

MINUTES OF THE VOLUNTARY AGENCIES COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
MEETING OF THURSDAY, 20 JANUARY 1955.

The meeting was called to order at 10:37 am. After presenting the members to the "new" member, Mrs. Rothwell Brown who is now representing the AWAS as Chairman of the Refugee Committee, the meeting started with report from Dr. Burckhardt who was reporting for M. Durand who was in Haiphong.

Dr. Burckhardt explained that M. Durand was observing the 3 transient camps there; that between them they accommodated about 16,000 refugees. No doubt that figure was actually much larger as a father or mother of a family had a way of reporting himself as the family, not giving number of children in his family, so that one person often turned up as 5 or 6, when they actually appeared for transport to Saigon.

Dr. Burckhardt further reported that; requests were still being made for warm clothing and vitamin B or "Bevitine" as it is locally called; while there were 3 dispensaries in 1 camp trouble might come from lack of adequate medical care; that there is a civilian hospital (400 beds) including special and general wards.

The trouble lay in the fact that in all of Haiphong there were presently only 10 Vietnamese doctors. Of these 5 are civilian and 5 are private doctors. All 10 of these will leave Haiphong soon, before the people. It was understood that the Vietnamese Government intends to ask French doctors to take over; General Cogy was willing to agree to this if asked but the General had not yet been asked.

All refugees are vaccinated for small-pox as this is the main disease there now. There is a little typhoid and German measles.

There are two small transit camps on the border. These are operating 24 hours a day and are controlled by the French. It is presumed that the doctor here picks out any noticeable patients, before they are allowed to continue on the weekly US. ship. In addition to this ship (to which may be added another soon) there are patrol boats which carry about 200 persons per boat. Those travelling on these boats escape medical inspection and care.

From the transit camp 50% leave as soon as they arrive but 50% wait for the rest of the family to gather before boarding ship. Usually it is the young men who run ahead as they can travel quickly and at night and thus evade the Minhs who are after them so as to prevent their leaving the north. The old people come on later as they travel more slowly and the Minhs are not interested in keeping them.

Food is a problem there now. When families reach Haiphong they are given "Nuc mam" and salt only. They must then go out and buy

food from their small funds which are all that remains from their evacuated farms. Dr. Burckhardt thought assistance in feeding in Haiphong might be helpful. As of last week - milk distribution had been started for these families.

It was estimated that there were from 10,000 to 15,000 Chinese ready to leave. Where there are reported to be 12,000 there are probably 50,000 actually waiting. Shelter is no real problem.

Dr. Burckhardt explained that the Communists are frightened of adverse public opinion - that is why they have only official opinion in their papers.

In reporting for UNICEF Dr. Burckhardt informed that their shipment of soap had been cancelled. When asked if the Australian Red Cross would be receiving the aforementioned food- the answer was "yes that he thought so".

Mr. Thelen told of the orphanage of Madame Ngai which USOM is assisting in evacuation to Saigon. Some of these children will be sent to trade schools in Saigon.

Mrs. Brown asked about the expandability of Saigon schools to include so many pupils from the North. Mr. Thelen explained that teachers are among the refugees and that resettlement schools are organizing as soon as they can in the new villages but that they are still slow with the schools.

Mr. Thelen informed that at present there are 500 refugees arriving by air-lift each day. Here also is the problem of a father of eight signing up for himself and then appearing at the plane with seven more than himself. The President's new land reform bill is expected to induce more refugees to come down.

Dr. Kellerman opened some discussion of tools for the farm people as recommended by his predecessor. Should they be purchased in Japan or locally seemed to be the question all agreed that tools were needed for the farmers, and they should be locally produced if possible.

Dr. Kellerman further reported that his CWS order of 5,000 articles of clothing and 10,000 yards of cotton cloth and 690 lbs. of Multi-vitamin pills were currently on order; that he would talk of his distribution plan later as he was currently talking this over with Dr. Japson; that there many displaced persons in Long My (where he had visited during the past week) that there were medical needs here as well as electrical equipment; that leadership is also greatly needed as since the Minhs were leaving there is now only the army for this and they have other things to do.

Mr. Thelen brought out the fact that mosquito netting is also needed in the south resettlement areas; that the past months have

revealed that improvement can't go too fast with farmers - for example a blacksmith can set up his old trade if he has the tools but with the farmer it is different.

It was reported that a refugee minister is now in Haiphong to help non-catholics and Buddhists, that emphasis is now on these; that USOM is going to integrate 1.1/2 million displaced persons first and the refugees after; that there is a plan to withdraw non-catholics from the present camps but they do not yet know where these families will be located. Mr. Thelen reported that the Land Reform bill was almost ready for public announcement; that this would come from the President.

Mr. Granada representing Dr. Japson and the Philippines medical mission explained that they had had the same problems in the Philippines - that they did not want to make the refugees stand out apart from displaced persons; that the Operation Brotherhood was planning a public health program just vitamin-pills forever; that in Philippines 3 years ago there was no FOA; that all this is a slow process they have learned to eat unpolished rice and other foods; that on 1 February the Government Dispensary would open in Cholon and by 8 February 3 teams would be ready for the Camau area.

Mr. Thelen added that the refugees were to be given unpolished rice, soy beans and peanuts. He also asked if Mr. Granada could find out if Operation Brotherhood had report to make concerning the experimental use of fish meal for mal-nutrition patients.

Mr. Granada further reported that they would soon have 10 teams, each consisting of 2 doctors and 1 nurse and 1 technical man to determine needs. These are being asked for from 52 countries; that they now have some basic knowledge of what they think will work here in Vietnam.

Mrs. Brown reported that her Refugee Committee had finished their projects; that they had received a gift of several cans of "Multi-Purpose-Food" and what they needed most now was a new major project; that they were expecting to assist the 150 refugee high school students who were still in the Opera House.

Mr. Thelen remarked that these had just been taken to another place and should be ready for assistance soon. He informed that there were 2 Belgium social workers who were to be used with these girls and that these should prove of great help in determining needs of this group, also that Mrs. Nixon who had just arrived from Washington would also be of help as she was to be assigned to women affairs and children and orphans in addition to her voluntary agencies liaison for USOM.

Mrs. Blake, representing the American National Red Cross, told of the recent distribution by Vietnamese Red Cross of American Junior Red Cross school chests and gift boxes which they were giving to orphans and poor schools in the Saigon-Cholon area. These were gifts of the ARC to assist this new Red Cross Society in developing their organization. It was explained that these had been given to the needy children of

Saigon-Cholon so that they could have a Tet present from Vietnamese Red Cross. It was anticipated that in the future, the school chests and blackboards, presently enroute from the US, would be presented to the newly organized schools among the refugee villages.

At 1215 pm the meeting adjourned with many remarks that this had been a very interesting and pleasant meeting.

Beth Blake  
Chairman.