Asian block. The Asian nation of Ceylon noted that racism and discrimination in the United States provided "the greatest propaganda gift any country could give the Kremlin in its persistent bid for the affections of the colored races of the

⁴⁵Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," pp. 99-100; Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*, pp. 535-539; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 134-139; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, pp. 237-238 & 257-278; and Wynn, "The Impact of the Second World War on the American Negro," pp. 48-49.

world.”⁴⁶ Though other factors, notably the growing importance of black voters, played a role as well, the Cold War strongly influenced both Harry S. Truman’s and Dwight D. Eisenhower’s support of civil rights issues.⁴⁷

The 1950s ushered in the height of the Cold War, the last gasps of imperialism, and the beginnings of the modern Civil Rights Movement. These three forces would profoundly affect one another and the way black Americans viewed their nation, the world, and ultimately, the Hungarian Crisis. With the advent of the Civil Rights Movement, and the watershed decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, black Americans began to take an renewed and increasing interest in the racial implications of both America’s domestic and foreign affairs. The emergence of the Civil Rights Movement in America also coincided with the increasingly strident demands by the colored nations of the Afro-Asian block to be free from colonial domination. Black Americans began increasingly to identify their fight against Jim Crow at home with the Afro-Asian block’s fight against imperialism overseas. Black Americans looked on with pride as former colonies throughout Asia and Africa threw off the final vestiges of colonialism and emerged as full-fledged nations. When they saw examples of continued oppression, black Americans protested loudly. Though black Americans wholly supported their nation in the Cold War, they also pointed out that communism was not the only, or even the worst, evil facing the world. For black Americans, the continuance of racism at home

⁴⁶Quoted in Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, p. 193.

⁴⁷Lauren, *Power and Prejudice*, pp. 186-196; Plummer, *Rising Wind*, pp. 4, 167-168, 183 & 214-215; and Roark, “American Black Leaders,” pp. 267.

and imperialism overseas constituted a greater threat to international harmony than even the Cold War.⁴⁸

By the mid-1950s, black Americans had made many gains. Urbanization, war, and the continued fight by organizations like the NAACP had brought them closer than they had ever been to social, economic, and political equality. A limited, but ever increasing, number of black Americans achieved prominent positions in the entertainment industry, sports, business, and perhaps most important, political life. The United States Congress now had three black Congressmen: Charles C. Diggs of Michigan, William L. Dawson of Illinois, and Adam Clayton Powell of New York.⁴⁹ Dwight D. Eisenhower also appointed the first two black Americans to serve in executive positions in the Executive Branch; J. Ernest Wilkins served as Assistant Secretary of Labor and E. Frederic Morrow as Special White House Assistant. Black Americans also benefitted, though not nearly to the extent as did the rest of America, from the booming economy of the 1950s. Perhaps most important, *Brown v. Board of Education* had, after decades of legal battles, at last stripped away the legal foundation supporting Jim Crow segregation. No other event imbued so many black Americans with a renewed sense of optimism for the future as this one Supreme Court decision.

⁴⁸Alexander DeConde, *Ethnicity, Race, and American Foreign Policy: A History* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), pp. 8 & 143-144; Alfred O. Hero, Jr., "American Negroes and U.S. Foreign Policy: 1937-1967," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 13, no. 2 (1969), pp. 220-251; Miller, *The Black Presence in American Foreign Affairs*, p. 248; and Plummer, *Rising Wind*, p. 257.

⁴⁹William L. Dawson joined Congress in 1943; Adam Clayton Powell in 1945; and Charles C. Diggs in 1955.

By 1956 when the first Hungarian refugees began to arrive, equality and full citizenship for black Americans had become clearly visible, but still continued to remain just beyond their grasp. While *Brown v. Board of Education* had monumental consequences for the future, Jim Crow did not simply fall away in 1954. Instead, *Brown v. Board* ushered in a violent backlash, particularly in the South, against black Americans' pursuit of integration and equality. Their nation's failure to guarantee them equality and freedom from fear left many black Americans feeling frustrated and betrayed. Black Americans had helped build their nation in the industrial era, fought in two world wars, and remained loyal citizens in their nation's new Cold War. Yet still their nation continued to deny them basic rights and privileges entitled to all American citizens. The frustration of black Americans at their continued status as second-class citizens, despite their many contributions, played an important role in the irritated and often bitter reaction of black Americans to their nation's efforts to rescue Hungary's refugees.

CHAPTER II: THE RESPONSE AND PARTICIPATION OF THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, MEDIA, AND PUBLIC IN THE HUNGARIAN CRISIS OF 1956 AND 1957

The roots of the Hungarian Revolt lay in part at the Twentieth Conference of the Soviet Union's Communist party, held in February 1956. As part of the new path toward "destalinization" Nikita Khrushchev spoke of embarking upon an improved relationship with Russia's Eastern European satellites. This relationship, he said, should be characterized by increased cooperation and equality.⁵⁰ When the word of this liberalization leaked out, it stirred Russia's Eastern European satellites to demand greater reforms and increased freedom over their own affairs. News of successful demonstrations in Poland set off similar protests in Hungary, and by the Fall of 1956 Hungary was experiencing ever increasing daily unrest.⁵¹

In an attempt to appease those demanding reforms, Erno Gero, First Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, invited the popular, exiled ex-premier, Imre Nagy, to return and share power. Even this invitation, however, failed to quiet the increasingly aggressive demands for reform. In Budapest on October 23, 1956 demonstrations turned into rioting, street fighting, and finally full scale revolt. Hungarian troops refused to fire

⁵⁰See text of Khrushchev's speech in Robert V. Daniels (ed.), *A Documentary History of Communism*, Vol. 2 (New York: Vintage Books, 1960), pp. 224-231.

⁵¹Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984), p. 354; Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 295-296; and Janos Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers: The 1956 Revolution and Realpolitik* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1972), pp. 3-4 & 6.

on student protestors. Instead, they began to defect and join the rebellion against Soviet occupation. The fighting soon spread from Budapest into the countryside. The rebels' demands included the complete withdrawal of Russian occupational forces, free elections, abolition of the hated secret police, greater religious freedom, and the end of forced collectivization and industrialization.⁵²

In an effort to quiet the growing rebellion, Soviet leaders agreed to allow Nagy to be fully reinstated as Premier of Hungary. Nagy then reorganized the government and won a promise from the Soviets to withdraw their troops. Despite that promise, however, Soviet troops still remained on November 1, 1956. By this time, Russian troops were rapidly approaching Budapest, and Nagy grew increasingly desperate. He proceeded to declare Hungary a neutral nation, to announce its withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact, and to state his intention of turning toward the United Nations and the West for aid and protection. As part of these efforts, Nagy urgently requested that the United Nations demand that the Soviets abide by their earlier promise to withdraw their troops peacefully. However, Nagy's efforts failed to halt the advance of Russian troops. On November 4, 1956 thousands of Soviet tanks and troops entered Budapest and put down

⁵²“Telegram From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State,” No. 98, pp. 263-264 and “Transcript of a Teletype Conversation Between the Legation in Hungary and the Department of State, October 25, 1956,” No. 108, pp. 271-286 (both in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1955-1957, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1990)[hereafter cited as *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*]; Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Waging Peace, 1956-1961* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 62-69; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, p. 295; and Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, p. 7.

the Hungarian Revolution with a brutality that shocked the world. The government of Nagy fell and a Soviet backed government headed by Janos Kadar then took over. Thousands of Hungarian rebels died in the days of brutal street fighting that followed. As a result of the heavy bloodshed and fear of further Soviet reprisals, Hungarian refugees began pouring into neighboring Austria by the thousands. Before the crisis came to an end, well over one-hundred thousand refugees crossed into Austria.⁵³

The Eisenhower administration closely watched events in Hungary. They greeted the news of the uprising with an uneasy mix of surprise, sympathy, excitement, and fear. Eisenhower declared that "the heart of America goes out to the people of Hungary."⁵⁴ The rebellion, however, also inspired a sense of excitement. After all, it appeared to be an ideal opportunity to validate Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' frequent rhetoric of "liberation of captive peoples" and a "roll back of communism." Dulles conveyed a sense of this sentiment when he declared: "We are on the point of winning an immense and

⁵³Sherman Adams, *Firsthand Report: The Story of the Eisenhower Administration* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961), pp. 254-255; United Nations, General Assembly, *Official Records of the General Assembly Second Emergency Special Session 4-10 November 1956, Plenary Meetings and Annex*, p. 1 [UN Doc. A/3251]; United Nations, Security Council, *Security Council Official Records, Eleventh Year, Supplement for October, November, and December 1956*, pp. 11-120 [UN Doc. S/3726]; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, pp. 370-371; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 81 & 87; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 296-298; and Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, pp. xv, 7-8, & 12-14.

⁵⁴"Statement by the President," *U.S. Department of State Bulletin*, Vol. 35, No. 906 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office: 1956), p. 700. [hereafter cited as *DSB*].

long-hoped for victory over Soviet colonialism in Eastern Europe."⁵⁵ Eisenhower himself displayed a similar attitude: "The United States considers the developments in Hungary as being a renewed expression of the intense desire for freedom long held by the Hungarian people."⁵⁶ At a National Security Council Meeting, held on November 1, 1956, Allen Dulles, head of the Central Intelligence Agency, best expressed this sense of excitement when he declared that "what had occurred...was a miracle."⁵⁷ Fear of provoking the Soviet Union into war, however, tempered the administration's excitement. Though he too seemed to share the excitement of possibilities brought about by the revolt, Eisenhower recognized that this was also a "dangerous moment." He expressed concern that "with the deterioration of the Soviet Union's hold over its satellites might not the Soviet Union be tempted to resort to extreme measure, even to start a world war?"⁵⁸ Eisenhower's concerns in this matter can be seen in his preparation for his October 31, 1956 address to the American people. Rather than giving the speech already prepared for him by John Foster Dulles, Eisenhower completely revised Dulles' draft, considerably toning down its references to "irresistible forces of liberation in Eastern Europe."⁵⁹

⁵⁵Quoted in Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 83.

⁵⁶"Statement by the President," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 906 (November 5, 1956), p. 700.

⁵⁷Memorandum, "Discussion at the 302nd Meeting of the National Security Council, November 1, 1956," p. 1, 302nd Meeting of NSC, Box 8, NSC Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Library.

⁵⁸Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 67.

⁵⁹Emmet John Hughes, *The Ordeal of Power: A Political Memoir of the Eisenhower Years* (New York: Atheneum, 1963), pp. 219-222 and "Developments in

Almost from the very start of the crisis, the administration's statements indicated that while America ultimately desired a free and independent Eastern Europe, they "could not, or course, carry out this policy by resort to force."⁶⁰

The Eisenhower administration's decision to not use military force to save Hungary resulted from a number of factors. The Suez Crisis played an important role in this decision. On October 29, 1956 the joint forces of Israel, France, and Great Britain attacked Egypt in attempt to stop Gamal Nasser's nationalization of the Suez Canal. Because of their role as America's primary allies in the Cold War, Britain and France naturally expected the United States to support them. In addition, many officials in the British government counted on the power of their longstanding personal friendships with Eisenhower to exert a favorable influence on his administrations's response to their actions in Suez. Israel, in turn, banked on the upcoming election and the power of the Jewish vote to gain the Eisenhower administration's support or, at least, neutrality. The administration, however, viewed this attack as a brutal, poorly planned, and blatantly obvious throwback to the tactics that had characterized nineteenth century gunboat diplomacy. While it troubled him to side against old friends and allies, Eisenhower concluded that Britain, France, and Israel had obviously acted as the aggressors. He

Eastern Europe and the Middle East," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907 (November 12, 1956), pp. 743-745.

⁶⁰"Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. October 31, 1956," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 1061. [hereafter cited as *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*]

further believed that their actions constituted a clear violation of the 1950 Tri-Partite Declaration, and thus obligated him oppose the invasion.⁶¹ In a speech to the American people Eisenhower declared that: "We value...the bonds with those great nations, those great friends, with whom we now so plainly disagree...But this we know above all: there are...firm principles...and we shall not break ours."⁶² To register his administration's disapproval internationally, Eisenhower sent Dulles directly to the UN with a cease fire resolution for the Middle East. This action made American opposition explicitly known to the world and, needless to say, infuriated America's allies. By diverting the United States' attention from Hungary, dividing the Western world, and wholly occupying Britain and France, Suez effectively eliminated any possibility of united Western military action on behalf of Hungary.⁶³

The Suez Crisis also served to diminish the adverse impact that Soviet aggression

⁶¹This declaration, signed by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France in 1950 promised to maintain the status quo in the Middle East. In it these three nations agreed to ensure that arms shipments to Arabs and Israelis remained balanced, and kept at a minimum. They also agreed to initiate joint action against the aggressor should the peace between Egypt and Israel ever be violated.

⁶²"Address in Convention Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. November 1 1956," *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, p. 1072

⁶³Robert D. Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1964), pp. 378-393 & 430-431; Elmo Richardson, *The Presidency of Dwight D. Eisenhower* (Lawrence: Regents Press of Kansas, 1979), pp. 98-91; "Address in Convention Hall, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. November 1 1956," *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, p. 1072; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, pp. 350-366; Adams, *Firsthand Report*, pp. 255-270; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 298 & 304; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, pp. 64-89; and Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, pp. 10-11.

had on world opinion. This element can particularly be seen with regards to the reaction of the nations of the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. The Eisenhower administration repeatedly sought to enlist the aid of the Afro-Asian block in America's efforts to mobilize world opinion against the Soviets. For these nations, however, the situation in Hungary, while perhaps unfortunate, paled in comparative importance to British, French, and Israeli aggression against Egypt. Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, pointed out that Nasser's defiance of Western imperialism "has powerfully moved the countries of Asia and Africa."⁶⁴ Eisenhower, however, regarded Nehru's concern for oppressed peoples as too narrowly focused. He suggested that "Nehru thinks of only one thing, which is colonialism, by which he [Nehru] means the white over colored people."⁶⁵ Eisenhower and his administration did recognize that, for many of the nations of the developing world, the action taken by Britain, France, and Israel dredged up unpleasant memories of past imperialism. The administration, however, sought to convince Nehru and others like him that the Soviets practiced "a type of colonialism that was far more serious and cruel than that practiced in the past by some of the Western nations - the latter a dying practice."⁶⁶ As a whole, the nations of Africa and the Near and Middle East, while appreciating America's strong stance on the Suez Crisis, remained largely

⁶⁴Quoted in Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 108.

