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Refugees
~~all reports~~
~~to be classified~~
~~Reading File~~
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Director of Mission
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In keeping with directions received, we submit a summary of notes of the meeting of December 2 between General Ely and Ambassador Collins and members of their respective staffs regarding the refugee program and program of land reform for Vietnam.

A. Refugee Program

It was agreed that the rate of implementation and permanent solution of problems of rehabilitation will require:

1) Decongestion in certain reception and relocation centers

The refugee population in certain of these areas is greater than can be permanently absorbed.

2) A unified national plan for rehabilitation

This requires continuation of the inventory of resettlement areas available including assessment of the needs and problems in each available area.

3) A firm government decision regarding the productive use of all available lands in the rehabilitation of refugees, displaced persons and discharged military personnel.

4) Financial requirements for subsistence and for rehabilitation.

This includes total or partial subsistence until the refugee family can by its own labor provide for its needs. It requires also financial assistance either by direct grant or credit for tools and equipment, work stock, supplementary farm animals, seed, fertilizer, housing, medical assistance, sanitation, communication, drainage and irrigation. Rehabilitation assistance for persons who are not cultivators, such as artisans, small business men, fishermen, and non-productive individuals.

5) Complete coordination of Vietnamese, U.S., and French efforts in providing aid of technical, financial and material nature.

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B. Land Reform

1) French Presentation

(a) Cited Ordinances promulgated in June, 1953, including recent studies, relating in particular to landlord-tenant relationships and maximum landholdings, explaining various reasons why legislation had not been applied, and then proposed,

(1) As first step, establishment within Ministry of Agriculture of necessary administrative organization to apply and enforce such program; and

(2) re-organization and expansion of national agricultural credit agency, including allocation of sufficient funds, to facilitate its cooperation and assistance in program of land transfers, establishment of cooperatives, and provision of short-term agricultural credit.

(b) Following recitation of time and effort required to institute overall program, plans were outlined to initiate broader plan in a series of "pilot" areas starting initially with area yet to be proposed of upwards of 10,000 hectares, fully publicizing the effort for its counter-propaganda value. Comment followed that it may be possible to utilize lands of French concessionaires as first pilot undertaking.

2) American Proposal

(a) Emergency requisition and lease by Government on behalf of owners of abandoned or idle agricultural lands on 3-year basis settling refugees, displaced farm families and veterans on such lands, including grant and credit assistance to tenant operators required to bring land back under cultivation, and employing scheme of ascending rental payments over 3-year period which will be held in trust for absentee owners.

(b) Revision of present landlord-tenant relationships Ordinance, including simplification and elimination of escalator clauses beneficial to owners, and aggressive program of enforcement.

(c) Progressive program of land re-distribution to family-sized farmers with emphasis on sale and distribution of Government-owned agricultural lands, recovery by Government of unused agricultural concessions for distribution, and continuing attention to revision of existing statutes and perfection of administration organisms which will insure enforcement.

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3) Coordination of Divergent Views

(a) Papers exchanged between American and French authorities, and agreement reached to continue conferences with view of developing an agreed common ground which will be presented to Vietnamese Government.

(b) French and American proposals not communicated Vietnamese Government.

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