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Even the 79 million dollars for "refugee relief and social welfare" help General Thieu maintain his hold on the people. Some are kept in "permanent resettlement camps," like this one.

SLIDE

SOURCE: U.S. Agency for International Development, April 1973. An official in the Public Services Branch of AID told NARMIC that this photograph showed a permanent resettlement camp in South Vietnam.

TEXT

\$79,445,000 is budgeted for "Refugee Relief and Social Welfare" in the AID 1974 Program Presentation, p. 48. Its purposes are broad:

Assistance includes transportation home or to the resettlement site, provision of temporary shelter until homes can be constructed, house reconstruction allowance, assistance to clear the land and prepare it for planting, food allowances until the first harvest, and allowances for agricultural equipment and miscellaneous household needs.... Also the Government of Vietnam, assisted by AID, will ensure that each new community will have the necessary water supply, sanitation facilities, classrooms, dispensaries, markets...

\$20 million of the \$79 million for Fiscal Year 1974 is marked specifically "to resettle 100,000 refugees on new land." (Ibid., p. 49)

The political and military nature of "humanitarian" aid is most clearly and cruelly apparent in the case of aid to refugees. Wells Klein of the Kennedy Study Mission to South Vietnam reported to the Senate Subcommittee on Refugees:

our whole approach to dealing with the refugee problem in Vietnam has been to view the solution to this problem as part of a broader political and paramilitary program to rout out Viet Cong infrastructure, to win the hearts and minds of the population and to pacify the countryside. Refugee care and assistance was not fundamentally considered a humanitarian obligation apart from the general cause of denying them to the enemy.

Klein believes that the aid program must be reevaluated in light of the Peace Agreement through which the U.S. is "publicly committed to a political reconciliation between North and South.... We have passed a watershed and we must cut the Gordian knot that ties humanitarian assistance to Vietnamese political and military objectives--objectives which are theoretically no longer those of the United States." (Hearings on War Victims in South Vietnam, 1973, p. 27; see notes 43-44)

Saigon and the U.S. cannot afford to keep hundreds of thousands of people on the welfare rolls forever. According to the Kennedy Study Mission to South Vietnam, there were 659,600 officially acknowledged refugees in temporary

sites, and several hundred thousand more in "out of camp" situations as of March 1973. (Ibid., p. 8) To lower the numbers of officially registered refugees who receive welfare benefits from the state, Saigon is "upgrading" the once-temporary refugee camps into permanent settlements. The Kennedy Study Mission described a few of these now-permanent homes:

Several examples may serve to illustrate the problem of camp inadequacy and deterioration. The first is the three Phu Tai camps located outside Qui Nhon. During the military activities that accompanied the offensive last year some 135,000 refugees were placed in this abandoned military installation, occupying what was left of the barracks and spilling over into army tents and makeshift housing. Phu Tai was to be an emergency, temporary reception center. Food was quickly, and it seems, efficiently distributed, and has continued since. But the temporary quarters have now been occupied for well over a year, and the result is disaster. Many of the refugees still live in tents which are now rotted and torn, others occupy tiny, shoulder high shacks made from discarded ammunition cases, and other debris of war. The overcrowding is alarming, not only within each living space, but also between "units". In some areas the "units" were ten or twenty deep with no streets or alley ways to say nothing of fire lanes, between them. Fire is a constant danger; hundreds if not thousands could or would die if a conflagration started. The whole complex is nothing but kindling wood. And fire is not idle speculation. Camp Baxter in Da Nang recently had a serious fire in which large numbers of refugees were killed or injured.

The Phu Tai complex is so bad that it was a particular focus of the AID/Washington evaluations and of the subsequent impact teams. But they missed the major consideration. Phu Tai was conceived as a temporary camp. It has become permanent. "Up-grading" was ordered, but when we visited five months later lumber for new housing had yet to arrive. Due to either bureaucratic ineptitude or outright corruption the lumber had been either mis-directed or sold for private gain. We heard both stories and both are plausible. In any case, Phu Tai is as it was, and getting worse...