⁶⁵"Memorandum of a Conference With the President, White House, Washington, November 5, 1956, 10:20 a.m.," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 168, p. 394.

⁶⁶Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 112.

unconvinced that their interests lay with active opposition to the Soviets on the Hungarian issue.

In light of his administration's general failure to gain more active support from the Afro-Asian block in the Hungarian Crisis, Eisenhower expressed his frustration that these nations were "not far more alarmed by the forceful domination of Eastern Europe by Russia than...the few vestiges of Western colonialism."⁶⁷ The administration also, at times, discussed whether the nations of the Near and Middle East may have made a deal with the Soviets in order to gain stronger support on the Suez issue.⁶⁸ The nations of the East understandably, however, viewed the international situation in light of their interests and from their own unique historical experience. Many of these nations had only recently gained their independence and emerged from a long and unhappy experience with Western imperialism. As a result, their sympathies were with Egypt, and their fears of Western colonialism remained paramount. The Eisenhower administration readily came to conviction that the untimely nature of Suez had cost the West a priceless moral and

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸This alleged "deal" refers to the choice of many Asian nations to abstain from voting on UN resolutions which condemned the Soviet Union and called for immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary. When the United Nation's General Assembly approved America's resolution of November 4, 1957, the Asian nations of Ceylon, India, Burma, and Indonesia attempted to present amendments which moderated the condemnatory nature of this resolution. When this attempt failed, these nations introduced their own resolution. This resolution, while far more moderate than that of the United States, did agree on some basic measures. One of the most significant areas of agreement was Asia's inclusion of a call for the presence of United Nations observers in Hungary. (See United Nations documents: A/3286, A/3319, A/3325, and A/3437).

public relations victory in the Cold War.⁶⁹ At a National Security Council meeting of November 8, 1956 the participants pointed to this lost opportunity: "If the British and French had stayed out of Egypt...they [the Soviets] would have been ruined in the eyes of world public opinion."⁷⁰

There still remained the possibility that the United States could act alone in providing conventional military support or an air lift of supplies to the Hungarian rebels. However, geography argued against this option. The only way to reach Hungary was through or over surrounding communist nations or neutral Austria. To cross into communist nations meant facing the almost certain possibility of war. To cross into or over Austria meant violating neutrality laws and placing Austria at risk of physical

⁶⁹Telegram #1176, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Jawaharlal Nehru, November 5, 1956 and Telegram #1242, Dwight D. Eisenhower to Jawaharlal Nehru, November 11, 1956 (both in India's Prime Minister Nehru 1956 (2), Box 29, International Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, Ann Whitman File, Eisenhower Library; "Memorandum of a Conference With the President, White House, Washington, November 5, 1956, 10:20 a.m.," No. 168, pp. 394-395; "Telegram from the Department of State to the Mission at the United Nations," No. 172, pp. 404-405; "Memorandum of Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council, Washington, November 8, 1956, 9-11:25 a.m.," No. 175, pp. 419-420; "Editorial Note," No. 180, p. 428; "Notes on the 46th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 13, 1956," No. 185, pp. 439-440; "Editorial Note," No. 193, pp. 460-462; and "Notes on the 56th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, December 11, 1956," No. 207, p. 503 (all in *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25); Eisenhower, *White House Years*, pp. 107-108 & 112; and Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, p. 431.

⁷⁰"Memorandum of Discussion at the 303rd Meeting of the National Security Council," Washington, November 8, 1956, 9-11:25 a.m." *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 175, pp. 419-420.

destruction if conflict should erupt.⁷¹ Therefore, as Eisenhower concluded, Hungary remained "as inaccessible to us as Tibet."⁷²

The United States' vast arsenal of nuclear weapons provided the Eisenhower administration with another possible option. Nuclear threats had worked in ending the Korean War; America still maintained a clear nuclear superiority; and the Russians well knew of this superiority. However, the fear of a world wide nuclear war and Eisenhower's fervent belief that the Soviets would not back down precluded this option. Eisenhower recognized that the Soviets had much more at stake than the United States on the Hungarian issue. Eisenhower surmised that the survival of the Soviet Union depended upon their maintaining dominance over Eastern Europe. Based on this belief, Eisenhower concluded that the Soviets would do anything, even use nuclear weapons, to protect their hegemony in Eastern Europe. He believed that the Soviets would perceive any American conventional military operations or nuclear threats on behalf of Hungary as a deliberate attempt to secure allies in Eastern Europe and destroy the Warsaw Pact.⁷³ As

⁷¹Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, pp. 355 & 367; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, pp. 88-89 & 95; George & Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 303-304; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, pp. 430; and Richardson, *Presidency of Eisenhower*, pp. 99.

⁷²Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 95.

⁷³Seyom Brown, *The Faces of Power: Constancy and Change in United States Foreign Policy From Truman to Johnson* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp. 111-114; Roscoe Drummond and Gaston Coblenz, *Duel at the Brink: John Foster Dulles' Command of American Power* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1960), 180-181; "The Task of Waging Peace," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 906 (November 5, 1956), p. 697; "Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East," p. 744 and "The Hungarian Question in the Security Council," p. 758 (both in *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907, November 12,

a result, the Eisenhower administration took every occasion "to remove any false fears that we...look upon...Eastern European countries as potential military allies."⁷⁴ In their final assessment, the Eisenhower administration concluded that any intervention "would risk a nuclear war with the Russians, and the American government was not prepared to take this risk on the Hungarian issue."⁷⁵

While the decision to not risk war over the Hungarian Crisis was probably a wise decision, the question of American complicity in fostering the rebellion and then abandoning its fighters dogged the Eisenhower administration. Critics pointed to the activities and pronouncements of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Voice of America, and in particular, Radio Free Europe. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites, not surprisingly, focused on America's alleged initial actions in instigating the rebellion. These governments accused the United States of maliciously interfering in the domestic affairs of Hungary. They asserted that for years the American

1956); "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East. October 31, 1956," p. 1062 and "Address in Convention Hall, Philadelphia Pennsylvania. November 1, 1956," p. 1071 (both in *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*); Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, p. 367; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, pp. 67-68; George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 304-306; Radvanyi, *Hungary and the Superpowers*, 11-12; and Richardson, *Presidency of Eisenhower*, pp. 99-100 and 71.

⁷⁴"Developments in Eastern Europe and the Middle East," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907 (November 12, 1956), p. 744.

⁷⁵Quoted in Brown, *Faces of Power*, p. 113.

Congress had appropriated funds for the express purpose of fomenting rebellion.⁷⁶ The Soviet block further maintained that the United States, not the Soviet Union, bore sole responsibility for the disorder and bloodshed in Hungary. The Soviet block also argued that the United States still continued to employ its “low and criminal propaganda designed to obstruct the restoration of normal life in Hungary at all costs.”⁷⁷

While the Soviet Union's condemnation of the United States could be dismissed as deceptive rhetoric designed to detract world opinion from their own brutal aggression, other international sources also criticized America's role in the Hungarian Crisis. The United Nations, Austrians, Germans, and the Hungarian rebels themselves all expressed their conviction that the United States bore some responsibility for the tragedy occurring in Hungary. Unlike the Soviet Union, however, which always focused on the Eisenhower administration's *actions* and their role in instigating the rebellion, these voices of reproach focused their criticism on the Eisenhower administration's *inaction* after the rebellion had begun. They were not upset so much with America's alleged encouragement of rebellion, as with its later failure to intervene more assertively on behalf of Hungary's freedom fighters. International critics saw America's failure to provide more material assistance as

⁷⁶These charges refer to the 1951 Kersten Amendment to the National Security Act. This amendment allowed the United States Congress to appropriate funds for what the Soviets referred to as “espionage and diversionist activity.” These activities included the recruiting and training of dissident groups throughout Eastern Europe as well as propaganda efforts like Voice of American and Radio Free Europe.

⁷⁷See United Nations, General Assembly, *Official Records of the General Assembly Eleventh Session, Plenary Meetings, Vol 2., Verbatim Records of Meetings 12 November 1956-8 March 1957*, pp. 693-697 [UN Doc. A/PV.620].

an outright abandonment of the promises implied in both the Eisenhower administration's repeated declarations of "liberation" and its propaganda activities in Eastern Europe.⁷⁸

In response to their perception that America had somehow failed Hungary, these critics expressed emotions ranging from disgust, to bitterness, to disillusionment. Henry Cabot Lodge, American representative to the United Nations, repeatedly expressed concern over the feeling among some members of the UN that the United States had "been exciting the Hungarians...and now that they are in trouble, we turn our backs on them."⁷⁹ Austria, which by virtue of geography, bore the brunt of caring for the refugees, also complained to American diplomats that the United States had "incited the Hungarians to action" and then failed to "do anything effective."⁸⁰ Among the rebels themselves there were who charged that "the US for the attainment of its own selfish

⁷⁸"Telegram From the Embassy in Austria to the Department of State," No. 129, p. 319; "Memorandum of Telephone Conversations With the President, November 9, 1956," No. 178, pp. 424-425; "Notes on the 46th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 13, 1956," No. 185, pp. 436-438; "Editorial Note," No. 180, p. 460; "Telegram From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," No. 198, pp. 472-473; "Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Austria," No. 202, pp. 481-482; "Notes on the 53rd Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 30, 1956," No. 204, pp. 494-495; and "Editorial Note," No. 228, pp. 556-558 (all in *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25); Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, pp. 371-372; George & Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, p. 300; and Richardson, *Presidency of Eisenhower*, p. 99.

⁷⁹"Memorandum of Telephone Conversations With the President, November 9, 1956, *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 178, p. 424.

⁸⁰"Telegram From the Embassy in Austria to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 129, p. 319.

goals, had cynically and cold-bloodedly maneuvered the Hungarian people into action"⁸¹ However, according to the American Legation, most Hungarians felt disappointed rather than bitter, and generally expressed their belief that "since we [the United States] were fostering liberty we would help the revolt."⁸²

Domestic opinion, as measured through statements of American diplomats, press, and Congressmen conveyed a sense of embarrassment and recognition that international criticism held some validity. Members of the American Legation in Budapest, who witnessed the situation first-hand, repeatedly communicated back to the State Department regarding what they saw as inappropriate conduct on the part of Radio Free Europe. Though the Legation never pinpointed specific broadcasts or statements, or actually accused the Eisenhower administration of intentionally fomenting revolution, the Legation repeatedly stated their belief that Radio Free Europe did, even if inadvertently, give the wrong impression to the rebels. The Legation argued that in light of the events in Hungary, the United States needed to reassess how other nations might interpret its propaganda.⁸³ Members of the American Legation pointed out that "our past radio

⁸¹"Telegram From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 198, p. 472.

⁸²"Notes on the 53rd Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 30, 1956," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 204, p. 495.

⁸³"Telegram From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," No. 198, pp. 472-73; "Notes on the 53rd Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, November 30, 1956," No. 204, pp. 494-495; and "Despatch From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," No. 214, pp. 520-522 (all in *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe* Vol. 25).

propaganda is at present [a] source of much embarrassment to us."⁸⁴

The American Congress and press, while not having the same intimate knowledge of the situation as the Legation, expressed similar criticism of what they perceived to be their government's abandonment of promises, implied or otherwise, to help the Hungarians. On March 13, 1957 reporters questioned Dulles as to why his administration "did not give military aid to Hungary when she appealed to the United States to protect her from Russia."⁸⁵ In his memoirs Robert Murphy, Deputy Under Secretary of State, reported on having to deal with a "stream of anxious visitors" some of whom were "accusing the State Department of having actively fomented the Hungarian Rebellion."⁸⁶ While most domestic criticism may not have gone this far, there was a clear sense in the American Congress and media that the United States bore some responsibility for the tragic turn of events in Hungary.⁸⁷ For example, John O' Kearney of *The Nation* argued

⁸⁴"Telegram From the Legation in Hungary to the Department of State," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 198, p. 472.

⁸⁵"Secretary Dulles' News Conference Canberra, March 13," *DSB*, Vol 36, No. 927 (April 1, 1957), p. 533.

⁸⁶Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, p. 429.

⁸⁷*Congressional Record, Proceedings and Debates of the 85th Congress, First Session*, Vol. 103, Parts 1-12 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1957), pp. 325-326, 750-751 & 771-772 & 9763-9764 [hereafter cited as *Congressional Record*]; *Congressional Record Appendix, Proceedings and Debates of the 85th Congress, First Session*, pp. A287-A288 & A482-A483, A4524 & A5136 [hereafter cited as *Congressional Record Appendix*]; Mark Gayn, "10 Days That Shook the World: The Counter-Revolution," *The Nation*, 10 November 1956, pp. 379-382; John O' Kearney, "Hungary: Myth and Reality," *The Nation*, 2 February 1957, pp. 91-94; Walter Ridder, "Our Propaganda in Hungary," *The New Republic*, 17 December 1956, pp. 12-13; "Day of Atonement," *The Reporter*, 29 November 1956, p. 2; Edmond Taylor, "The Lessons of Hungary," *The Reporter*, 27 December 1957, pp. 17-21; "Five Free Days," *Time*, 10

that, while Radio Free Europe may not have actually incited the revolt, it “played a large part in keeping blood flowing.”⁸⁸ Senator Richard L. Neuberger, a Democrat from Oregon, similarly argued that “our phrasemakers must assume a share of the responsibility for the terrible bloodshed and tragedies.”⁸⁹

The Eisenhower administration always maintained that the rebellion was a “spontaneous uprising,” and that America played little or no role in its instigation. With regards to the official government activities of Voice of America and the CIA, Eisenhower asserted that, while of course America wanted to see freedom come to Eastern Europe, “the United States doesn't now, and never has advocated open rebellion by an undefended populace against force over which they could not possibly prevail.”⁹⁰ With regards to the unofficial activities of Radio Free Europe, the Eisenhower administration argued that the administration only provided guidelines and could not be held responsible the content of all broadcasts. However, they also stated that they believed that, while Radio Free Europe may have slightly exceeded its boundaries, it generally remained within the established guidelines. The Eisenhower administration consistently maintained that the Hungarians acted of their own accord, and that America

December 1956, p. 6; and “Hungary: Doing it Themselves,” *Time*, 17 December 1956, p. 26.

