

Sept 29, 1955

VIET NAM REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

BACKGROUND

The Geneva Accords of July 22, 1955, gave the Communist Government of North Viet Nam control over all Vietnamese territory north of the 17° and authorized inhabitants north and south of the parallel to emigrate without molestation. All movement of persons between zones was to be completed by May 18, 1956. The President of the United States announced that the U.S. would assist non-Communists from the North to evacuate and settle in the South.

Almost immediately after this announcement, U.S. Navy transports and about \$10 million (for tents and supplies) were made available to the non-Communist Government of Viet Nam, and refugees began to arrive in large numbers in Saigon and other receiving centers in U.S. transports by August 15. From the beginning the French Air Force and Navy also engaged in assisting the exodus.

Early in August the U.S. Government sent several seasoned refugee experts from Germany, Hong Kong, and other places to assist the Vietnamese in solving administrative problems, such as, the organization of a Government refugee bureau, the planning of refugee reception and temporary settlement centers, the provision of direct relief supplies and cash grants, and the establishment of classification records to facilitate the handling and later resettlement of the refugees. The new Prime Minister Diem appointed a Commissioner General for Refugees, and a committee composed of Vietnamese, French, and Americans was established early in August to coordinate activities.

Initially it was thought in Saigon that the refugees would total about 250,000 civilians and 200,000 Vietnamese troops. By September, 60,000 a month were being transported by the U.S. Navy and a larger number by airlift. As of the final date for refugee exodus, the number of refugees was:

Vietnamese Civilians	620,090
Other Civilians	38,024
Vietnamese Military	<u>154,410</u>
TOTAL	821,524

The U.S. Navy lifted 322,586 persons; the French lifted 448,610, and 41,328 were self-evacuated.

When the magnitude and nature of the refugee problem became clearer in November 1955, an over-all refugee program was developed and a U.S. aid project totaling \$35 million for FY 55 was approved. Later, supplemental aid raised the total for the fiscal year to \$55.8 million, for transportation, reception, food and medical supplies, tents and housing materials, and cash grants.

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The evacuation, or first, phase of the program was a notable success. Probably no other voluntary migration of this magnitude has been accomplished in modern times. On the whole, the refugees have been well-cared for and there have been no epidemics of diseases.

Considerable confusion, however, characterized the second phase -- including reception, relief, and initial housing of the refugees. During the period September 1954 to March 1955 there was some suffering and much overcrowding, and failure to classify the refugees at the outset has prevented proper utilization of their skills and is complicating their resettlement.

The chief causes of the confusion in this stage were these: (a) a new Government took office only three months prior to the Geneva Accords; (b) Prime Minister Diem appointed and dismissed several refugee Commissioners during the first two months of the exodus; (c) Government employees responsible for the second phase activities had little administrative competence and technical skill. It should be realized, however, that any government would have been strained to handle such a mass movement of people efficiently.

Progress in the final, or resettlement, phase of the refugee program has been very slow. A recent report from Embassy/Saigon indicates that only about 10 percent of an approximate total of 580,000 refugees needing aid has been resettled in areas suitable for raising crops and that few of these 60,000 have been given sufficient land for self-support. The seriousness of this situation is but little mitigated by earlier field reports that some 450,000 refugees had been transferred from temporary receiving centers to "resettlement areas." (Many of these areas are roadside camps). Although the Government with the able assistance of several U.S. voluntary agencies (CARE, International Rescue Committee, American Red Cross, International Red Cross, Mennonite Central Committee, Federated Women's Clubs, National Catholic Welfare Conference, International Junior Chamber of Commerce), as well as with USOM aid, has met the most pressing needs for shelter, food, clothing and medical treatment and though generally the refugees themselves have energetically endeavored to improve their living conditions, the great bulk of them are still supported through direct grants of cash and in kind. Thus they are in danger of becoming at best pauperized and at the worst sources of political unrest. Moreover, it is obvious that resettlement of these people is a precondition for any substantial reduction in Viet Nam Government outlays for their support and consequently also a precondition for a reduction in the Government's requests for United States financial assistance.

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Viet Nam Refugee Resettlement
(Suggested for discussion in the Viet Nam Government)

The Problem

To overcome Viet Nam Government inertia in arranging for resettlement of over 500,000 North Vietnamese refugee farmers on uncultivated land so that they may become self-supporting. (The public domain is ignored in this paper because such land is largely unsuitable for resettlement).

