

Friday, December 8, 1967 -- 9:10 a.m.

Mr. President:

Pres file

With respect to your getting with Amb. Eugenie Anderson, her report is positive, although she expresses anxiety on refugees. (Tab A)

I attach (Tab B) the passage on refugees from Ellsworth's cable of yesterday which you may wish to call to her attention. There are several points we ought to make to her and make in public as well.

-- 60% of the 2,100,000 refugees reported in the past 4 years have been resettled or returned to their villages.

-- In 1967 for the first time the number of refugees returned home or resettled exceeded new refugees coming in.

-- Half the refugee problem is in the I Corps. This is not due to U.S. action but to the pressure on I Corps by the North Vietnamese across the DMZ. In short, the view that our military actions generate refugees is not a correct position of the problem at the present time.

-- The plans for 1968 on the Vietnamese side and ours promise further reduction in refugees during the year.

You may wish to have her meet the press after your talk with her.

I recommend that Bill Leonhart be present when you have your session with Mrs. Anderson. I should be glad to come along, also.

W. W. Rostow

Have Leonhart and Rostow in _____

No _____

See me _____

cc: Amb. Leonhart
Mr. Christian

WWRostow:rlh

11:45 A.M. - DEC. 8

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December 8, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Ambassador Eugenie Anderson, U. S. Representative on the U. N. Trusteeship Council

SUBJECT: Vietnam

The following general observations are based on my eight day stay in Vietnam. I concentrated on the political aspects of the struggle, in particular the Revolutionary Development program. This "front" of the war is, in my opinion, very little understood in our country, although it is equally as important as the military.

1. I believe that we can eventually win in Vietnam if the American people will sustain the war with the same commitment and depth of understanding shown by the Americans in Vietnam, and with the same persistence shown by the Vietnamese people. To win the political struggle there will probably take even longer than the military. Both aspects are interrelated and interdependent. To win a war, pacify a countryside and build a nation all at the same time is bound to require considerable time, perseverance and great resources.

2. I believe that Americans in this country need to know more about what the Americans in Vietnam and the South Vietnamese are doing along constructive and reconstructive lines. If the epoch-making story were better understood, most Americans at home would feel - as I do - a deep pride and confidence in what we are doing in Vietnam.

This is the first time in history when people were fighting a cruel and many fronted war against outside aggression and internal subversion, and yet, at the same time, they were also engaged in building a new nation, in revolutionary social development, and in constructive humanitarian programs.

While all this is an immense undertaking, I saw many evidences of progress and of new hope among the people. Given security from VC and North Vietnamese attack, the Revolutionary Development program is bound eventually to succeed.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of this and other new political developments. If ever there were a political war, this is it.

3. The most immediately critical and vulnerable problem on the non-military side (although closely affected by and having effect on military undertakings) is the growing number of refugees, currently conservatively estimated at about 750,000.

(I am sure I need not mention that certain Senators are exploiting this issue for their own political purposes.)

However it is inescapable that the refugee program is massive and can be dealt with effectively only on a commensurate scale. While I am aware that Ambassador Komer has recently integrated the refugee work under the CORDS program, nevertheless I believe that this problem requires a much greater sense of urgency and priority.

Extract from Saigon 12892 -- Amb. Bunker's thirtieth weekly report

I know that there has been growing interest in the press and in Congress on refugees and this has also been a matter of great concern to us here. There are indications, however, that the problem may be getting more manageable. The number of known refugees coming in during 1967 (460,553 during the first ten months) is down considerably from the 980,323 who came in during 1966. For the first time in some years the number of refugees enabled to return home or resettled during 1967 to date has exceeded the new refugees coming in. In fact, of the cumulative total of 2,100,000 refugees reported over the four years since January 1, 1964, almost 60 percent have been resettled or returned to their villages. The 1967 refugee problem has principally been concentrated in First Corps (51 percent) and Second Corps (24 percent), in Third Corps and in the Fourth Corps Delta area resettlement or repatriation is proceeding considerably faster than the generation of new refugees. The criticism that refugees have been created by U.S. and Government of Vietnam military operations is no doubt true in part, but it seems to me equally valid to point out that heavy North Vietnam infiltration in First and Second Corps has caused the fighting which creates refugees.

The Government of Vietnam and the U.S. are steadily increasing their refugee efforts. The Government of Vietnam budgeted 1 billion piasters for refugees in 1966, just over 1.5 billion piasters for 1967 and 2 billion piasters for 1968. On the U.S. side, the amount of direct support we provide is only a part of our total assistance. Military civic action plus the growing activities of any voluntary agencies must also be added in.

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By aj/ls, NARA, Date 1-13-92