

# Ford Asks Rebirth of U.S. Pride

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NEW ORLEANS, April 23 — President Ford called on the American people tonight to put Vietnam behind them and to avoid recriminations and bitter debate.

In a major new statement of administration policy as the final battles are being fought in Vietnam, Mr. Ford appealed for "a great national reconciliation" and for a new effort to regain "the sense of pride that existed before Vietnam."

This new unity and sense of purpose cannot be achieved "by refighting a war that is finished—as far as America is concerned," the President said at Tulane University in an address designed to forestall a debate on how the war was lost.

"I ask tonight that we stop refighting the battles and recriminations of the past," the President said. His speech was interrupted frequently by loud applause, and he received a long ovation at the end. An estimated 5,300 persons packed the Tulane Field House for the special convocation to hear the President.

Although Mr. Ford frequently of late has assailed Congress for its failure to grant additional funds for Indochina, he made no criticism of it tonight, but emphasized that "we must now move beyond the discord of the past decade."

The President's words meant, as he said in a television interview Monday, that "I will not make it (Vietnam) an issue in 1976."

In the same interview the President set the theme he developed in tonight's speech. "It seems to me," he said in the interview, "that the American people are yearning for a new start. . . . We should look ahead and not concentrate on the problems of the past where a good bit of blame can be shared by many."

Expanding on the theme tonight, Mr. Ford said, "We are saddened, indeed, by events in Indochina. But these events, tragic as they are, portend neither the end of the world nor of America's leadership in the world."

"Some seem to feel that if we do not succeed in everything, everywhere, then we have succeeded in nothing anywhere. I reject such polarized thinking. We can and should help others to help themselves. But the fate of responsible men and women everywhere in the final decision rests in their own hands."

The President said that America's future depends on Americans.

"We must now move beyond the discord of the past decade," he said. "It is in this spirit that I ask you to join in writing an agenda for the future . . ."

"I ask that we accept the responsibilities of leadership as a good neighbor to all peoples and the enemy of

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none. I ask that we strive to become, in the finest American tradition, something more tomorrow than we are today."

Tonight's speech represented a major shift in emphasis from the President's April 10 address to a joint session of Congress, where he stressed the need to aid Vietnam.

Having lost the battle with Congress, Mr. Ford seemed to accept it and to move ahead to new ground, possibly faster than Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger would like.

While Kissinger has talked about the "image" of America and the importance of maintaining American influence and power everywhere, Mr. Ford rejected the thesis.

Instead of addressing the image of America, I prefer to consider the reality of America," he said.

White House press secretary Ron Nessen said that the address was written by the President, counselor Robert T. Hartmann and

speechwriter Milton Friedman. Much of the writing was done yesterday, Nessen said, and more work was done on Air Force One with the President, Hartmann and Friedman completing the text shortly before the plane landed here this morning.

"The time has come to look forward to an agenda for the future, to unity, to binding up the nation's wounds and restoring it to health and optimistic self-confidence," the President told the Tulane students.

He challenged his audience to find answers to problems of wealth, crime, energy, the cities and the proliferation of armaments.

"Let America symbolize humanity's struggle to conquer nature and master technology, he said. "The time has come for our government to facilitate the individual's control over his or her own future—and the future of America."

Tonight's speech was the President's third of the day in New Orleans. His first was a morning tribute to

Rep. F. Edward Hebert (D-La.), unseated in January as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, at groundbreaking ceremonies for the F. Edward Hebert Library.

The President addressed a luncheon meeting of the Navy League, where he promised support of a strong, modern American fleet. "The Navy is still a major instrument for resolving crisis short of war," he said. "Its very presence in a troubled spot serves as a deterrent."

The Navy's fleet of 501 ships is its smallest since 1939, Mr. Ford said, but its strike force is the "best in the world" because "our aircraft carriers and their air groups are potent weapon systems."

Americans owe a debt of gratitude to the Navy and the Marines "for their heroic efforts in evacuating Americans from the besieged city of Phnom Penh without casualties and without a hitch," Mr. Ford said.

He said there is no doubt

that the Soviet Union "understands the importance of sea power." Soviet ships "now freely roam the world's seas," he said.

Some 220 Soviet ships deployed in all of the oceans have just taken part in "Global Maneuver," he said, with reconnaissance aircraft operating from Cuba and Guinea.

"The Russians built up their navy while we permitted ours to shrink," he said. "And they know how to show their flag."

Those who contend that America "is overarmed and overspending on defense are dead wrong," the President declared.

"We cannot afford to cut any further without endangering our national security. Detente and national defense are closely tied together. In fact, the foundation of detente is the military balance that exists today."

Between speeches this afternoon, Mr. Ford flew by helicopter to an oil rig nearly 100 miles south of here in the Gulf of Mexico.

After inspecting the complex machinery, operated by Gulf Oil Corp., Mr. Ford thanked crew members for "a very interesting, very informative and quite thrilling opportunity." The country needs more offshore oil rigs in all its coastal waters to help make it independent of foreign energy sources, the President said.

Following his Tulane speech, Mr. Ford returned to Washington.