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MEMORANDUM

September 28, 1954

TO: Mr. D. G. Lavergne
Special Deputy Refugee Affairs

FROM: W. A. Dymasa
Acting USOM Representative, Central Vietnam

SUBJ: Resettlement of Refugees

1. The key refugee problem in Central Vietnam continues to be resettlement and rehabilitation. During the last two or three weeks progress has been rather slow. Many of the government officials and I hoped that a sufficient number of homes would be constructed in satisfactory locations with economic opportunities before the heavy rains came in the northern provinces of C.V.N. Some houses have been constructed, but in general, construction has bogged down. A few weeks ago, lack of funds was said to be delaying resettlement, but this has not been true for three weeks, for there are adequate funds available.

2. The lack of coordination and effective governmental leadership has probably been the principal factor responsible for delays in resettlement. The government services have not worked effectively together; neither have they worked effectively with province chiefs and district chiefs. The province and district chiefs seem to be overwhelmed with the job of resettling refugees, along with their regular duties. Moreover, there has not been a coordinated plan for resettlement. Despite many efforts of Mission people to stress the importance of registration, there has not been effective registration and classification of people by occupations; therefore, there are variations in classifications of refugees by occupations, depending upon the sources, the province chiefs, or the chiefs of the services.

3. Last week the Government Delegate appointed a Commissioner to take charge of the resettlement of refugees in Central Vietnam. I held a meeting with the Commissioner after his appointment and made a number of suggestions to him based upon my observations. I believe that the appointment of the Commissioner is an important step forward and since he appears to be an energetic person, that he will be able to coordinate the work of the services and province chiefs and expedite the resettlement of refugees.

4. Although the rainy season has begun in C.V.N. and many schools are filled with refugees, I do not believe the delays in constructing houses are crucial if, as a result, more thought is given to the problems, sounder plans are developed, and more effective settlement is performed in which refugees have adequate facilities and opportunities for gaining their livelihood. Particularly, I believe

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that this may be an opportunity for avoiding some mistakes, such as establishing community facilities in places where refugees probably cannot earn a satisfactory living.

5. Some of the specific problems which have developed in resettlement are the following:

a. Construction of homes. Some of the province chiefs state that they cannot construct homes for 4,000 piastres, previously established as the cost per home. They say that adequate supplies of building materials are not readily available. I believe that a Mission housing technician should study this problem on the spot as soon as possible.

b. Mission standards. In some cases, the local officials are not adhering to Mission standards in the selection of sites and plans for construction of community facilities such as schools, dispensaries, wells, disposal facilities, etc. Therefore, it is necessary that the Commissioner General in Saigon issue instructions to Central Vietnam that Mission specified standards should be observed.

c. Privately owned land. In some areas near Quang Tri and Hue, the local officials plan to resettle farmers on privately owned abandoned land. In my meetings with government officials, I have emphasized that farmers should be resettled, if possible, on publicly owned land. However, some refugees have expressed a desire to be resettled near Hue or Quang Tri, sometimes near a church, where state owned land is not available. The province chiefs of Quang Tri and Hue have told me that they are trying to make satisfactory arrangements with the proprietors of the land. However, particularly in the area around Hue, I have the impression that the arrangements will be much more beneficial to the proprietors than to the refugees, and that refugees will bring the land back into cultivation and then be compelled to pay fairly high rent to the owners. I believe that someone from the Agriculture Division should examine this problem and make some recommendations which can be transmitted to the Government.

d. Reception Centers in Nha-Trang, Phan Rang, Phan Thiet. In many ways the three provinces in the southern part of Central Vietnam offer better opportunities for the resettlement of refugee farmers and fishermen than the provinces in the north. The climate is also more favorable. Therefore, government officials, particularly the Director of the Agricultural Service, are encouraging a transfer of refugees to these three provinces, where it is said that an abundant amount of rich, publicly-owned land is available.

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If this transfer of refugees takes place on a large scale, there will be a need for temporary reception centers at Nha-Trang, Phan Thiet, and Phan Rang until permanent homes are built. Schools will not be available there; tents will probably be needed. I shall try to send more information about plans for transfer of refugees to these three provinces.

WADymssa:impt
(Drafted but not
read by Mr. Dymssa)
cc: Mr. Everett
Mr. Falk
Mr. Schwartz

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