⁸⁸O’ Kearney, “Hungary: Myth and Reality,” p. 4.

⁸⁹*Congressional Record*, p. 771.

⁹⁰“The President’s News Conference of November 14, 1956,” *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, p. 1096.

could, at the very most, be found guilty only of keeping alive the idea of freedom.⁹¹

The message that freedom exists and what it means has been carried in broadcasts from the free world to captive peoples, who otherwise would hear only what their police state masters want them to hear. The very fact that freedom exists anywhere will, of course, encourage those who are deprived of it to strive for their own liberty and independence.⁹²

Whether or not they played a part in instigating the rebellion, the Eisenhower administration had to deal with the Hungarian Crisis in light of the hard realities of a tense international situation, an inaccessible geographic location, and the Soviet's high motivation to preserve their empire. In the final assessment, the use of force brought with it too many risks. Faced with such risks, the United States had few options to halt the bloodshed. The only remaining possibilities lay with verbal condemnation and providing aid and comfort to the Hungarian victims of Soviet aggression. Eisenhower recalled in his memoirs that "the United States did the only thing it could... readied [itself]...to help

⁹¹"Secretary Dulles' News Conference Canberra, March 13," *DSB*, Vol. 36, No. 927 (April 1, 1957), p. 533; "Memorandum of Telephone Conversations With the President, November 9, 1956," No. 178, pp. 424-425; "Editorial Note," No. 193, p. 460; "Memorandum From the Acting Director of the United States Information Agency (Washburn) to the President," No. 197, pp. 470-471; "Memorandum From the Director of Central Intelligence (Dulles) to the President," No. 199, pp. 473-475; and "Memorandum From the Acting Secretary of State to the President's Press Secretary (Hagerty)," No. 213, pp. 518-519 (all in *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25); "The President's News Conference of November 14, 1956," *Public Papers of DDE 1956*, p. 1096; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 371-372; and Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 429.

⁹²"Memorandum From the Acting Secretary of State to the President's Press Secretary (Hagerty)," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 213, p. 519.

the refugees fleeing from the...Soviets, and did everything possible to condemn the aggression."⁹³

The administration's earliest efforts came through the United Nations and personal diplomacy. On November 3, 1956 Henry Cabot Lodge, American ambassador to the UN, introduced a resolution calling on the Soviets "to desist...from any form of intervention, particularly armed intervention, in the internal affairs of Hungary."⁹⁴ However, the Soviets, quite predictably, vetoed this resolution on November 4, 1956. At this point, the United Nations, again at the urging of Lodge, decided that the situation warranted calling an emergency session of the General Assembly. At this emergency session, Lodge introduced another resolution calling on the Soviets to end their military intervention. This resolution further called upon the Soviet Union to permit the entry of UN observers and humanitarian supplies into Hungary. This resolution passed by a vote of 53-9 with 13 abstentions. However, with the exception of allowing some food and medical supplies to enter Hungary, the Soviets simply ignored this and other similar resolutions.⁹⁵

While Lodge worked in the UN to bring world attention to the plight of Hungary,

⁹³Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 89.

⁹⁴"Text of U.S. Draft Resolution Vetoed By U.S.S.R on November 4," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907 (November 12, 1956), p. 763.

⁹⁵"The Hungarian Question in the Security Council," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907 (November 12, 1956), pp. 757-763; "The Hungarian Question Before the General Assembly," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 908 (November 19, 1956), pp. 800-807; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, p. 89; and Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 431.

Eisenhower attempted to influence the Soviet Union through personal diplomacy. On November 4, 1956 Eisenhower wrote to Nikolai A. Bulganin, Chairman of the Soviet Council of Ministers. In this letter, Eisenhower reminded Bulganin of the "Declaration of the Soviet Government of October 30, 1956." In this declaration, the Soviets argued that their policy had always been one of "respect of territorial integrity, state independence and sovereignty, and noninterference in...another's domestic affairs." This declaration went on to admit that "the further presence of Soviet Army units in Hungary [could] serve as a cause for even greater deterioration of the situation."⁹⁶ Eisenhower then pointed out that this declaration "was generally understood as promising the early withdrawal of Soviet forces from Hungary."⁹⁷ The Soviets, however, coldly informed Eisenhower that the situation in Hungary did not concern him, and that the "problem of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Hungary...[came] completely and entirely under the competence of the Hungarian and Soviet governments."⁹⁸

Faced with a situation in which moral suasion had failed miserably and the use of force posed unacceptable risks, the Eisenhower administration could do little more than offer America's tremendous resources to aid the thousands of Hungarian refugees fleeing

⁹⁶"Text of Soviet Statement of October 30," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 907 (November 12, 1956), pp. 745-746.

⁹⁷"Message to Nikolai Bulganin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, U.S.S.R., Urging Withdrawal of Soviet Forces from Hungary. November 5, 1956," *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, p. 1080.

⁹⁸"Message from the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R (Bulganin) to the President, November 7, 1956," in Paul E. Zinner (ed.), *Documents of American Foreign Relations, 1956* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 260.

into neighboring Austria. On November 8, 1956 the Eisenhower administration set in motion the necessary mechanisms for the emergency processing of 5,000 Hungarian visa applications under the Refugee Relief Act. Within two weeks, the Defense Department had transported the first group of refugees to the United States.⁹⁹ Upon their arrival, Eisenhower himself welcomed them to America and expressed his administration's commitment to continue to provide assistance: "I want to tell you that our country feels privileged in inviting you to the United States...We shall continue our efforts to...help those who are coming..and...be very, very glad to do so."¹⁰⁰

By the end of November, the Eisenhower administration would be faced with the opportunity to make good on its promise to help the refugees. It soon became clear that America's initial offer of asylum would not sufficiently reduce the massive numbers of refugees fleeing daily into Austria. The administration then took further steps to alleviate the crisis. On December 1, 1956 it announced that the U.S. would accept an additional 15,000 refugees under the parolee provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act. Under the parolee provision, refugees could be admitted only on a temporary basis. However, Eisenhower promised that in January he would go to Congress and seek

⁹⁹Memorandum, Max Rabb to Governor Adams, November 8, 1956; Memorandum, Harry B. Lyford to James Hagerty, November 19, 1956; and "Remarks By the President to a Group of Hungarian Refugees in His Office at 9:00 A.M. November 26, 1956," (all in Official File 154-N-2, Box 823, Papers as Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Library); "Need for Nationwide Effort to Admit Hungarian Refugees," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 908 (November 19, 1956), pp. 807-808; and Adams, *Firsthand Report*, pp. 257-258.

¹⁰⁰"Remarks By the President to a Group of Hungarian Refugees in His Office at 9:00 A.M. November 26, 1956."

legislation to change the refugees' status to permanent residents. He further announced that when these numbers had been exhausted he would continue to reassess the situation and find new ways to meet the need.¹⁰¹ These actions, he maintained, would "give practical effect to the American people's intense desire to help the victims of Soviet oppression."¹⁰²

The Hungarian refugee relief effort continued to pick up speed as 1956 drew to a close. On December 12, 1956 Eisenhower sent his Vice-President, Richard Nixon, to Austria. He also appointed Tracy Voorhees to head the "President's Committee for Hungarian Relief." This committee served to provide coordination and support for the various volunteer and government agencies involved in refugee relief work. It also served as a clearing house for the tremendous flow of public offers of employment, housing, and education that poured in daily to the government's refugee relocation center at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. When Nixon returned from Austria, he submitted his "Report to the President on Hungarian Refugees." In this report, Nixon urged the President to be open and flexible when it came to Hungarian immigration. On the basis

¹⁰¹U.S. Department of State to Embassy in Vienna, November 28, 1956, Official File 154-N-3, Box 824, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Library; "More Hungarian Refugees Offered Asylum in U.S.," *DSB*, Vol. 35, No. 911 (December 10, 1956), p. 913; "White House Statement Concerning the Admission of Additional Hungarian Refugees. December 1, 1956," *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, pp. 1116-1118; Adams, *Firsthand Report*, pp. 257-258; Ambrose, p. 371; Eisenhower, *White House Years*, pp. 97-98; and Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, p. 431.

¹⁰²"White House Statement Concerning the Admission of Additional Hungarian Refugees. December 1, 1956," *Public Papers of DDE, 1956*, p. 1118.

of this recommendation, Eisenhower went to Congress and requested that revisions be made to the Immigration and Nationality Act to allow for the entry of an increased number of refugees. He also made good on his earlier promise to request that Congress change the status of the Hungarian refugees from "parolees" to permanent residents. By the end of the 1957, over 32,000 Hungarians had been successfully resettled in the United States.¹⁰³

Throughout the Hungarian Revolt and the ensuing refugee relief program, the majority of American opinion was characterized by enormous sympathy for the Hungarians and an intense desire to help in any way possible.¹⁰⁴ Soviet brutality in putting down the Revolt shocked and horrified most Americans. For many Americans, this initial response would be followed by impatience with what they perceived as their government's failure to take more forceful steps to halt Soviet aggression. Most domestic critics recognized that a legitimate fear of war motivated the Eisenhower administration's cautious approach. However, these same critics also believed that

¹⁰³"Report to the President on Hungarian Refugees," and Letter, Gerald Morgan to Tracy S. Voorhees, January 28, 1957 (both in Official File 154-N-2, Box 823, White House Central Files, Eisenhower Library); "Developments Relating to Hungarian Relief Activities," *DSB*, Vol. 35, Nos. 913-914 (December 24 and 31, 1956), pp. 979-980; and "Recommended Revision of Immigration and Nationality Act," *DSB*, Vol. 36, No. 921 (February 18, 1957), pp. 247-250.

¹⁰⁴There were, however, a minority of individuals and groups who opposed the admission of the Hungarian refugees. The grounds upon which they voiced their opposition encompassed diverse concerns. Some felt that the refugees would have an adverse effect on the economy. Some Protestants felt that there were too many refugees of both the Catholic and Jewish faiths. Other voices expressed concern that there might be communist infiltrators and spies among the incoming refugees.

American had missed an important and historical opportunity to implement liberation and turn the tide toward victory in the Cold War. A House Subcommittee referred to the Hungarian uprising as “the lost opportunity of our generation.”¹⁰⁵ A November 1956 editorial in *The Reporter*, sent in by a reader from New Jersey, argued that peace at any price did not always provide the best policy option. This editorial went on to declare that the United States needed to “decide between freedom and slavery.”¹⁰⁶ Similar criticism appeared in an editorial found in the *Saturday Evening Post* on January 1957. In discussing the risk of war as a consideration, this editorial accused America of putting “its fears before its principles.”¹⁰⁷ These and other voices throughout the Congress and press argued that, despite the risk or war, morality and world opinion necessitated that the Eisenhower administration take additional steps above and beyond UN resolutions, condemnatory statements, and refugee relief.¹⁰⁸

A surprising number of American critics advocated the immediate deployment of the United States’ military forces. Others argued that, if open military intervention

¹⁰⁵*Congressional Record*, p. 14637.

¹⁰⁶“A Troubled Conscience,” *The Reporter*, 29 November 1956, p. 5.

¹⁰⁷“Let’s Not Help Any Red Despot Get Off the Hook!” *Saturday Evening Post*, 26 January 1957, p. 10.

¹⁰⁸*Congressional Record Appendix*, pp. A287-A288 & A794-A796; *Congressional Record*, pp. 51-52, 308-320, 3861-3862, 5182-5183; & 14637-14638; Max Ascoli, “The Price of Peacemongering,” *The Reporter*, 29 November 1956, p. 10; “Hungary: The Five Days of Freedom,” *Time*, 12 November 1956, pp. 40-48; “Revolt in Hungary,” *Time*, 26 November 1956, p. 8; “A Troubled Conscience,” pp. 5-6; “Hungary: Doing it Themselves, p. 26; “Let’s Not Help Any Red Despot Get Off the Hook!” p. 10; and Taylor, “The Lessons of Hungary,” pp. 17-21.

remained unfeasible, then the Eisenhower administration should perhaps consider providing some form of covert military assistance to Hungary's freedom fighters. When it became clear that the United States government had no intention of providing any military support, a number of private organizations and individuals sought to raise a volunteer army, composed of American citizens, to aid Hungary's rebellion. Most Americans, however, while not entirely ruling out the use of force, instead, proposed varying combinations of tough economic sanctions, withdrawal of diplomatic recognition, and the immediate expulsion of the Soviet Union and the Kadar government from the United Nations. Whatever particular solution they advocated, domestic critics all expressed a sense of anger or, at the least, disappointment, that their government had been either unable, or unwilling, to save Hungary.¹⁰⁹ This sense of disillusionment can be seen in an editorial in the *Saturday Evening Post* of February 1957. This editorial, written by a private citizen from Ohio, argued that from here forward the Hungarian Revolution would "stand as a monument to the eternal shame of those evasive elements..who would not, or said they could not, come to the aid of a sacrificing populace."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹*Congressional Record*, pp. 307-320, 325-326, 316, 318-319, 325-326; 750-751, 771-772, 2096, 3655, 3861-3862, 5182-5183, 10108-10110 & 14637-14640; Christopher Emmet (Chairman of the Friends of Captive Nations), "Action to Save Hungary," *America*, 17 November 1956, p. 185; "Still Time to Help Hungary," *Life*, 24 June 1957, p. 36; Harold H. Martin, "The Man Who Wanted To Help Hungary," *Saturday Evening Post*, 29 December 1956, pp. 19 & 53; "Hungary's Revolt," *Saturday Evening Post*, 16 February 1957, p. 5; and "Volunteers," *Time*, 31 December 1956, p. 2.