An Loi, the much touted showpiece camp is a different situation. Within a short driving distance of Saigon, An Loi received extensive assistance from the voluntary agencies, and the foreign community, as well as from AID and the Vietnamese Government. There is an effective feeding program and an excellent dispensary, yet the living conditions at An Loi are miserable and it reportedly has the highest per capita death rate of any refugee camp in Vietnam.

I first saw the An Loi camp in August of last year. Despite "up-grading" An Loi was as bad this March as seven months earlier. It was the same syndrome of some pre-existing structures but primarily rotting and torn army tents. No new housing construction has been started until the week before we arrived. ...

Many of the An Loi refugees are Montagnards. One has the clear impression that they are disintegrating as a people in prolonged refugee status. Many are dying from no apparent cause. Their special plight is so grave that it moved one U.S. refugee official to say that "it would be better to resettle them in their villages in Viet Cong areas and pay the VC to help them than to let them stay here any longer."

(Hearings on War Victims in South Vietnam, 1973, pp. 35-6)

Where "resettlement" does involve moving people to new sites, the situation is often no better. According to Hatcher J. James, Jr., director of resettlement and reconstruction in South Vietnam's Second Military Region, some "resettlers" are "moving to sites with worse conditions than they had in the refugee camps." (Jacques Leslie, "Haste in Resettling Refugees Creates New Chaos in S. Vietnam," Philadelphia Inquirer, 8/21/73, p. 5A. See Note 115)

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Others are being forced to move into new regions where Saigon wants to expand its control.

SLIDE

SOURCE: New York Times, Graphics by NARMIC

TEXT

There have been at least three different kinds of resettlement of refugees reported underway in Saigon-controlled areas since the Peace Agreement was signed. Each type of resettlement involves a political strategy.

Moving Refugees Into Areas Saigon Hopes to Control

The political and military function of moving people into outlying areas was explained frankly in a New York Times story:

SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 2—The Saigon Government is greatly expanding its territorial control by moving tens of thousands of refugees into vast stretches of no man's land where the Vietcong have roamed freely for years...

But with the political struggle starting to take shape, President Nguyen Van Thieu has dramatically accelerated the project, apparently in an effort to lay definite claim to as much territory as possible before clear lines of control are drawn...

American officials are solidly behind the resettlement program...

While the political ramifications of Saigon's resettlement and frontier projects are obvious, South Vietnamese and American officials prefer to emphasize the economic and humanitarian aspects...

Civilians, Dr. Dan said, are not like soldiers. Sometimes, he said, soldiers in outposts on the edge of the jungle are attacked and run away.

"But a man who's brought his family, built a house and is working the land is not going to quit that easily," Dr. Dan said.

("Saigon Is Moving Refugees to Get Broader Control," New York Times, 7/5/73, p. 1)



"American soldiers help unload refugees from a truck in Phu Yen province." /pre-ceasefire/ US AID PHOTO

Such population transfers are planned on a very large scale, as was reported soon after the ceasefire.

SAIGON, South Vietnam, March 21 — The Government has begun moving the first of a planned total of 100,000 refugees from the northernmost provinces to unsettled land near Saigon, more than 300 miles away, a ranking South Vietnamese official reported yesterday.

Dr. Phan Quang Dan, Minister of State in charge of refugees, who made the report, said that the plan was part of an ambitious program to resettle permanently as many as possible of the 660,000 refugees in camps around South Vietnam.

The people to be moved south originally lived in areas of Quang Tri, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai Provinces occupied by the Communists during their offensive last year and are therefore considered by the Government to be unacceptable for resettlement....

"Shouldn't these people have the option of being allowed to go back to their original villages even if they are occupied by the Communists?" asked Jerry Tinker, a staff aide to Senator Edward M. Kennedy's Senate Subcommittee on Refugees. Mr. Tinker and three other subcommittee aides have been making a tour of refugee camps.

"It is also apparent that Dr.

Dan is putting pressure on the refugees to get out of the camps, but how much pressure constitutes force?" Mr. Tinker asked....

