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24 January 1955

Field Office
Refugees
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MEMORANDUM:

TO : Mr. Leland Barrows, Director of Mission

FROM : Herman J. Holiday, Chief, Community Development Division

SUBJECT : Report on Resettlement of Evacuees South of the Seventeenth Parallel

This report is the result of several visits to "settlements" of Refugees along the roads in the provinces South of Saigon. Its findings are based upon discussions with National and Provincial Social Welfare Officials, authorized Americans, and Vietnamese interested in a joint Government-Army program for National Action, members of the Philippine Voluntary Medical Teams and with the Evacuees themselves.

It is hoped that the following observations and recommendations will be useful to you in your plan to reorganize the Mission's approach to the problems here and that they will also be helpful in correcting a situation which is both politically and economically dangerous to "Free" Vietnam.

OBSERVATIONS:

1. It is noted that thousands of North Vietnam Evacuees have established large, horribly congested "settlements" along the sides of the roads in the provinces throughout South Vietnam and, except for cutting fire wood, there is little opportunity for such large numbers of people to make a living and they will, in time, be forced to shift for themselves as best they can.

Some officials, both local and foreign, call and consider these new "settlements", "Resettlement and Rehabilitation". This is true in spite of the fact the people have not been properly dispersed according to a unified approved operational plan and in selected resettlement areas where conditions offer gainful employment and rehabilitation.

Resettling Evacuees along the sides of the highways, if there is no other Government-owned land available, can be carried out successfully if a well-planned and coordinated program is established, village lay-out staked off, and technicians assigned full-time to the areas to assist the people in becoming resettled.

An example that people can properly be resettled and rehabilitated along sides of roads, if there is an approved co-

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ordinated plan, in force, is shown in the war-time resettlement villages such as "Tan-Phu-Trung" located on the Phnom Penh highway.

2. Only a few of the Evacuees were found to be registered and fully documented. Therefore, except from among the people themselves, little is known of their occupational skills, educational backgrounds, and political beliefs. Without this recorded information, the Communist Vietminh can infiltrate the resettlement areas and continue to stir up strife and unrest among all the people throughout South Vietnam. Also, in such a loosely conducted resettlement program maximum use cannot be made of the people's skills and education.

3. The several different Commissioners for Refugees have had in their own minds some sort of Resettlement Plan, but very little except the expenditure of millions of US dollars and billions of piasters, has been the result of these various plans.

4. The most astounding finding is that the Mission has supported and is supporting a Refugee Program for which there is no approved detailed plan of operation, nor any real conditions established which will allow the Vietnam Government to know what

is expected of it. Local and American Refugee officials are allowed to do as they please about resettlement and rehabilitation for the Evacuees, only because there are no established measures by which they can be judged and held accountable.

5. The continued emphasis placed upon the "care" of approximately 450,000 Evacuees has become very costly to the American taxpayers and is found to be out of proportion with what is being accomplished, in comparison with that which can ultimately be achieved for the money and with what is needed to save "Free" Vietnam.

If it is true, that ninety percent of the Evacuees are members of the Catholic faith, then there is no real need for us to worry about Communist infiltration. There is, however, a great need to be concerned about resettling these people in areas where they can become employed, become productive, self-sufficient, well-fed, happy and satisfied.

6. The most disturbing finding was, there is great emphasis placed upon and financial assistance given to the political Evacuees from the North, but little or nothing being done to help resettle and rehabilitate the more than one million Displaced Persons and Refugees who have always lived south of the Seventeenth Parallel, large numbers of whom do not have Catholic leadership and who are more susceptible to Communist propaganda.

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Little has been done to place idle people on idle land which, if put under cultivation, would help the government.

No assistance, under the present program, has been given to poor villagers in the South who have for the past eight years lived on the fringe of insecure areas. They are in need of self-help-aid which will allow them to become involved in their own problems, and help them to improve their standard of living.

It is quite necessary that "Free" Vietnam be assisted to reach all of its victims of war and needy people if the government is to become popular and win over the Communists in the northern part of the State.

7. In addition to the absence of a coordinated Mission and Government plan of operation for the resettlement of Evacuees, it was discovered that the Government is not fully utilizing its human resources when spending large sums of money given to it by American citizens.

It's most discouraging to see able-bodied adults squatting along the sides of roads when there is so much which needs to be done at once to save "Free" Vietnam and to which the Evacuees, Displaced Persons, Refugees, and village people could contribute in personal labor.

8. Evacuees say many local and foreign officials, in separate groups visit their congested areas, but only the Philippine Medical Teams spend any time with them daily. They look to their clergymen for general guidance. It is obvious that there is very little technical guidance given when one observes the congested fashion in which the Evacuees have been allowed to construct their bamboo and grass huts along the highways. Of course, there could not have been, nor can there ever be, meaningful utilization of technical knowledge until an operational plan is established by the technicians of the Government and the Mission; and implemented by them with the use of the manpower found among the Evacuees.