¹¹⁰"Hungary's Revolt," p. 5.

The Eisenhower administration's announcement of its Hungarian Refugee Relief Program provided a partial outlet for Americans' frustrated desire to actively aid the Hungarian victims of Soviet aggression. By the end of 1956, refugee relief efforts, both official and unofficial, had sprung up around the nation. Churches and charity organizations began massive fund raising drives; Colleges and universities set up scholarship programs; businesses rushed to provide employment; and the media began presenting highly dramatized and sympathetic portrayals of the Hungarians' plight.¹¹¹ The American public's strong display of support for the Hungarian refugees can further be seen in the generous outpouring of food, clothing, shelter, and cash donations that arrived daily at Camp Kilmer. The Eisenhower administration clearly recognized the link between the public's earlier criticism and the overwhelmingly positive response toward refugee relief efforts. Discussion at a meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, held on December 19, 1956, noted that: "The realization of our impotence to act in Hungary had a sobering effect on public opinion." Those at this meeting went on to acknowledge "that the refugee matter was more and more becoming an American operation as a result of public criticism that too little was being done."¹¹²

¹¹¹The highly sympathetic response of the mainstream media can be seen in *Time*'s selection of the anonymous "Hungarian Freedom Fighter" as its 1957 "Man of the Year." Prior to this selection, a number of *Time* readers wrote in with various suggestions such as: "Hungarians..who have defied Soviet tyranny." (19 November 1956, p. 8); "Imre Nagy;" and "The unknown Hungarian youth...who showed us that a freedom-loving heart is mightier than a tank" (both in 3 December 1956, p. 4).

¹¹²"Notes of the 58th Meeting of the Special Committee on Soviet and Related Problems, Washington, December, 19, 1956," *Foreign Relations, Eastern Europe*, Vol. 25, No. 216, p. 533.

The extraordinary popularity of the refugee relief effort, combined with the widespread feeling that more should have been done, made ending the Hungarian Refugee Relief Program very difficult. In the Spring of 1957, the Eisenhower administration announced that the time had come to taper off refugee admissions and aid. This announcement set off a new wave of public criticism. The *Washington Post* referred to the administration's new policy as "cruel and capricious."¹¹³ *America*, referring to the Eisenhower administration's earlier decision to not use force, declared that now this new policy could not be explained away by "pleading the risk of war or the exigencies of international politics."¹¹⁴ Critics in both Congress and the press accused the Eisenhower administration of once again abandoning Hungary.¹¹⁵ In a special article to the *New York Times*, Senator John MacCormac of Massachusetts argued that the decision to phase out refugee relief, combined with earlier misleading propaganda, left the Hungarians with a bitter feeling that "they are being let down again."¹¹⁶ MacCormac and other critics pointed to the some 40,000 refugees still in Austria and argued that more needed to be done. Critics argued that still divided families, the continued burden on Austria, and the need to restore and maintain respect in the eyes of the world demanded that America not leave its good work unfinished. Senator Clifford P. Case of New Jersey expressed the

¹¹³*Washington Post*, 8 April 1957, p. 5.

¹¹⁴"Liberty in Mourning," *America*, 27 April 1957, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁵It should, however, be noted that some of the critics in the press placed equal blame on the United States Congress for America's failure to adequately address the refugee issue.

¹¹⁶*New York Times*, 19 April 1957, p. 8. [hereafter cited as *NYT*]

feelings of many Americans that their nation had stopped just short of fulfilling its obligation to the Hungarians.¹¹⁷

This is a matter not only of fairness...but also a matter of the appearance this country gives, depending upon whether or not it fulfills its moral obligations...in this regard. It is very important that we not stop now, before the job is done.¹¹⁸

The Hungarian Revolt touched the vast majority of Americans like few other events in history. Rather than urging their government to concentrate on domestic affairs and stay out of a potentially threatening situation overseas, as is so often the case, many Americans pressed for greater involvement than their government was either willing or able to provide. The Eisenhower administration, undoubtedly, felt sympathy for the Hungarian rebels and wanted to assist in their struggle to liberate themselves from Soviet domination. However, the threat of all-out war in a nuclear age could not be ignored. For the Eisenhower administration, the fear of war precluded any military assistance. The administration, instead, sought to use the United Nations and personal diplomacy to persuade the Soviet Union to halt its aggressive action. Unable to satisfy the domestic pressures for stronger American action, the administration took the unprecedented step of inviting and transporting thousands of Hungarians to America's shores. However, for

¹¹⁷*Congressional Record Appendix*, pp. A5480-A5481; *Congressional Record* pp. 5223-5224; 6114-6117, 9763-9765; 10302 & 10520; Hungary - Lest We Forget!" *Life*, 29 April 1957, p. 42; *New York Post*, 1 April 1957, p. 4; *NYT*, 6 April 1957, p. 1 & 6, April 7, 1957, p. 1 & 30, April 11, 1957, p. 12, and April 19, 1957, p. 8; and *Washington Post*, 8 April 1957, p. 5.

¹¹⁸*Congressional Record*, p. 6115.

many Americans, even this action did not fully satisfy what they saw as America's obligation to the people of Hungary. Many individuals and groups in the American Congress, the media, and the general public argued that until every Hungarian refugee had been rescued and suitably placed, America had not fulfilled its responsibility for the Hungarian Crisis.

CHAPTER III: THE REACTION OF BLACK AMERICANS TO THE HUNGARIAN CRISIS OF 1956 AND 1957

While Eisenhower Administration sought to provide what relief it could and most Americans either encouraged these efforts or demanded that more be done for the Hungarians, black Americans viewed the Hungarian crisis from a very different perspective. Like most Americans, black Americans recognized that the Soviet Union had acted with immense brutality and total lack of concern for human rights. Black Americans, however, also pointed out that Hungary was not the first or only example of a larger, more powerful nation seeking to control and exploit a weaker power. At the same time America poured forth its sympathy for Hungary, black Americans called attention to both past and contemporary examples of aggression against the peoples of Asia and Africa, and these peoples' struggles to gain their freedom. Black Americans also pointed to their own fight for equality, and the indifference and violent resistance it so often encountered. Rightly or wrongly, many black Americans concluded that their nation simply did not care unless the victims of oppression happened to be white. James L. Hicks of the *Amsterdam News* observed that:

We Americans...sit back and watch *black* [emphasis added] people from Ethiopia to Mississippi get their brains beat out by anyone who has guns to do the job without getting 'charitable' or excited. But the minute someone starts kicking a white nation around we rush to their aid by land, sea and air."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ *Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 17.

Because of its closeness in time and its interconnectedness with the situation in Hungary, the Suez Crisis provided black Americans with an area of ready comparisons. In many respects, the reaction of black Americans to the joint concurrence of the Suez and Hungarian Crisis more closely resembled that of the Afro-Asian block than that of their fellow Americans. Black opinion, unlike mainstream opinion, tended morally to equate the actions of Britain, France, and Israel with those of the Soviet Union. Black Americans argued that the Suez Crisis, like Hungary, involved a clear case of unjustified aggression on the part of a larger power(s) and a courageous defense put up by a smaller nation. Like the Afro-Asian block, many black Americans found themselves “affected by the plight of Egypt and stimulated by the dramatic and exciting maneuvers of Nasser.”¹²⁰ There are numerous examples of black Americans praising the actions of Nasser. One of the best examples came from Samuel Hoskins, editor of the *Washington Afro-American*. Hoskins even went so far as to compare Nasser to Martin Luther King, Jr. Hoskins asserted that: “Colonel Nasser, like the Rev. Martin Luther King...are...rallying points for millions.”¹²¹ James L. Hicks expressed a slightly different, though still sympathetic, perspective: “I don’t give a hoot how bad he [Nasser] is, it did not justify England, France, or Israel...crossing his sovereign borders and shooting down men, women, and children.”¹²²

¹²⁰*Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 November 1956, p. 10.

¹²¹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 29 December 1956, p. 12.

¹²²*Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 17.

Black Americans did generally recognize and appreciate the Eisenhower administrations' very public condemnation of Britain, France, and Israel. Black Americans, however, maintained that nowhere in the immense media coverage surrounding both crises could there be found any sympathy, or even real mention, of the internal suffering in Egypt. Black critics of American policy argued that Britain, France, and Israel's attack on Egypt, like the Soviet's attack on Hungary, had left many starving and homeless refugees. They demanded to know why only the Hungarians deserved America's offers of aid and refuge.¹²³ A reader of the *Philadelphia Afro-American* pointed out that: "White America is doing all it can for the Hungarian refugees, but nothing for Egypt." This reader went on to suggest that "colored Americans...organize and send money...to help...the destitute people of Egypt."¹²⁴ A December 1956 editorial sent in to the *Amsterdam News* expressed similar sentiments when it demanded that America explain its respective attitudes toward Hungary and Suez:

What is this! Why all this all-out aid for the Hungarians because the Russians attacked them...Even special legislation to permit thousands more into the country...What of the Egyptian *blacks* [emphasis added] who

¹²³Ibid; *Associated Negro Press*, 12 December 1956, Features, p. 5 and December 26, 1956, Features, pp. 8-9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 2 November 1956, p. 4 and December 12, 1957, p. 4; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 16 March 1957, p. 8; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 17 November 1957, p. 4, November 24, 1956, p. 4, December 1, 1956, p. 4, December 8, 1956, p. 4, December 22, 1957, p. 4, December 29, 1956, p. 12, January 12, 1957 p. 4, January 26, 1957, p. 4, and March 2, 1957, p. 2; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 November 1956, pp. 8 & 10, December 8, 1956, p. 9, December 22, 1956, p. 4, January 8, 1957, p. 4, and February 9, 1957, p. 9.

¹²⁴*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 26 January 1957, p. 4.

were... molested equally as brutally. What are we doing to relocate them?¹²⁵

While the Suez Crisis provided black Americans with the most visible and well-known comparison to Hungary, they also pointed to many other examples of what they perceived as American indifference and/or hostility toward the fight of dark-skinned nations for their freedom. Black Americans also drew unfavorable comparisons between the United States' response to the Hungarian Revolt and its very different reaction to the Mau Mau Revolt in Kenya. Black Americans viewed the Mau Mau's struggle as a justified response on the part of the native population to a long history of abuse and oppression at the hands of Great Britain. Since the turn of the century, Britain had systematically robbed the native Kikuyus of the best land and forced them into the status of second-class citizens. In the years following World War II, the Mau Mau, a rebel organization seeking an independent Kenya, sought to entirely rid Kenya of white rule. From 1952 to 1954, Britain set out to destroy this organization and put down the larger more widespread demands for change with incredible ruthlessness and brutality. In their efforts to quell the rebellion, British forces imprisoned, tortured, and killed thousands of native Kenyans.¹²⁶

The picture that Great Britain presented to the world, however, was that the Mau Mau were savages, and that Britain had simply acted out of necessity. Black Americans argued that the general American public seemed not to question Britain's portrayal of

¹²⁵*Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1956, p. 16.

¹²⁶Plummer, *Rising Wind*, pp. 239-241.

events, if it even paid any heed to this crisis at all. Black Americans questioned why Kenyans, who like Hungarians, fought to be free of foreign domination were seen as savages and not as freedom fighters. Blacks Americans went on to question why no one suggested that thousands of Kenyans be lifted from the hands of their oppressors and brought to the United States as refugees.¹²⁷ George Schuyler of the *Pittsburgh Courier* reminded Americans of the “hapless Kikuyu people vegetating in Kenya concentration camps.” Schuyler went on to inquire: “Is there a home here for them?”¹²⁸ P.L. Prattis, also of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, suggested that maybe the reason for the differing response to Hungary and Kenya lay in the United States government’s and the general public’s belief that “the murder of African natives is an internal affair, not genocide.”¹²⁹

The continued riots and protests that accompanied Algeria’s quest for independence from France provided black Americans with yet another a case by which to measure American concern for Hungary against its reaction to similar events in Africa. The French had been an unwelcome presence in Algeria since 1830, when their rule was established by conquest. France, however, continually maintained that Algeria formed an equal and integral part of the French nation. The political, social, and economic

¹²⁷“Looking and Listening...Practicing Hypocrisy,” *The Crisis* (February 1957): pp. 89-90; *Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1957, p. 17; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 1 December 1956, p. 4, December 12, 1956, p. 4, and December 22, 1956, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 November 1956, p. 8, December 8, 1956, p. 9, January 8, 1957, p. 10, January 26, 1957, p. 9, and February 9, 1957, p. 9.

¹²⁸*Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 January 1957, p. 9.

¹²⁹*Pittsburgh Courier*, 24 November 1956, p. 8.

inequality of the native Algerian population, however, seemed to belie the French assertions of “equality” and “assimilation.” In the early 1950s, the longstanding discontent simmering just below the surface in Algeria erupted into a violent full-scale nationalist revolt. As in other revolts and wars involving African nations, the sympathies of most articulate black Americans lay with the native population. In November 1956, an editorial in the *Pittsburgh Courier* argued that black Americans saw “no difference between Hungary’s right to be free from Russian domination and Algeria’s right to be free from French rule.”¹³⁰ William Worthy of the *Philadelphia Afro-American* declared that Soviet satellites, Alabama, and Algeria all had one thing in common: “After long periods of suffering the people are refusing to be lackeys any longer.”¹³¹

Black Americans further believed that, unlike in Hungary, the United States did not wholly side with those who fought for freedom in Algeria.¹³² George M. Houser of the American Committee on Africa (ACOA) argued that the United States had “implicitly backed the French in the Algerian conflict.”¹³³ The belief among black Americans that

¹³⁰*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 17 November 1956, p. 4.