Anticipated Viet Nam Government Position

The Government will express its intention to press for the resettlement of the refugees and will point to past accomplishments as an earnest of such intention. An Office of Commissioner General For Refugees was established in August 1954. The Government has widely publicized, and has also empowered local authorities in the provinces to implement, Ordinance No. 7 of February 5, 1955, which permits the allotment of uncultivated land on favorable terms to refugees and other needy persons. It has also established two survey teams for the purpose of locating uncultivated land for resettlement purposes.

The Government may cite the following as reasons for delay in implementing the resettlement program:

- a. Efforts to put down the rebellious Sects and establish secure conditions throughout the country have pre-occupied the attention of their limited administrative personnel.
- b. The provisions of Ordinance No. 7 could not be effectively implemented in outlying areas until security has been established.
- c. The location of suitable land, the drafting of occupancy contracts, and the physical effort of moving refugees to new locations involve work of such magnitude that with its limited administrative personnel the Government could hardly be expected to have accomplished more than has been done in the few months that have elapsed since the evacuation and immediate relief phases of the refugee problem were successfully concluded.

Suggested U.S. Position

The U.S. fully appreciates the magnitude of the problem and the Viet Nam Government's efforts to date. Despite all these efforts, however, the fact remains that only about 10 percent of the refugees are now located in areas with potential rice land and few of these

60,000 have received sufficient land for self-support. Thus, over half a million persons still await adequate resettlement. The U.S. wishes to emphasize that in the interests of reducing the tremendous financial burden of relief costs, of raising agricultural production, and of assuring that these hundreds of thousands of homeless people do not become political liabilities, all barriers to their becoming self-supporting must somehow be broken through.

The responsibility for resettling these people is that of the Viet Nam Government. U.S. assistance in the past leaves no room to doubt the willingness of the U.S. to help Viet Nam solve this problem. The U.S. has already provided \$55.8 million in FY 55 for refugee assistance and in FY 56 it is planning to provide about \$37 million. It is contemplated also that U.S. technicians will continue to assist in the administration of the refugee program. In making this offer of assistance the Government of the U.S. would like to have assurance that every possible effort is being made to reduce the cost of the refugee program, particularly through the rapid resettlement and assumption of self-support by the refugees.

If the Government of Viet Nam will take the necessary actions promptly, the U.S. believes that in FY 57 the refugees will need little assistance other than for production credits, work animals, farm tools, fertilizers and seeds in order to become self-supporting.

To this end the Government of the U.S. suggests the following as illustrative of actions needed:

1. Location of suitable land - The adequacy of the administrative staff now engaged in the survey work should be ascertained; additional personnel needs should be met, and a target date for the completion of the survey should be established.
2. Planning - A plan for a scheduled movement of refugees to predetermined new locations should be agreed between the Government and the USOM.
3. Arrangements for occupancy - Prior to the movement of refugees to new locations, all necessary arrangements for occupancy should be worked out between the refugees and the appropriate local authorities (e.g., joint committees and communal councils).
4. Housing and production requirements - Advance plans should be drawn to assure the timely availability of housing and commodities (seeds, tools, etc.) needed by the refugees in crop-production.

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The Embassy and USOM are now convinced that the Government is not succeeding in the resettlement phase of the program largely because it lacks the will. Possibly Diem and his Ministers do not appreciate the pressing importance of taking new action in this field. They may feel that they have dealt adequately with the problem in the promulgation of Ordinance No. 7 (see below). Based on information available in ICA/W, this is what has been done so far.

The Government promulgated Ordinance No. 7 on February 5, 1955 for the purpose of encouraging "an immediate large scale recultivation of unexploited agricultural land and rice fields belonging to both private individuals and to juridical persons" - unexploited land being defined as that which has not been cultivated during the past crop year.

Joint Committees and communal councils (at the village level) were instructed to prepare and forward lists of uncultivated land to the District Chiefs within a period of one month, who in turn would forward them through channels to the Commissioner General. Lists of refugees were to have been sent by the Commissioner General to the committees and councils in villages where land is available. The Ordinance made no specific provision for transportation of refugees to newly available land; however, it may be assumed that the Commissioner General for Refugees was made responsible for making the necessary arrangements.

The Commissioner General has established two survey teams to report on the location of uncultivated land available for resettlement.

It is clear from the small number of persons actually resettled, however, that these measures have been totally inadequate to meet the need. The general lines along which the Government should take immediate remedial action are likewise clear, as follows:

- a. A much more vigorous effort should be made to locate suitable land for resettlement.
- b. Plans should immediately be drafted for a scheduled movement of refugees to predetermined new locations.
- c. Arrangements for occupancy should be made between the refugees and the local joint committees and communal councils.
- d. Housing and commodities necessary for crop production should be provided on an advance planning basis in order to have them available when needed.

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