9. The number of Evacuees "rushing" south have, in recent months, been reduced to a few thousands. Notwithstanding this fact, the Mission Refugee "Experts" and the local officials in charge of "care" for the Evacuees, continue to place great importance on this activity for which there is no official approved operational plan.

It has been found that continued emphasis on a few hundred thousand Evacuees is not the concept of sincere individuals who wish to see improvement in the lives of all Vietnamese in the South and the maximum development of the country before it's too late.

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10. Several Voluntary Agencies are interested in assisting the Government of Vietnam to establish meaningful permanent resettlement schemes. Some of these Agencies will provide full-time personnel to live and work with the people being resettled at the village level.

Voluntary Agencies have had more than fifty years technical assistance experience. Last year while in the States on consultation the Indo-China Branch of the Foreign Operations Administration sent me to New York to reveal to such agencies' representatives what aid their organizations might give to the Refugees, Displaced Persons and poor village people of Vietnam. Now that several of these agencies have sent missions to Saigon, they should be fully utilized in the resettlement and rehabilitation program.

Where our Refugee "Experts" and local Refugee officials require large sums of money for such programs, you will find that these Agencies will do a better job of resettlement and rehabilitation with less money, because they, with cooperation, will stimulate the people to become involved in their own improvement, by living day and night with the people, which is something the Mission has yet to get the local officials to do.

It is apparent that it is time that the Mission limit its assistance to any "program" which serves less than a half a million people, and focus its collective attention on all problems, in selective areas which have the greatest possibility of helping to save what is now left of Vietnam for the non-Communist world.

If the Technical and Economic Mission to Vietnam is hopeful in helping save "Free" Vietnam, it must get its technicians actively busy along side the Vietnamese with all the problems in all areas South of Quang Tri.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. For the future security of "Free" Vietnam, all Evacuees should be registered. The registration should give a complete history of the Evacuees, their families, and members of their families, left behind in North Vietnam. Copies of this documentary information should be centrally filed for the Government's use, or for the use of any foreign military intelligence group who may have to be active in Vietnam at a later date. Complete screening and documentation of the Evacuees will also permit proper occupational selection for permanent resettlement, etc.

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2. An approved plan of operation should be established at once which would allow the resettlement and rehabilitation of Evacuees in given areas and on government-owned or confiscated land which offers gainful employment and rehabilitation.
3. Maximum use of the manpower available among the Evacuees should be utilized for the best interests of the country.
4. An operational plan of action spelled out in detail should be worked out by the technicians of the government and the Mission and approved before further commitment of American taxpayers' dollars is made available to support the Evacuee "program".

The plan agreed upon should state clearly what is expected of the local government and under what condition the Mission will assist such a plan.

5. The undue emphasis now placed upon a "program" which is designed to reach a few people should be reduced, and more attention should be directed towards needs of all the people, which will help make South Vietnam secure and free of Communism.
6. The local Government should be advised or instructed to make full use of all of its natural and human resources if it expects continued Mission support to resettle its Evacuees from the North.

All of the able-bodied people should be put to work on work projects of public benefit to their community and to their country.

7. The local Government should be requested to organize Village Rehabilitation Teams which will live and work with the Evacuees being resettled. Members of these teams should be trained to know what self-help-aid is available to Evacuees and to village people who have been inspired to improve their lot.

Technical aid should be made available upon request of village people once there is a trained leader working among them and they have been stimulated to do something about improving their own standard of living.

8. The local government should be requested to note the fact that the "rush" south of North Vietnamese is not what it was six months ago and emphasis should now be placed on activities which will help save what is left

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of the country from Communism. The only kind of program activities which can possibly help to accomplish this objective must be designed to reach at least 13,000,000 people, not just 400,000.

9. The local Government should be made to understand that the Mission will not support any plan of operation which is not worked out in conjunction with the Mission's technical personnel.
10. Every effort should be made to fully utilize the Voluntary Agencies now in Vietnam in the resettlement and rehabilitation program for Evacuees, if for nothing more than to reduce the amount of money which it is now costing American citizens, to support the "care" of a few hundred thousand people.
11. Mission Refugee "Experts" attention is directed to the US-supported voluntary labor programs in Greece. These voluntary labor programs proved to be most helpful in stemming the tide of Communism in Greece. If wisely and properly applied by sincere personnel to the local programs for Evacuees, Refugees, and Displaced Persons as well as to activities to improve and develop conditions, in general, such a program might prove helpful in turning the tide in Vietnam.

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