¹³¹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 3 November 1956, p. 23.

¹³²*Associated Negro Press*, 2 January 1957, Features, p. 9 and February 27, 1957, Deadline, p. 6; *Atlanta Daily World*, 5 January 1957, p. 6 and February 13, 1957, p. 3; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 3 November 1956, p. 23, November 17, 1956, p. 4, and December 8, 1956, p. 4; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2; and “Practicing Hypocrisy,” p. 89.

¹³³To back up this assertion, Houser pointed to a March 1956 statement by C. Douglas Dillon, American ambassador to France, in which Dillon agreed with French officials that “the four departments of Algeria are French territory.” Houser further asserted that the United States government had lent France helicopters, which France then utilized against Algerian nationalists. See Draft ACOA Policy on Algeria, George M.

their nation cared little about Algeria, while it poured forth its sympathy for Hungary, can be seen in the words of Alice A. Dunnigan of the *Associated Negro Press*. In discussing the admission of the Hungarian refugees, Dunnigan sarcastically commented on what she saw as American indifference to events in Algeria: “As America extends open arms to the Hungarians..what about...lending a little sympathy to the *black* [emphasis added] citizens of revolt-torn Algeria.”¹³⁴ A reader of the *Pittsburgh Courier* even more directly questioned whether race determined where America’s sympathies lay. Referring to the tremendous outpouring of support for Hungary’s freedom fighters, this reader demanded to know: “Is this freedom...labeled or colored...If not, then why are we so mum for freedom of...Algerians?”¹³⁵

The situation in South Africa provided black Americans with yet another instance by which to measure the United States’ action on behalf of Hungary against inaction when it came to dark-skinned peoples. White rule had been a de facto reality in South Africa since the late nineteenth century. However, it was not until the May 1948 election of Daniel Malan and his Nationalist Party that South Africa embarked upon the official and very brutal policy of strict segregation of the races which came to be known as apartheid. Under apartheid, black South Africans had little to no political or economic

Houser to the Executive and Advisory Boards of the ACOA, April 13, 1956, Africa: American Committee. 1954-1969 (and undated), Reel 3, The Papers of A. Philip Randolph (Bethesda: University Publications of America).

¹³⁴*Associated Negro Press*, 2 January 1957, Features, p. 9.

¹³⁵*Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2.

rights. Anyone who dared oppose this blatantly unjust system faced jail or even death. The recentness of events, combined with the growing identification of many black Americans with colored nations, pushed South Africa into the forefront of black Americans' overseas concerns. It was only natural therefore, that many in the black media drew upon America's policies and attitudes toward South Africa for comparisons to the Hungarian Crisis.¹³⁶

Many individuals in the black media, as well as the general public, argued that the brutalities in South Africa received little attention either from the United States government or the mainstream media. In an editorial to the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Dr. Wendell C. Somerville maintained that black Americans did, in fact, understand their fellow Americans concern for Hungary.¹³⁷ Somerville, however, also pointed out that such displays of empathy would seem far less hypocritical to black Americans if extended to "all peoples of every land who are victims of cruel oppression." Somerville concluded by reminding his fellow Americans that: "Freedom means freedom, even to

¹³⁶For a description of the emergence of apartheid see Thomas Borstelmann, *Apartheid's Reluctant Uncle: The United States and South Africa in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. vii & viii & 3-4.

¹³⁷*Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 17, December 22, 1956, p. 25, and December 25, 1956, p. 6; *Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1956, Features, pp. 8-9, December 31, 1956, Deadline, p. 5, January 2, 1957, Features, pp. 8-9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 1 January 1957, p. 6 and January 5, 1957, p. 6; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 5 January 1957, p. 6; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 8 December 1956, p. 4, December 12, 1956, p. 4, and January 5, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 January 1957, p. 10, January 12, 1957, p. 2, and February 2, 1957, p. 8.

the people of Africa.”¹³⁸ The juxtaposition of the Hungarian Crisis with apartheid in South Africa could also be seen on a sign commemorating Human Rights Day in 1956. This sign, photographed by the *Amsterdam News*, bore a slogan which illustrated the irritation of black Americans with what they perceived as the exclusive and excessive attention paid to Hungary: “On Human Rights Day - Let Us Pray for Hungary and South Africa!!”¹³⁹

The *Chicago Defender* contrasted the American treatment of Hungary with its treatment of South Africa in the United Nations. The *Defender* argued that, while the United States actively sought to place the situation in Hungary before the UN, it failed to support similar attempts on behalf of black South Africans. In its editorial column, “Our Opinions,” the *Defender* pointed out that United States representatives had either abstained from voting, or actively opposed, every attempt by the Afro-Asian block to place the internal problems in South Africa on the General Assembly’s agenda. This editorial compared these actions to the repeated efforts by Henry Cabot Lodge to secure the presence of UN observers in Hungary. The *Defender* went on to argue that if the United Nations’ charter allowed for the presence of UN observers in Hungary, then it should also allow for the presence of observers in South Africa: “Either the [G]eneral [A]ssembly has the authority to consider domestic policies that come clearly within the purview of human rights or it does not...inquiry into the racial policy of the Union is as

¹³⁸*Norfolk Journal and Guide (Virginia-National Edition)*, 5 January 1957, p. 6.

¹³⁹*Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1956, p. 25.

legitimate..as that proposed for Hungary.”¹⁴⁰

The *Chicago Defender* also reached further back in history for a case by which to consider the United States’ reaction to the invasion of Hungary against its reaction to similar events in an African nation. Though it occurred two decades earlier, Benito Mussolini’s brutal invasion of Ethiopia provided some of the best parallels to the Soviet invasion of Hungary. Like Hungary, Ethiopia had mounted a brave, but ultimately rather futile defense. In a manner similar to Imre Nagy, Haile Selassie, the Ethiopian emperor, had turned to the international community for its assistance. In a November 17, 1956 issue of its “Our Opinions” column, the *Defender* compared the United States government’s prompt introduction of UN resolutions and heavy use of moral influence on behalf of Hungary with its haste to enact neutrality legislation and avoid any and all involvement in the 1935 Ethiopian Crisis. This editorial asserted that, though not an official member of the League of Nations in the 1930s, the United States could have, and should have, employed its tremendous moral influence to initiate punitive international action against Italy. Had America done so, the *Defender* argued, then Mussolini might have been forced into an untenable international position and withdrawn his troops.¹⁴¹

Black Americans further pointed out that they were virtually alone in their efforts to help the Ethiopian victims of Italian aggression. The efforts of black Americans in the 1930s on behalf of Ethiopia, in fact, bore a striking resemblance to that of white

¹⁴⁰*Chicago Defender*, 15 December 1956, p. 9.

¹⁴¹*Chicago Defender*, 17 November 1956, p. 9.

Americans in the 1950s on behalf of Hungary. Unlike the later response to the Hungarian Crisis, most Americans in the 1930s feared war more than they sympathized with the victims of invasion. An anonymous editorial in the *Chicago Defender* presented a highly unfavorable comparison of the American public's very warm and sympathetic response to the Hungarian refugees with what many black Americans saw as a lack of concern for the Ethiopian victims of Mussolini's invasion. This editorial coldly noted that "no one seemed to get excited about help or 'safe haven' for the Ethiopians when Benito Mussolini...crushed these helpless and defenseless people."¹⁴² Black Americans believed that, though other factors influenced America's reaction to the two crisis, race once again played the deciding role in dictating when and where Americans would act on behalf of victims of aggression.¹⁴³ The *Associated Negro Press* recalled how "Ethiopia was ravished and raped by the Italians." The *Associated Negro Press* then, somewhat sarcastically, questioned where "was the inclination of big-hearted American to enact emergency aid relief to the starving, destitute and dying *black* [emphasis added] people there?"¹⁴⁴

For black Americans, the same "color line" that existed in international affairs also characterized events at home. In addition to comparing the struggle of colonial

¹⁴²*Chicago Defender*, 9 February 1957, p. 10.

¹⁴³*Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 17; *Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1956, Features, pp. 8-9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 26 December 1956, p. 4 and February 26, 1957, p. 4; *Chicago Defender*, 9 February 1957, p. 10; and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, p. 19.

¹⁴⁴*Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1956, Features, pp. 8-9.

peoples to the events in Hungary, black Americans also drew analogies between their own struggle and that of Hungary. The crisis in Hungary came just as the Civil Rights Movement had begun to emerge. Their own struggles against the force of oppression at home led many black Americans to equate their fight against Jim Crow with the Hungarians' fight against communist rule. At the NAACP's 48th Annual Convention, Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary, noted that black Americans found little "discernible difference between the dictatorship of skin color in certain of the Southern States and the dictatorship of communism in Hungary."¹⁴⁵ Those in the black media, in fact, often referred to the South as the "cotton curtain." The *Atlanta Daily World* argued that the continued existence of this "cotton curtain" constituted a force as "strong and cruel and different from true democracy as the Russian Iron Curtain."¹⁴⁶

Many leading figures in the black media and improvement organizations pointed out that the tactics used by racists to maintain Jim Crow rule were just as, if not more, brutal than those used by Soviet troops to preserve Russian domination in Hungary. To illustrate their case, they pointed to the riots, beatings, bombings, and even murders that

¹⁴⁵Gloster B. Current, "At the Crossroad - and Beyond," *The Crisis* (August-September 1957): p. 435 and "Address of Roy Wilkins, New York City, executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, at closing mass meeting of 48th Annual NAACP Convention, Olympia Stadium, Detroit, Mich., June 30, 1957, 3 PM, EST," p. 3 in 1957 Speeches, Annual Convention File, NAACP Administration 1956-65, Papers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Supplement to Part I - 1956-1960 (Bethesda: University Publication of America). [hereafter cited as NAACP Papers - 1956-1960]

¹⁴⁶*Atlanta Daily World*, 30 October 1956, p. 6.

accompanied black Americans' struggle for Civil Rights. Numerous articles and editorials described how efforts to desegregate schools in Clinton, Tennessee brought out white mobs that violently harassed black students, destroyed the property of local blacks, beat a sympathetic white minister, and eventually even blew up the school itself. The brutal murder of fourteen year old Emmett Till for allegedly whistling at a white woman provided the black media with a vivid and terrible incident to compare with Soviet actions in Hungary. Black newspapers also pointed accusingly toward Montgomery, Alabama, where white racists beat men, women, and children; bombed the homes of local Black ministers; and shot up buses.¹⁴⁷ For many black Americans, these incidents, and countless others like them, clearly demonstrated that racial violence in the United States constituted an "evil not less despicable than that in Hungary."¹⁴⁸

Black Americans compared the speed with which the Eisenhower administration aided the Hungarian Revolt with what they perceived to be the administration's rather

¹⁴⁷"1956 Annual Report of the Washington Bureau," p. 3 and "The NAACP In 1956 By Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary, Report to the Annual Meeting, January 7, 1957, National Office, New York City," (both in Annual Meeting - General 1956-58, General Office File, NAACP Papers - 1956-1960; *Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 16; *Associated Negro Press*, 28 January 1957, Deadline, p. 9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 30 October 1956, p. 6 and December 4, 1957, p. 6; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Carolina Edition)*, 2 February 1957, pp. 1-2 and February 16, 1957, p. 4; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Home Edition)*, 2 January 1957, pp. 1-2; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 5 January 1957, p. 6, January 19, 1957, p. 8, and February 16, 1957, p. 3; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Pennsylvania Edition)*, 5 January 1957, p. 5 and February 2, 1957, pp. 1-2; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Portsmouth Edition)*, 2 January 1957, pp. 1-2; and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, pp. 4 & 19, January 26, 1957, p. 4, February 16, 1957, p. 4, and February 23, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁴⁸*Atlanta Daily World*, 30 October 1956, p. 6.

slow and timid action on the problem of racial violence in the South.¹⁴⁹ The *Courier Press Service* reported that “thousands of Negroes are puzzled about the tremendous interest being shown by the federal government in the plight of Hungarian refugees while the homes of Negroes in Alabama and other U.S. towns have been bombed and blasted without the criminals being apprehended.”¹⁵⁰ The black media pointed out that many leading Negro newspapers had seen Eisenhower as a potential champion of their cause, and encouraged their readers to vote for him based on his assumption.¹⁵¹ A black women from Virginia wrote an angry letter to Eisenhower declaring: I voted for you...I think your duty lies right here in America...All over the United States there are injustices being done to Negroes, and you have to worry about Hungary.”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹Mrs. Gwendolyn Moore to President Eisenhower, December 18, 1956 and Mr. L.A. Jaramillo to President Eisenhower, January 13, 1957 (both in President Letters Received (1-3), Box 8, Records of the President’s Committee on Hungarian Refugee Relief, Eisenhower Library; *Amsterdam News*, 19 January 1957, p. 14; *Associated Negro Press*, 28 January 1957, Deadline, p. 9 and February 20, 1957, Deadline, p. 12; *Chicago Defender*, 2 February 1957, p. 9; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 19 January 1957, p. 2 and January 26, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2, January 26, 1957, p. 11, February 2, 1957, p. 8, and February 9, 1957, p. 9.

¹⁵⁰*Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2.

¹⁵¹A number of leading Black newspapers including the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, Virginia; *Baltimore Afro-American*, Maryland; *Amsterdam News*, New York City; *Black Dispatch*, Oklahoma City; *Negro Labor News*, Houston; *Louisiana Weekly*, New Orleans; *Omaha Guide*, Nebraska; *Tri-State Defender*, Memphis; *The Philadelphia Independent*; *Carolina Times*, Durham; *Wilmington Journal*, North Carolina; and *Cleveland Call and Post*, Ohio urged their readers to vote for Eisenhower in 1956. In addition, Adam Clayton Powell, a leading black Democrat, also broke with his party to endorse Eisenhower’s candidacy for President.

¹⁵²Mrs. Gwendolyn Moore to President Eisenhower, December 18, 1956.

