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September 20, 1979

Mr. Ogden Williams  
4621 Q Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Oggie:

Thanks so very much for your note enclosing a copy of the letter to Mike Oliver. I only had one phone call with him, initiated by his interest in my article of which you may have heard on the possibility of New Caledonia. Attached is the full text of the article as it appeared in the JAPAN TIMES. I hope it would be of some interest. Meanwhile, I understand and sympathize entirely with your comments with respect to New Hebrides. Thanks very much for your note and for your indefatigable efforts on behalf of our good friends.

Sincerely yours,

  
W.E. Colby

WEC:pdk

JUN 28 1979

Japan Times

# 'Indochinese Island' — Solution for the Refugees

By WILLIAM E. COLBY

Special to The Japan Times  
Colby, a former director of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, now practices law in Washington, D.C. In his year-old capacity as the U.S.-based lawyer-adviser for Tokyo's Center for Political Public Relations, he has contributed the following article exclusively for the readers of The Japan Times on the eve of the Tokyo Summit. — Editor

The refugee flow out of Indochina is becoming torrent. Over 300,000 have been resettled outside of Southeast Asia, about 200,000 in the United States, the remainder in France, Australia and other nations. The camps of Southeast Asia, primarily in Malaysia and Thailand, now number well over 300,000 more, and new arrivals are being forced back over the Cambodian border at gunpoint or pushed out to sea from Malaysia. Some 300,000 ethnic Chinese have been pushed from Vietnam into China and some of these are continuing on into Hong Kong.

The nations of Southeast Asia have struggled manfully with the problem, but it is plainly becoming beyond them. They all have sensitive ethnic balances in their own countries and their expenditures for refugees are questioned by their own poor. They perceive a world tendency to ignore faraway Southeast Asia and leave these problems associated with the agonies of the last decades there to the people of the region.

Potential nations for resettlement are concerned at what obligations they will be undertaking and what problems they might be creating by receiving

additional refugees for permanent immigration, despite the spectacular success of the Vietnamese integration into the United States and France. International conferences on the subject break into recriminations and name calling, much of it well deserved but of very little value. A call has been issued for another conference in July, and the preliminary reverberations offer no very positive hope of a better climate.

Apportioning blame is subject to charges of hypocrisy and counter-charges of guilt. The current thought is to press the new Vietnamese authorities to abandon their program of expelling unwanted Chinese ethnics from their nation. But this is unlikely to be effective nor to solve the problem of the other refugees who merely decide in desperation that the new regime in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos is intolerable and worth the risk to escape. We can hardly urge the new authorities in Indochina to build a Berlin Wall around their territories to keep their people in.

There is another solution. It stems from the characteristics of the individuals, a high proportion of educated and elite Vietnamese, the traditional energy and efficiency of ethnic Chinese, and familiarity with tropical agricultural development among the Cambodians and even the ethnic and tribal Lao. A common heritage of French colonial rule provides a tenuous bond and, indeed, some cultural and linguistic vestiges of unity.

These factors together sug-

gest the possibility of organizing a new community of these peoples so that their natural talents can again enable them to work effectively to produce their own livelihoods and to contribute to world trade. The models of the successful development of Singapore and Hong Kong, the examples of a continental elite sent to a small exile area (Israel and Taiwan) and major power assistance to the process as a moral charge and in preference to greater problems — all suggest the potential of an "Indochinese Singapore."

A first question is where? We have already seen the problems — and the limits — of trying to absorb these peoples into Southeast Asia or to resettle them farther afield. But one alternative does exist: New Caledonia. This island, off Australia, lies in the same tropic climate as Indochina, and is no farther from European and American markets than Hong Kong or Singapore. Its 22,000 sq. km today hold a population of only 140,000 and it is only partially developed. Indeed, many Vietnamese already reside there, brought to work in the plantations many decades ago. The island is an overseas territory of France, the former colonial power in Indochina, and it has been a quiet and comfortable South Pacific tropical backwater these many years.

A development corporation, comparable to the Suez and Panama companies, with stock initially held by the governments of the United States, Japan and other nations concerned with the problem or the

history of Indochina, could assemble the capital for a major development program to produce an Indochinese version of Singapore on New Caledonia. French sovereignty could be respected and the French contribution be one of facilitating the governmental and administrative aspects of the operation. The corporation could be capitalized initially by government funds to organize transportation facilities for people and goods, necessary welfare programs in the shorter term and the tools for agricultural and light industry development.

This corporation, however, should also open specific projects to private investment, encouraged, guaranteed and assisted by the sponsoring governments. One of the arrangements should be a guarantee of general system of preference (GSP) tariff rates for products of the area, and similar incentives to private investment. And, of course, a maximum effort should be made to engage the interest and support of world financing organizations such as the Asian Development Bank.

This is no proposal to deposit the problem of the refugees on a faraway Pacific island where they can be forgotten. It offers instead the potential for a substantial economic development and the probability that New Caledonia would, in a very few years, produce a considerable trade surplus. The refugees would be able to maintain their religious, cultural and national traditions rather than suffering the shock of integration into distant and different societies.

The project is also in the positive interest of the French and the indigenous population of New Caledonia, as their area can become a bright light of development and progress for the Pacific. And it would offer another contrast between the potential for progress for individuals in free societies and their desperate actions to escape the new regimes in Indochina.