

*Refugees* 2 10  
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Dr. D. C. Lavergne

Richard R. Brown and James Campbell, Consultants

Report and Recommendations from Hanoi and Haiphong Visit *B*

As a result of our visit in company with Mr. Herman Holiday to Hanoi on Saturday, August 14, 1954, and Haiphong Sunday, August 15, 1954, we desire to make the following report:

First of all, we found the physical conditions wretched! Never in the experience of either of us have we seen such unsanitary, unhealthful, and disagreeable living conditions. The possibility of epidemics is rife and the health of the refugees is definitely in jeopardy. We found people living even in the schools in filth and squalor with inadequate sanitation, inadequate water, and with the situation generally worse than that with which one would normally provide for animals.

We found abject confusion reigning among the officials assigned to various responsibilities for refugee care and control; there were no clear-cut lines of authority and very few individuals willing to assume responsibility.

There is apparently a complete lack of any reasonable registration of refugees. Even within cities there is no reasonable estimate of numbers. Different officials will vary 100 per cent in totals. As an example, in Hanoi, Mr. Strauss estimates 35,000 total, whereas, Mr. Ham, the newly appointed Viet-Nam official, estimates 70,000. We obtained information that 170,000 persons had registered as wanting to move from Hanoi. Nowhere could we find confirmation of this figure although it had been reported that there had been 12 registration offices set up. Only a few of the refugees have any sort of identification cards or papers. In Haiphong we found the only registration for the estimated 10,000 living in the rice paddies was that contained in the Priest's pocket-notebook, in which he had 21 villages listed with a number of refugees supposed to have come from each village. On his own admission he stated that he did not know whether these figures were accurate because they had been given him by the village chiefs, and some people had returned to the villages meantime, and others constituted new arrivals.

Second to the lack of registration is the almost total lack of information concerning inoculations and vaccinations. The health and medical control is almost non-existent in all the schools and camps we visited. Here and there we were able to have refugees produce a certificate of vaccination.

We have come to the conclusion that the present handling of refugees, or lack of handling, constitutes the best propaganda weapon which the Communists might have. In fact, it is ready-made for them, and all they have to do, and all they are doing, is move among the refugees quietly commenting upon their miseries and indicating that the worst is yet to come. It is our firm conclusion that, unless this situation is rectified within the next few days any gain to be had by facilitating the movement of refugees will be lost.

We present the following specific recommendations for your consideration:

1. The first and foremost requirement is a change in the policy of the French Government. It must be made immediately. It is clearly evident that the highest priority for movement and care is now given to French troops and the dependents of French troops. The care of civilian refugees is far down the line. The French Government has refused to allow refugees to enter the City of Haiphong, dumping them along the railroad tracks, some five or six kilometres outside of Haiphong. They have resisted making available camp sites even though such sites in parks, et cetera, are available. Unless the movement of civilian refugees can be given a high priority, the efforts of the United States Government and the Vietnamese Government will be of little avail.

2. There is need to move at once to create a tri-partite working party at sufficiently high level in order that operating decisions can be made and executed without delay. The tri-partite working group should be composed of the United States, the French, and Vietnamese Government representatives. This representation must include civilian as well as military representatives for all three parties. Such a working group is needed in Hanoi immediately, and a counterpart of it should be established in Saigon.

3. Closely coupled with the establishment of the tri-partite groups is the establishment of a two-way radio, telephone and telegraph communication setup. At the moment, communication facilities are completely inadequate, and the need for simultaneous communication between Saigon and Hanoi is obvious. The officials represented on the tri-partite group will continue to be reluctant until they have received instructions and information from their own parent offices.

It is mandatory also that inauguration of joint tri-partite instructions and information be made.

4. We recommend that agreement be obtained from the French military for the requisition of space, buildings, and facilities of all types urgently needed for refugees presently in Hanoi, Haiduong, and Haiphong as well as for reception centers in the South.

5. There is urgent need for the Vietnamese Government to improve and increase the number of Government officials in the North primarily to work in Haiphong. The present incumbents are extremely new and have no knowledge

of the extent of their responsibility or their powers to act. It is our feeling that perhaps a personal designation of an over-all North Viet-Nam representative by the President might tend to solve the present chaotic situation.

6. It is absolutely essential that a comprehensive and accurate registration by individual names be instituted at once and that the records of these registrations be so implemented as to permit continuous contact with the individual and if necessary his relatives who do not accompany him.

7. There is immediate need for adequate policies or military security for the personal safety of refugees in camps, schools, et cetera, for the maintaining of internal order and for the keeping out of Communist infiltrators. We suggest that consideration be given to the use of the Vietnamese Army.

8. Immediate consideration should be given for providing some type of part-time work for refugees over and above the proposed seven piastres. Refugees could be utilized for help with camp sanitation, camp improvement, et cetera.

9. There is a mandatory need for medical doctors and medical staff to protect the health of refugees, control the spread of epidemics and to make ready refugees for movement South.

10. Physical needs -- the most basic physical needs include shelters (tents, schools or thatch roofs) latrines, showers, drinking water, garbage disposal, wood and cooking utensils, sleeping mats, clothes or cloth, and public address systems to provide diversionary programs for counter-propaganda purposes --i.e., news, music, entertainment.

(The present rate of exchange is 35 to the American dollar for the piastres.)

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