The Eisenhower administration's response to the Hungarian crisis provided black Americans with many examples of just what steps could be taken to promote civil rights and put an end to the violence sweeping across the South. The Eisenhower administration had repeatedly issued statements demanding an immediate end to the Soviet Union's violence against Hungary. On January 11, 1957 a group of prominent Southern black leaders urged Eisenhower to utilize the "weight of his office" similarly on behalf of the Southern Negro. These leaders begged Eisenhower to come to the South and personally speak out against the violence and continued defiance of the Supreme Court's desegregation orders. However, black Americans soon realized that no such visit would be forthcoming.¹⁵³ An editorial in the *Philadelphia Afro-American* sarcastically suggested that "he [Eisenhower] might well have been too busy arranging further aid and refuge to the oppressed Hungarians."¹⁵⁴

In addition to denouncing the Soviet Union, Eisenhower had sent his Vice-President, Richard Nixon, to Austria to report on the conditions of the Hungarian refugees and provide suggestions for their relief. The same leaders who pressed for Eisenhower to denounce racism and violence also hoped that Nixon could travel to the South and issue a report similar to what he had done with regards to the Hungarian

¹⁵³*Associated Negro Press*, 14 February 1957, Deadline, p. 15; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 26 January 1957, p. 4, February 2, 1957, p. 4, and February 16, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 January 1957, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 26 January 1957, p. 4.

refugees.¹⁵⁵ Numerous articles and editorials throughout the black press repeated this suggestion. A *Courier* reader writing from San Antonio, Texas demanded to know why “if Mr. Nixon has traveled thousands of miles to look in on the Hungarian situation...[he] can’t...travel just a few hundred miles to look in on the Alabama situation.”¹⁵⁶ Black Americans viewed Nixon’s, like Eisenhower’s, failure to make a personal tour of the South as illustrative of the administration’s obsession with events overseas at the expense of neglecting important domestic matters.¹⁵⁷

While most black Americans accused the Eisenhower administration of inaction, rather than any real animosity toward their cause, they could also point to staunch advocates of Jim Crow among the many supporters of Hungarian refugee relief. In many respects, James O. Eastland, a Democratic Senator from Mississippi, epitomized Dixiecrat racism. On numerous occasions, Eastland loudly condemned the Supreme Court’s desegregation orders and even accused the Court being an instrument of communism. Yet this same man, according to many in the black press, actively and

¹⁵⁵No copy of the original request was found. However, The Bayard Rustin Papers contain a February 14, 1957 second request, again making specific reference to Hungary. See Telegram from the Southern Negro Leaders Conference to Vice-President Richard Nixon, February 14, 1957 in General Correspondence, 1943-1987, Reel 20, The Bayard Rustin Papers (Bethesda: University Publications of America).

¹⁵⁶*Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2.

¹⁵⁷*Associated Negro Press*, 14 February 1957, *Deadline*, p. 15; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 19 January 1957, pp. 1-2, January 26, 1957, p. 4, February 2, 1957, p. 4, and February 16, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2 and February 9, 1957, p. 9.

wholeheartedly supported the admission of thousands of Hungarian refugees.¹⁵⁸ In a brief column entitled, “No Room to Talk,” the *Philadelphia Afro-American* scornfully noted that “James O. Eastland, Mississippi’s dixiecrat gift to the United States Senate, is all heated up over the situation in Hungary.” The *Afro* reminded its readers of the brutal murder of Emmett Till. It then pointed out that Eastland failed to express any outrage at this terrible crime, which occurred much closer to home.¹⁵⁹ This column concluded by contending that protests against Russian aggression in Hungary “have a hollow ring indeed when made by men like Senator Eastland.”¹⁶⁰

Representative Francis Walter, Republican from Pennsylvania, received similar, though somewhat less strident, criticism from the black community for his participation in America’s Hungarian relief effort. The *Associated Negro Press* pointed out that throughout his career Walter had consistently opposed any relaxation of immigration standards, particularly those affecting “brown-skinned peoples.” Now, however, this once adamant opponent of relaxed immigration standards stood up to champion the cause of Hungary’s rebels. After witnessing the shooting of fleeing Hungarians by the Soviets, Walter returned home with the recommendation that rather than tapering off Hungarian immigration, the United States should, instead, accept more refugees than it had

¹⁵⁸*Associated Negro Press*, 5 December 1956, Features, pp. 15-16; *Atlanta Daily World*, 6 January 1957, p. 3; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 12 January 1957, p. 9; and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 2 February 1957, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹Emmett Till was lynched in Tallahatchie County, Mississippi.

¹⁶⁰*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 2 February 1957, p. 4.

originally planned.¹⁶¹ Upon hearing the news of Walter's change of heart, a black citizen from Philadelphia commented that: "I don't remember Mr. Walter becoming outraged at the murder of a boy in Mississippi."¹⁶²

Black Americans also pointed accusingly toward the attitude of the American people in general. The public loved the notion of doing whatever it could to help the Hungarians. Rather than having to be pushed and prodded by their government to help out, the public actually dragged a somewhat reluctant administration into providing increased aid. The majority of voices in Congress and the media spoke out sympathetically on behalf of the Hungarians. Churches, charitable institutions, and the general public all gave very willingly of their time and money to assist the Hungarians in any manner they could. Everywhere they looked, black Americans saw their fellow citizens exhorting the government to do even more to help the Hungarians. However, black Americans argued that these same individuals and groups tended to be at best apathetic, and at worst resentful, toward the cries for help from Southern Negroes.¹⁶³ Lin Holloway, of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, noted that: "It is gratifying to see

¹⁶¹ *Associated Negro Press*, 5 December 1956, Features, pp. 15-16 and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 2 February 1957, p. 4 and March 9, 1957, p. 4.

¹⁶² *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 2 February 1957, p. 4.

¹⁶³ *Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 16 and December 22, 1956, p. 5; *Associated Negro Press*, 30 January 1957, Deadline, pp. 6-7; *Atlanta Daily World*, 25 November 1956, p. 4; *Chicago Defender*, 12 January 1957, p. 9; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Home Edition)*, 12 January 1957, p. 14; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, pp. 4 & 19, January 19, 1957, p. 4, January 26, 1957, p. 4, February 2, 1957, p. 4, February 9, 1957, p. 4, and February 16, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2 and February 2, 1957, p. 8.

Americans rallying to the aid of oppressed people in Hungary. Such a wide-spread interest in the welfare of humans may soon spread to Dixieland.”¹⁶⁴ In the *Chicago Defender*, Langston Hughes utilized his imaginary character (“Simple”) to express his disgust: “With all this..ain’t-it-a-shame about the Hungarians, there is nary a word about...the Negroes that cannot vote in Mississippi.”¹⁶⁵ At a convention for the National Committee for Rural Schools, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. also registered his disapproval of the public’s attitude: “Americans are so concerned about the Hungarians - but it is strange that they have not the slightest concern about the Negroes in Mississippi and Alabama.”¹⁶⁶

Many in the black press argued that the mainstream media and entertainment world also deserved criticism for their inattention to the fight of black America, especially in contrast with their enthusiasm for the struggle in Hungary.¹⁶⁷ Baker E. Morton, radio and television commentator for the *Associated Negro Press*, accused the media of “going overboard for drama growing out of Hungary’s plight while ignoring the same drama right under their noses in the Negro plight.”¹⁶⁸ Morton pointed to the rash of

¹⁶⁴*Norfolk Journal and Guide (Home Edition)*, 12 January 1957, p. 14.

¹⁶⁵*Chicago Defender*, 12 January 1957, p. 9.

¹⁶⁶*Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1956, p. 5.

¹⁶⁷*Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1956, Features, pp. 8-9, December 31, 1956, Deadline, pp. 8-9, February 6, 1957, Features, pp. 12-13, and March 13, 1957, Features, p. 11; *Atlanta Daily World*, 26 December 1956, p. 4 and January 3, 1957, p. 2; and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 12 January 1957, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸*Associated Negro Press*, 31 December 1956, Deadline, p. 9.

stories about Hungary airing on television with dramatic titles such as “Flight from Budapest” and “Passport to Life.” He further pointed to how effectively radio and television producers employed their mediums to highlight the Hungarians’ quest for freedom. Morton argued that radio and television could, and should, be used with equal zeal to attack racial oppression and hatred in America. The *Philadelphia Afro-American* expressed similar regrets that the American media remained “too busy watching Europe to note that an identical struggle was taking place right here.” In particular, the *Afro* took issue with *Time*’s selection of the Hungarian freedom fighter as “Man of the Year.” The *Afro* declared that “our choice would have been a freedom fighter, too...the Rev. Martin Luther King, Junior.”¹⁶⁹

Black observers went on to point out that in the eyes of the American media and general public alike, Hungarians who used force to defy their oppressors were heroes. The NAACP’s Roy Wilkins contrasted this attitude with that of many Americans toward even peaceful Negro resistance: “When Hungarians resist oppression they are called heroes, when American Negroes...peacefully resist oppression they are called agitators.”¹⁷⁰ America exhorted its black citizens to be patient and move cautiously in their quest for freedom and equality. This attitude existed even among the black

¹⁶⁹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 12 January 1957, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰Current, “At the Crossroad,” p. 435 and Wilkins’ Address at 48th Annual Convention, June 30 1957, p. 4, NAACP Papers - 1956-1960.

community and white supporters of civil rights.¹⁷¹ Hungarians, however, received immense cheering and support when they attempted to seize their freedom with force. The *Chicago Defender* pointed out that at the same time America rushed to commend Hungary's freedom fighters; "We have native fighters for freedom...to whom no word of sympathy or encouragement is extended."¹⁷² Black Americans demanded to know why the Hungarians' fight against tyranny and oppression deserved all the cheers and accolades, when so many Americans remained either hostile or indifferent to the equally courageous fight of black Americans at home.¹⁷³ A *Pittsburgh Courier* reader from San Antonio, Texas angrily noted the respective response of Americans to the Hungarians' and Negroes' struggles for freedom: "On every newscast and in every newspaper, the Hungarians are being praised and lauded for their...fight...against enslaved conditions...While...instead of being praised...we are being bombed and shot at like clay

¹⁷¹In his "Letter From Birmingham Jail" of April 16, 1963 King utilized the Hungarian Revolution, among other examples, to address the fears of some of his fellow clergymen regarding his acts of civil disobedience. No doubt remembering the intense displays of support for Hungary's dissidents, King defended the use of civil disobedience in the fight for equality by declaring: "There is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience...We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did...was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did...was 'illegal.'" See Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 86-87.

¹⁷²*Chicago Defender*, 2 February 1957, p. 9.

¹⁷³*Chicago Defender*, 27 January 1957, p. 9 and February 2, 1957, p. 9; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, p. 4; *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 December 1956, p. 8, January 8, 1957, p. 8, and January 12, 1957, p. 2; Current, "At the Crossroad," p. 435; and Wilkins' Address at 48th Annual Convention, June 30 1957, p. 4, NAACP Papers - 1956-1960.

pigeons.”¹⁷⁴

In addition to comparing the action of America’s civil rights leaders to Hungary’s freedom fighters, black Americans also compared Southern Negroes fleeing racial violence to Hungarians fleeing Russian troops. The *Philadelphia Afro-American* reported on a address given by a Reverend J. Herbert Nelson to students at Allen University. In this address, Nelson held the Reverend J.A. DeLaine, who fled South Carolina in the face of violent reprisals for his efforts to desegregate schools in Clarendon County, up as an example of the “classic refugee.” Nelson went on the declare that: “No Hungarian loves liberty and freedom more than J.A. DeLaine.”¹⁷⁵ Many throughout the black press and public questioned why no relief programs were extended to such colored “refugees.” These critics noted that when Southern Negroes, like DeLaine, moved North to escape the violence, they often encountered irritated Northerners who ignored their plight, or quietly shunted them off to the de facto segregation and ghettos that existed in most urban areas. The *Amsterdam News* pointed out that a “Hungarian who slips out of Budapest...is called a ‘freedom fighter.’ The Negro who slips away from a lynch town...and arrives in Detroit or Chicago...is apt to be regarded as ‘a problem.’”¹⁷⁶ Such attitudes reinforced the deepening conviction of black Americans that their nation cared more about white

¹⁷⁴*Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 January 1957, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 19 January 1957, p. 5.

¹⁷⁶*Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, p. 4.

foreigners than its Negro citizens.¹⁷⁷

Black Americans who flocked to the Hungarian cause, without first establishing themselves as defenders of their own people, did not escape censure by the black community. Louis Armstrong, the famous trumpet player, received harsh criticism for his role in the Hungarian relief effort. The focus of black Americans' criticism involved Armstrong's benefit concert in London on December 18, 1956. Armstrong canceled already scheduled appearances in the United States, paid all his own expenses, and donated the entire proceeds, some 14,000 dollars, toward Hungarian refugee relief. Baker E. Morton pointed out that he "never recalled 'Satch'...advocating Negro relief."¹⁷⁸ The criticism of Armstrong in the black media had its roots in his frequent appearances before white, segregated audiences in the South. One Southern black from McCain, North Carolina questioned how "Southern born" Armstrong could "put Hungary before the colored man and forget that charity begins at home."¹⁷⁹ These and other critics demanded to know when, or even if, Armstrong planned on giving a similar benefit performance on behalf of the Civil Rights Movement.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷W. W. Hensel to President Eisenhower, February 20, 1957, President Letters Received (1-3), Box 8, Records of the President's Committee on Hungarian Refugee Relief, Eisenhower Library; *Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, p. 4; *Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1957, Deadline, p. 15; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 19 January 1957, p. 5 and February 23, 1957 p. 4; Current, "At the Crossroad," p. 435; and Wilkins' Address at 48th Annual Convention, June 30 1957, p. 4, NAACP Papers - 1956-1960.

¹⁷⁸*Associated Negro Press*, 6 February 1957, Features, p. 13.

¹⁷⁹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 23 March 1957, p. 4.

