

100 Refugee Rel. Report

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BULLETIN #0

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To: STEN Staff

From: Refugee Affairs

Subject: Report of Meeting with Dr. Vien, Deputy to Mr. Dai, Commissar of Refugees.

Dr. Vien met with the Staff at 6:30, Thursday September 2, 1954, and discussed for approximately 1 and 1/2 hour Government plans for Re-settlement. Following is a summary of the salient points of his discussion:

1) Presently an attempt is being made to register all Refugees at Huiphong, or aboard ship, on the way South. It is hoped that from this registration at least preliminary attempts can be made to classify Refugees with respect to occupations and skills.

2) The Government has adopted the following criteria for the selection of sites and establishment of Refugee areas:

The land in the area must be Government owned, must have access to main roads or an access which can be built. It must be well-drained and must be classified as suitable for farming, small industries etc. It must also secure opportunity for satisfactory opportunities for making a living for a reasonable number of families, preferably an entire village group.

3) In addition to meeting the urge of a rapid influx of Refugees in Saigon, the Government is also concerned in evacuating Refugees from schools so that the schools can open September 30th.

4) The Government has determined to utilize the area in and around Bien Hoa for the establishment of initial resettlement areas. Already 5,000 Refugees have been moved to a smaller compound opposite the mental Hospital in Bien Hoa where they are held in Village groups. They then are escorted by the village priest to areas in which individual shelter tents have been erected. Adjacent to these tent-villages is adequate land to provide each family with one hectare. It is planned that the Refugees themselves will erect a permanent housing estimated to cost roughly 2,000 piastres per family. (The French Army has assumed responsibility for clearing, grading, providing accesses to roads, and installation of water and sanitation facilities.)

5) Dr. Vien indicated that the Government had decided on up-land areas rather than rice land because the ownership of rice land is still in question and Refugees placed on such land would, of necessity, be delayed in becoming self-supporting, at least until a new crop would be planted and harvested. Placing them on up-land areas, will permit them to plant and harvest a crop much sooner thus reducing the period of dependency. The up-land area also will provide

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some opportunity for refugees to use their own wood, particularly bamboo, used for housing. Dr. Vien indicated that the Government has available 86,000 hectares of public land which will provide roughly 1 hectare per each of 20,000 families. This means some opportunities for approximately 100,000 persons.

6) It is hoped that the refugees can make some of their own required tools as well as performing much of the construction work on their houses. Dr. Vien also indicated that, in so far as possible, all of the lumber required should be procured locally without adversely affecting the market (STRE should explore additional sources of lumber from Japan, Formosa and the Philippines as well as following up lumber ordered from the United States).

7) The responsibility for administration of the resettlement areas including setting up the villages, feeding the refugees, providing the security, will be shared jointly in the Siam Ban area by the Chief de Province and the Bishop.

8) Every effort will be made to utilize the same village leaders in the new villages as were in charge in the Ban.

9) Rice, fish and salt will be sent to Siam Ban for storage by train or LRT. Distribution of food-stuffs will be made to the village prior by the Chief de Province in consultation with the Bishop.

10) As of Wednesday night, no tents had been erected in spite of the fact 8,000 had been sent to the area. Indian shelter was provided by the French Army. Additional 6,000 refugees were scheduled to leave Saigon for the resettlement areas Thursday by Army trucks.

11) Dr. Vien indicated a great need for billboards, awnings, small tools such as axes, adzes, sawblades, hurricane lamps and malaria control items such as spray and mosquito nets.

The Acting Epistol Deputy pointed out to Dr. Vien that there appeared to be a need for establishing camps wherein the Mission populations could render effective aid to the Government. The Mission procedure in operations is to work through Ministries and material aid is made available on arrival to the Ministries as operating units of the Government. The allocation and use of such items are then the responsibility of Ministries with consensus and mutual participation of the Mission and the Government.

Since Mission Populations working with refugees have a continuing responsibility for their normal functions it appears that the best utilization of materials and services would be made if Dr. Vien is authorized to request various and sundry aids and services for refugees from the Ministries on a priority basis.