



The Holy See

***ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS PIUS XII
TO MEMBERS OF THE UNITED NATIONS RELIEF
AND REHABILITATION ADMINISTRATION (U.N.R.R.A.)****

Sunday, 8 July 1945

You will understand, gentlemen, what a great pleasure it is for us to receive such a distinguished representation of UNRRA led by its esteemed and worthy Director General.

During the past year tens of thousands of people have visited the halls of the Vatican. Every day, with very few exceptions, we have met them, we have talked with so many of them, of all ages, of all classes, of many nationalities. Behind and beyond them we could see with the mind's eye millions of others throughout the world, who like them are looking to the future with eager hope, yet not without misgiving, even fear; some perhaps with little, too little, hope. And they are asking themselves the question: has man certain God-given rights which the State is obliged to protect, may not infringe upon? Or is the notion to prevail, which assigns unlimited power to the State, leaving to the individual only what rights and prerogatives the State may find it useful to confer? Who does not see the fatal consequences of such an error? It leads inevitably to the despotic rule of one or of few who, without pity or conscience, have been able to seize the ascendancy and block or poison the natural channels of a people's national life. True freedom stagnates there, and dies. Moreover, such a claim of absolute, irresponsible power for the State leaves the stability of international relations at the mercy of the same capricious despotism; and the foundations of any lasting peace are shattered.

No wonder, then, that many right-minded men are anxious about the future, and the high hopes of many peoples of the world begin to droop. It is for the responsible leaders of political thought and government in all nations today to sustain these peoples; to encourage them in their efforts to rise from the ruins of an unhappy past to a new, a better, a more stable national life; above all to make it abundantly clear to them, even to national minorities, that they will enjoy complete and genuine liberty in what is dearest to them - their cultural and religious life.

Your splendid Organization, gentlemen, is making a powerful and necessary contribution towards just this end; and Europe will never cease to bless you for it. May God strengthen your hand, give light and courage to the promptings of your heart, and grant you the precious consolation of doing untold good to your fellow-men in their piteous need and sufferings: a truly Christ-like work.

For you, the Director General of UNRRA, and all your collaborators, we invoke God's choicest blessings; and may He bless all here present and those who are near and dear to you.

**L'Osservatore Romano* 11.7.1945, p.1.

Paths to Peace, p.447-448.