¹⁸⁰*Associated Negro Press*, 6 February 1957, Features, pp. 12-13 and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 9 March 1957, p. 4, March 23, 1957, p. 4, and March 30, 1957, p. 4.

Aside from feeling hurt and abandoned that their nation seemed to care more about the Hungarians than its own black citizens, many black Americans also feared the potential economic impact of such a large number of white immigrants. Harkening back to the bitter competition between Negroes and white immigrants at the turn of the century, George Schuyler pointed out that “European immigration has never been helpful to the American Negro historically.”¹⁸¹ By the 1950s, black Americans, while still facing intense job discrimination and frequent unemployment, had slowly begun to move up the economic ladder. Much of their opposition to the Hungarian refugees arose from the fear that they would again lose the economic gains they had so recently acquired.¹⁸² Black Americans could not help but notice the eagerness with which their fellow Americans offered the Hungarians employment opportunities of all kinds. This awareness, combined with the precarious nature of their own economic status, caused a substantial number of black Americans to view the admission of thousands of Hungarians with uneasy suspicion.¹⁸³ The National Urban League, which had historically concentrated it

¹⁸¹*Pittsburgh Courier*, January 26, 1957, p. 9.

¹⁸²The fear that Hungarian immigration would have an adverse economic effect on black Americans had the most basis in fact in the Cleveland area. Of the approximately 32,000 Hungarian refugees granted asylum in the United States, over 10,000 settled in Cleveland, Ohio.

¹⁸³*Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, p. 14; *Associate Negro Press*, 5 December 1957, Features, pp. 15-16 and February 20, 1957, Deadline, p. 12; *Atlanta Daily World*, 25 November 1956, p. 4 and January 19, 1957, p. 3; *Chicago Defender*, 9 February 1957, p. 10 and February 23, 1957, p. 10; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 26 January 1957, p. 9; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, p. 4, and March 30, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 December 1956, p. 8, January 12, 1957, p. 2, January 26, 1957, p. 9, and February 9, 1957, p. 9.

efforts on improving the economic status of black Americans, was particularly concerned with this issue. Lester Granger, head of the National Urban League, reported the most commonly asked question of black workers as being: “Will they [Hungarian refugees] be taking our jobs...our promotions?”¹⁸⁴

Many black Americans from around the nation also raised the related issue of housing. In the 1950s, neighborhoods remained segregated, with whites generally occupying the more desirable areas. Those black Americans who could afford to purchase a home in a white neighborhood faced tremendous obstacles. Existing owners frequently refused to sell, or even show, their homes to Negro buyers. Those who did sell, almost always did so at a vastly inflated price. Blacks who did finally move into white neighborhoods often faced critical daily scrutiny and complete exclusion from neighborhood activities. For most black Americans, however, even this situation usually constituted an improvement over the expensive rents and substandard housing so many faced. At the same time governmental and private organizations did so much to locate decent, affordable housing for the Hungarian refugees, many black Americans lived in horrible conditions.¹⁸⁵ One Brooklyn resident wrote to the *Amsterdam News* complaining of the poor state of New York Public Housing. This individual pointed to conditions so bad that they actually posed substantial risks to the safety and health of the occupants.

¹⁸⁴*Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, p. 14.

¹⁸⁵“Looking and Listening...Housing,” *The Crisis* (March 1957): pp. 228-230; *Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, pp. 5 & 14; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, p.4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 26 January 1957, p. 9.

The writer went on to relate these conditions to attention given by so many, in and out of government, to the Hungarians' housing needs. She pointed out that "our leaders look out for the refugees....." But what, she asked, "about the health, safety and freedom of us Negroes here?"¹⁸⁶

Black Americans also noted the immense disparity between educational opportunities offered to the Hungarian refugees and those denied to themselves. Even though *Brown v. Board of Education* had legally ended segregation in public schools, educational equality remained elusive. The *Pittsburgh Courier* reported on the large number of scholarships being offered to the incoming Hungarian refugees. The *Courier* observed that these generous offers came at a time when education for black Americans remained woefully under-funded. The *Courier* concluded that "evidently it is more advantageous to be a Hungarian refugee than a black citizen."¹⁸⁷ Furthermore, black Americans could not help but feel bitter when they witnessed Hungarian refugees being warmly welcomed at the same educational institutions which fought so stubbornly to avoid compliance with *Brown v. Board of Education*.¹⁸⁸ This bitterness was reflected in an unsigned editorial sent in to the *Philadelphia Afro-American* from a black resident of

¹⁸⁶*Amsterdam News*, 2 February 1957, p. 14.

¹⁸⁷*Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 December 1956, p. 9.

¹⁸⁸Suzanne Smith, "Crisis in the South," *The Crisis* (January 1957): pp. 5-7; *Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1956, p. 16; *Atlanta Daily World*, 1 January 1957, p. 6, January 5, 1957, p. 6, and January 19, 1957, p. 3; *Chicago Defender*, 27 January 1957, p. 9; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 26 January 1957, p. 9; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, pp. 4 & 19; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 December 1956, p. 9.

Alabama. This writer reported on the recent admission of a number of Hungarian refugees to the University of Alabama. This Alabama native maintained that “good will for these aliens pervaded the campus.”¹⁸⁹ This writer then went on to point out that such hospitality stood in “sharp contrast” to Alabama’s treatment of Autherine Lucy.¹⁹⁰

At heart, what bothered most black Americans was that their government and fellow Americans seemed to prefer to help white foreigners over American citizens, who also happened to be black. Black leaders, columnists, and private individuals all stressed that their citizenship and long residence in the United States entitled them, not some foreigners, to their nation’s primary consideration. Instead, what black Americans saw was the rights and privileges their country had so long denied them being handed over freely to the newly arriving Hungarians. One black laborer remarked that “these people can come here, even without the ability to speak English, and obtain the best jobs...I have been here all my life. More than this, I’m an American citizen”¹⁹¹ In an imaginary conversation with a supporter of Hungarian relief Langston Hughes’ “Simple” expressed similar sentiments. Simple argued that “colored folks have been in this here U.S.A. a long time...and yet, you mean to tell me a Hungarian what has been here a half-hour is

¹⁸⁹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 5 January 1957, p. 4.

¹⁹⁰In February 1956 Autherine Lucy became the first Negro to ever attend the University of Alabama. Lucy’s presence at the University of Alabama was met with threats to her life, brutal attacks on faculty who attempted to defend her, and intense rioting. Rather than seeking punishment for the perpetrators of such acts, the university instead expelled Lucy after only three days of attendance.

¹⁹¹*Atlanta Daily World*, 25 November 1956, p. 4.

worth more.”¹⁹² Black Americans further pointed out that all the aid to the Hungarians cost taxpayer money, including their own.¹⁹³ Blacks Americans felt it profoundly unfair that they should have to pay for services and privileges denied them and given to foreigners instead.¹⁹⁴

While black Americans tended to view racial discrimination and violence in America as an evil equal to, if not greater than, communism, this equation should not be interpreted as indicating any large scale presence of pro-communist sentiments among the black population. Rather, most black Americans of the 1950s fell squarely within the Cold War consensus. Black Americans, like most other Americans in the 1950s, firmly

¹⁹²*Chicago Defender*, 23 February 1957, p. 10.

¹⁹³Some black Americans angrily pointed to the United States government’s plan to confiscate the assets of Joe Louis, boxing heavyweight champion of the world, in order to satisfy interest and fines on his back taxes. In particular, the government’s plan to seize the trust fund which Louis had set up for his young children infuriated black Americans. For many black Americans, Louis was an icon, and the government’s action against him an absolute outrage. These critics demanded to know how the U.S. government could be so charitable to the Hungarians, and yet cruel enough to impoverish one of its most famous black citizens. (*Associated Negro Press*, 26 December 1956, Features, pp. 14-15 and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 22 December 1956, p. 2, December 29, 1956, p. 4, January 5, 1957, p. 4, and March 30, 1957, p. 4.)

¹⁹⁴Mrs. Peggy E. Nunnally to President Eisenhower, December 20, 1956; Mrs. J.F. Gene Rees to President Eisenhower, January 12, 1957; and Mr. L.A. Jaramillo to President Eisenhower, January 13, 1957 (all in President Letters Received (1-3), Box 8, Records of the President’s Committee on Hungarian Refugee Relief, Eisenhower Library); *Amsterdam News*, 19 January 1957, p. 14; *Atlanta Daily World*, 25 November 1956, p. 4, December 9, 1956, p. 4, January 1, 1957, p. 6, January 19, 1957, p. 3, January 29, 1957, p. 6; *Chicago Defender*, 12 January 1957, p. 9, February 9, 1957, p. 10, and February 23, 1957, p. 10; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 26 January 1957, p. 9; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 22 December 1956, p. 4 and February 16, 1957, p. 4; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 29 December 1956, p. 8, January 1, 1957, p. 10, and January 26, 1957, p. 11.

Americans, like some white Americans, argued against the admission of the Hungarians based on the fear that some might be Soviet spies and communist infiltrators. Some black Americans, again like some white Americans, maintained that the vast majority of Hungarian refugees had not fought so much against Communism per se, as for Nationalist communism and/or socialism.¹⁹⁵

The editorials of John B. Henderson of the *Norfolk Journal and Guide* further illustrated how black Americans viewed racism as often worse than communism, and yet also remained ardently anti-communist. On December 15, 1956 in an editorial regarding the situation in Hungary, Henderson declared that: “The Communists’ true nature stood revealed with all of its beastly cruelty and primitive savagery.”¹⁹⁶ Then on December 22, 1956, again in the context of Hungary, Henderson referred to the “oppressive rule of Russian communism.”¹⁹⁷ On January 19 1957, however, he produced another editorial which, if taken out of context, might be interpreted as a softening of his earlier position. When comparing the tactics used to sustain Jim Crow rule with those used to maintain Soviet domination of Hungary he wrote: “The Communists may parade in heavy tanks though the cities of Hungary...but they, at least, do it in the daytime so that you know

¹⁹⁵*Amsterdam News*, 19 January 1957, p. 14; *Atlanta Daily World*, 1 January 1957, p. 1; and *Pittsburgh Courier*, 8 December 1956, p. 9, January 12, 1957, p. 8, January 26, 1957, p. 9, February 2, 1957, p. 8, and March 2, 1957, p. 9.

¹⁹⁶*Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 15 December 1956, p. 8.

¹⁹⁷*Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 22 December 1956, p. 8.

what they are and can fight back. Communists don't hide under the cover of darkness and hurl bombs at churches and residences."¹⁹⁸ Rather than viewing this statement, or similar statements by other black leaders and media figures, as a change of heart or as containing any pro-Soviet sympathies whatsoever, it should be interpreted as the stern indictment of Jim Crow it was meant to be.¹⁹⁹

Black Americans also remained keenly aware of the interconnected nature of the United States' racial problems, its international image, and the Cold War. A number of black Americans pointed out that if America ever hoped to maintain credibility, particularly with the Afro-Asian block, then it must make an effort to "aid all nations not just white" and "clean up its own backyard."²⁰⁰ On December 29, 1956 the *Philadelphia Afro-American* reported on how *Pravda*, the Soviet Union's official newsletter, responded to the Eisenhower administration's condemnation of Soviet actions in Hungary with its own charge that: "The United States does not ensure elementary human rights in its own country."²⁰¹ In *Fight for Freedom*, Langston Hughes also pointed to the "field

¹⁹⁸*Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 19 January 1957, p. 8.

¹⁹⁹It should be further noted that Henderson also compares white racists to bank robbers and other similarly despicable types.

²⁰⁰*Amsterdam News*, 15 December 1957, p. 16; *Associated Negro Press*: 5 December 1956, Deadline, p. 7, December 26, 1956, Features, pp. 8-9, January 30, 1957, Deadline, pp. 6-7, February 20, 1957, Deadline, p. 12, and February 27, 1957, Deadline, p. 6; *Atlanta Daily World*, 9 December 1956, p. 4, January 5, 1957, p. 6, and February 20, 1957, p. 2; *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 29 December 1956, p. 2 and January 5, 1957, p. 2; Current, "At the Crossroad," p. 431; Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 157-158; and "Practicing Hypocrisy," pp. 89-90.

²⁰¹*Philadelphia Afro-American*, 29 December 1956, p. 2.

day” Iron Curtain countries were having with reports of racial violence in the South. When the United States condemned the puppet regime of Janos Kadar, Kadar simply replied that: “Those who tolerate that a people should be persecuted because of the color of their skin have no right to preach...liberty and human rights to others.”²⁰² Hughes also reported on a similar statement by Bulgaria’s UN representative. When Ceylon’s representative finally came around to joining in America’s censure of Hungary, the Bulgarian delegate reminded him that: ”Something worse could happen to you today if you went to Little Rock.”²⁰³

There were those within the black community, aside from Louis Armstrong, who voiced their support and/or provided aid to the Hungarian refugees. At the urging of the Red Cross, a select group of black leaders issued statements of support for Hungarian relief. These leaders included such prominent figures in the black community as Dr. Channing H. Tobias, Chairman of the NAACP; J. Ernest Wilkins, Assistant Secretary of Labor; Alonzo G. Moron, President of Hampton Institute; and E. Frederic Morrow, White House Administrative Assistant.²⁰⁴ Other black

²⁰²Quoted in Hughes, *Fight for Freedom*, pp. 157-158.

²⁰³*Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁰⁴Newspaper accounts reported that the statements of support issued by these black leaders all came after an appeal from the Red Cross. In a series of correspondence with E. Frederic Morrow, the Red Cross indicated that they desperately needed his help to “bring to the attention of all Americans this special appeal for Hungarian relief.” None of the correspondence mentioned enlisting the support of the black community specifically. However, the Red Cross’ choice of such well-known black leaders to endorse their campaign seemed to indicate that this was in fact the purpose. In addition, with the exception of Morrow, there was little indication of any involvement, beyond a mere statement of support, on the part of these black leaders. (See Wire from E. Roland

supporters of Hungarian relief included some Negro branches of the Elks Club, black employees of the Manger Hotel in Savannah, and miscellaneous individuals.²⁰⁵ Why these other scattered black groups and individuals supported Hungarian relief remains somewhat unclear.²⁰⁶ Some supporters, like a young pastor in New Jersey, urged black Americans to look beyond their own struggles and “demonstrate that the Negro’s fight for freedom is unselfish.”²⁰⁷ The *Chicago Defender’s* “Our Opinions” column also voiced, with some hesitation and reservations, support for the Hungarian cause. On December 22, 1956 this column reminded readers of those white Americans, like William Lloyd Garrison and Elijah P. Lovejoy, who had historically helped the Negro cause. This editorial went on to argue that black Americans should “set aside their own grievances

Harriman to E. Frederic Morrow, December 5, 1956; Telegram from E. Frederic Morrow to E. Roland Harriman, December 6, 1956; and Letter from E. Roland Harriman to E. Frederic Morrow, January 3, 1957 (all in Hungarian Relief Program, Box 1, E. Frederic Morrow Records, Eisenhower library).

²⁰⁵*Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1956, p. 25 and December 29, 1956, p. 31; *Associated Negro Press*, 16 January 1957, Deadline, p. 9; *Atlanta Daily World*, 11 December 1956, p. 2 and December 22, 1956, p. 4; *Chicago Defender*, 22 December 1956, p. 9 and December 29, 1956, p. 8; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (Home Edition)*, 2 February 1957, p. 3; *Norfolk Journal and Guide (National-Virginia Edition)*, 29 December 1956, p. 20 and January 19, 1957, p. 11; and *Philadelphia Afro-American*, 8 December 1957, p. 18 and December 22, 1957, p. 28.

²⁰⁶It remains unclear because most newspapers accounts simply reported the occurrence of support with little analysis, or even indication, as to what circumstances generated such support. In addition, there was no indication, unlike in the case of Armstrong, of how these supporters were received by their fellow black Americans.

²⁰⁷*Amsterdam News*, 22 December 1956, p. 25.

and woes to lend their might to the cause of Hungarian freedom.”²⁰⁸

Of all these supporters, Morrow participated the most directly in the United States’ refugee relief efforts. In his position as White House Administrative Assistant, Morrow played a primary role in the organization of the United States’ refugee efforts. It was his duty to locate an appropriate headquarters, hire staff, procure and dispense supplies, handle billing concerns, and perform numerous other administrative functions for Eisenhower’s Hungarian Refugee Relief Committee. In his memoir, *Black Man in the White House*, Morrow reported on the difficulties inherent in his dual role as an official member of Eisenhower’s Hungarian refugee relief team and as a prominent member of the black community. Morrow remembered how he initially found himself “somewhat surprised at the violent Negro reaction...in welcoming Hungarian refugees to this country.”²⁰⁹ Morrow discussed how, as member of the President’s staff, he felt an obligation and a sense of duty to do all he could to help the incoming Hungarian refugees. This sense of duty, however, often conflicted with Morrow’s realization and understanding of the circumstances which generated the unfavorable response of black Americans toward Hungarian relief in the first place.²¹⁰ Morrow pointed out that: “Deep down Negroes are sympathetic...but...how charitable can one expect him to be when he so

²⁰⁸*Chicago Defender*, 22 December 1956, p. 9.

²⁰⁹E. Frederic Morrow, *Black Man in the White House: A Diary of the Eisenhower Years By the Administrative Officer for Special Projects, the White House, 1955-1961* (New York: Coward-McCann, Inc., 1963), p. 109.

²¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

seldom experiences this kind of charity on the part of others?”²¹¹ Throughout the Hungarian Crisis, black Americans repeatedly expressed their sense of anger and betrayal at what they perceived to be inattention to both their own plight and the plight of oppressed peoples of the Afro-Asian block. For black Americans, the intense concern for the fate of the victims of Soviet aggression in Hungary seemed rather hypocritical when placed along-side of inattention to aggression on the part of white colonial powers overseas and to Jim Crow within the United States. Rightly or wrongly, the conclusion reached by many black leaders, newspapers, and private citizens alike was that “skin-color” explained this disparity. Why else, many black Americans wondered, would their nation rush to help white victims of oppression thousands of miles away, and ignore abuses against its own black citizens. Black Americans further argued that, given the United States’ somewhat lackluster record on human rights, the Afro-Asian block could not help but find America’s concern for Hungary a bit hypocritical.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 109.

CONCLUSION

With the exception of the relatively few black Americans who supported aid for and admission of the refugees, there remained a remarkable amount of consensus within the black community regarding the Hungarian Crisis. This remarkable unanimity of opinion encompassed such important differences as geography and political allegiance. Little difference could be seen in the opinion of Northern newspapers, like the *Amsterdam News*, *Chicago Defender*, and *Pittsburgh Courier* and Southern newspapers, like the *Atlanta Daily World* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*. Furthermore, there was no clear distinction between Democratic newspapers, like the *Chicago Defender*, and Republican papers, like the *Pittsburgh Courier*. The consensus also encompassed the statements of prominent black leaders, regularly featured black columnists and reporters, and average black Americans. These diverse groups and individuals expressed emotions ranging from mild annoyance to intense bitterness to their nation's concern and care for Hungary's refugees.

Throughout the Hungarian Crisis, mainstream public opinion argued, implicitly or explicitly, that the United States bore some responsibility for the events in Hungary. However, nowhere in the comments of black Americans was there any indication of a sense that they felt that the United States had any responsibility at all for Hungary's troubles. Furthermore, there was very little even mentioned regarding Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, or any other American propaganda efforts. Black Americans, undoubtedly, were well aware of the existence of such activities. Why black Americans

did not express the same sense of guilt and responsibility for their nation's alleged culpability in the Hungarian Crisis stands as one of the most intriguing questions left by their unique response. One possible explanation may lie in the deep empathy felt by black Americans for victims of oppression in the Afro-Asian block, and the accompanying belief that their nation bore some responsibility for this oppression. While other Americans expressed shock at outrage that their government did not do more to help Hungary, black Americans noted that their government and the American people in general did little to help stop, and sometimes even tacitly aided, the past and continued exploitation of colored peoples around the world. Perhaps black Americans' intense belief that their nation should have felt a sense of guilt and shame for its policy in Ethiopia, Algeria, and other similar cases left them with little inclination to consider American complicity in Hungary.

The analogies used by black Americans in criticizing their nation's involvement in Hungarian refugee relief ranged from a rather long stretch to Joe Louis' tax problems, to somewhat misguided hero-worship of Gamal Nasser, to glossing over the nuances between internal and external aggression in South Africa and Hungary, to some very well drawn parallels between the Ethiopia Crisis of 1935 and the Hungarian Crisis of 1956-1957. While some of the analogies used by black Americans might have fell short when examined strictly from the standpoint of their accuracy and logic, they conveyed an important underlying disaffection within the black community. For black Americans, what Joe Louis, Gamal Nasser, the South Africans, the Ethiopians, and the numerous other individuals or nations compared to Hungary all had in common was that they were

dark-skinned people facing oppressive and/or unjust white aggressors. Black Americans consistently expressed their belief that their nation simply did not care about colored victims of oppression overseas, or even its own black citizens.

Of all the analogies, the comparison between the tax troubles of Joe Louis and the plight of Hungary seemed to have had the least validity. It should be noted, however, that the association of Joe Louis with the Hungarian Crisis occurred far more frequently in editorials sent in by private citizens than in the writings of regularly featured columnists or statements of prominent black leaders. Irrespective of the merits of Louis' case, the financial troubles of one very famous black American did not seem to equate with the troubles experienced by the Hungarian refugees. Black Americans linked Louis to the Hungarian Crisis by implying that there existed a direct connection between the seizure of Louis' money to pay back taxes and the money being spent to help the Hungarians. In some editorials, this argument almost seemed to degenerate into the implied assertion that the government planned to seize the trust fund of Louis' children, just so they could give it the incoming refugees.

While the actions of Britain, France, and Israel did deserve condemnation, the comparisons made by black Americans between Hungary and Suez were not entirely accurate either. The vast majority of comments found in black newspapers portrayed Nasser as a hero and role model for dark-skinned peoples everywhere. Though most black Americans were surely aware that Nasser ruled as a military dictator, this fact was generally glossed over in the outpouring of praise for his defiance of Britain, France, and Israel. Even those black Americans who had some reservations about Nasser still poured

forth their sympathies for the common people of Egypt. Black Americans argued that thousands of Egyptians were killed, wounded, and made homeless by this “unwarranted attack.” The praise of Nasser, particularly the comparison with the likes of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., illustrated the growing pride many black Americans felt when they witnessed members of the Afro-Asian block standing up to the old imperial powers of Europe.

The comparison between the Hungarian Revolt and apartheid in South Africa also tended to ignore important differences. The brutality of the treatment of South Africa’s black population was equally as inhumane as Soviet aggression against Hungary. However, the *Chicago Defender*’s line of reasoning regarding UN policy in South Africa versus that in Hungary failed to take into account significant differences between the UN’s policy regarding internal and external aggression. The *Defender* argued that: “Either the [G]eneral [A]ssembly has the authority to consider *domestic policies* [emphasis added] that come clearly within the purview of human rights or it does not...inquiry into the racial policy of the Union is as legitimate...as that proposed for Hungary.”²¹² The United Nations’ charter did not grant it the power to interfere in the domestic affairs of its members.²¹³ While the South African government was clearly guilty of terrible violations of human rights, apartheid did in fact remain an internal,

²¹²*Chicago Defender*, 15 December 1956, p. 9.

²¹³Article 2, Section 7 of the United Nation’s charter states: “Nothing contained in the present charter shall authorize the U.N. to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”

domestic matter. Hungary, unlike South Africa, was not an issue of “domestic policy” as implied by the *Defender*. The Soviet’s invasion was, instead, a clear case of external aggression against a member state. The UN’s charter did, in fact, grant it the power to act in cases, like Hungary, that were obvious examples of external aggression.

Despite the difference in the isolationism of the 1930s and the internationalism of the Cold War, as well as the separation in time and space, the parallels between Ethiopia and Hungary remain some of the strongest drawn by black Americans. Unlike the comparisons to South Africa, both the Ethiopian and Hungarian Crises constituted clear cases of outside invasion, rather than internal violations of human rights. In addition, military intervention in either Ethiopia or Hungary would have risked wide-spread conflict and loss of American lives. When confronted with the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, many Americans actively pressed their government to avoid any American involvement. However, as black Americans pointed out, many Americans seemed all too willing risk war on behalf of Hungary. Furthermore, the vast majority of Americans in the 1930s did little to provide food and medical aid to Ethiopia, much less offers of sanctuary. While the public’s changing attitude toward America’s role in the world, rather than racism as was so often suggested, explained the differing response to the Ethiopian and Hungarian Crises, black Americans did raise some very valid points.

No matter what analogy they used, or how well or poorly argued, black Americans consistently asserted that race determined when and where their government and fellow citizens would allow oppression and injustice to continue. Throughout the Hungarian Crisis, black leaders, members of the media, and private citizens alike all

asserted that their nation would not have bothered to aid the Hungarians, much less have allowed them entry into the United States, had they been colored instead of white.

Whether or not black Americans' assertion that the United States would not have acted as it had toward Hungary had it been an Asian or African nation wholly conveys the totality of American foreign policy, it does suggest a lot about the experience of black Americans leading up to and during the mid-1950s. Black Americans viewed race as playing a primary role in America's policy toward Hungary because it occupied such an omnipresent force in their own lives. Despite their official status as citizens and their long record of service to their nation, the color of their skin continued to determine where black Americans could work, live, attend school, and often even who their friends and associates would be.

When the Supreme Court handed down *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), many black Americans felt that, at last, things would be different. As they continued to wait for their nation to grant them the privileges inherent in their status as citizens, they became increasingly embittered and pessimistic about the future of America's race relations. Then, in late 1956, black Americans witnessed their government and fellow citizens racing to offer citizenship, housing, and jobs to a group of unknown foreigners. This spectacle stirred deep emotions and aroused old feelings of nativism among the black community. Existing nativism, combined with the climate of the 1950s, generated annoyance, disgust, and bitterness on the part of many black Americans toward refugee relief efforts.

Black Americans' reaction to the Hungarian Crisis was not so much a well-

thought out and organized attempt to prevent the admission of the Hungarian refugees as it was a series of emotional statements designed to vent their frustration, express fears, and draw greater attention to their own struggle. Evidence of this purpose can be seen in where and how black Americans chose to express their opposition to Hungarian refugee relief. The vast majority of statements of black opposition appeared in black newspapers. The only substantial group of people reading black newspapers in the 1950s were other black Americans. Of the hundreds of letters received by Eisenhower, only four or five appeared to have been from black Americans.²¹⁴ Placed alongside of the immense coverage of the Hungarian Revolt, these facts seem to indicate that black Americans did not truly seek to alter the course of events. Furthermore, few statements by black Americans argued that the United States should actually cease aid to Hungary. Most black Americans, instead, pointed out that the concern and care given by their nation to the situation in Hungary should *also* be shown on behalf of colored people overseas and at home.²¹⁵ Overall, the response of black Americans to the Hungarian Crisis seems to have been deeply rooted in their intense frustration with the continuing neglect and poor treatment received by both themselves and the peoples of Asia and Africa, rather than any

²¹⁴If not specifically stated, the assumption of whether or not the writer was black was generally based on area of residence and the content of the letter.

²¹⁵For example, when the Southern Christian Leaders Conference pointed to Eisenhower's frequent verbal condemnation of the Soviet Union and Nixon's visit to Austria they never once argued that Eisenhower should stop condemning the Soviet Union or Nixon should never make a trip overseas to Hungary again. Instead, they pointed out that Eisenhower and Nixon could, and should, initiate similar actions on behalf of equally oppressed Southern Negroes.

particular hostility to the Hungarians themselves.

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