Whether or not the 100,000 refugees from the northern provinces are finally resettled near Saigon, there are 60,000 already in camps around the capital for whom there seems little prospect of starting new lives.

These are the rubber-plantation workers and Montagnard tribesmen who lived around An Loc before the fighting there last year. Since they were not farmers, they have resisted the idea of clearing the scrub jungle for farms, and they have remained in the squalid camps. There is no plan for resettling them.

("Saigon Is Starting to Resettle 100,000 Refugees Far From Home," New York Times, 3/22/73, p. 12)

Removing People From PRG Areas

Moving people out of areas controlled by the PRG has the obvious political purpose of "denying population to the Viet Cong," as explained in this New York Times article:

SAIGON, South Vietnam, July 31—Since the cease-fire began in January the Saigon Government has forcibly moved thousands of Mekong Delta peasants out of areas frequented by the Vietcong.

The primary objective of the resettlement, which American officials say they have strongly opposed, has been to deny population to the Vietcong as the possibility of a political settlement and eventual national elections appeared on the distant horizon....

The Americans say that originally 30,000 peasants were told they had to move from "contested areas" where they had lived for years to locations closer to Government military positions.

Nearly half the people refused, according to the Americans, and many of those who acquiesced when confronted by armed soldiers have quietly made their way back to their old homes....

The Vietnamese officials charged with carrying out the

forced resettlement were often slipshod in their work, but there were instances where they went to extremes to see that the general's instructions were followed.

Houses Were Burned

For example, when some of the people slipped back to their old land in Vinh Long Province troops burned their houses.

In Chuong Thien, the Americans say, a province where as much as 70 per cent of the territory is believed to be con-

trolled by the Communists, the resettlement program was regarded as something of a joke.

"When the ARVN went out and told the people they needed to resettle, many of the people immediately went back further into the VC area," one of the Americans recalled.

"Others just said they would not move. Some others moved into town, and now they go back and work the fields during the day. The VC can talk to them out there any time they want."

("Saigon Is Forcibly Moving Thousands in Delta Region," New York Times, 8/1/73 p. 3)

Moving Refugees to Other Camps

Even the third type of resettlement, forcing people to move from one Saigon-controlled camp to another Saigon-controlled camp, has a political goal. "The sovereignty of the entire province was involved," according to an unnamed American official, commenting on the following operation:

SAIGON, South Vietnam. March 23—The Saigon Government has moved several thousand people in the Central Highlands, against their will in many cases and despite strong protests from American officials.

About half of the 7,500 people, mainly hill tribesmen, were shifted from refugee camps in Pleiku Province to larger camp in neighboring Kontum province where there has been an outbreak of typhoid. The water is contaminated and in extremely short supply and there are neither tents nor houses to shelter all....

American officials say that the refugees were moved for political reasons. Lieut. Col Buu Hap, the province chief of Kontum and the man who directed the move, said in an interview yesterday that he wanted the people back in their home province to facili-

tate hamlet and village elections, which he said would be held some time in April.

Another reason was so the people could begin cultivating their rice fields before the end of the planting season late next month, the colonel said.

He acknowledged, however, that for a great many people crowded into the former American Army base known as "Mary Lou," there was no land to work....

With the latest arrivals, there are nearly 17,000 living in Mary Lou, a fenced-in section of dusty, barren rolling plains that lie just south of Kontum city. Many of the first to arrive at Mary Lou last October are still living in tattered army tents. There are also rows of wooden one-room houses with tin roofs. There had been about 24 people to a house; now there are 40 in some.

("Saigon's Transfer of Refugees Is Protested," New York Times, 3/24/73, p.2; emphasis added)

American involvement

Forced movement of population for political gain is not new in Vietnam; nor is the American adviser's stance of disapproval. After all, Article 49 of the Geneva Conventions makes "individual or mass forcible transfers" of civilians a war crime.

A foreign service officer working on the pacification program in Vietnam wrote to Congressman Les Aspin about a mass transfer program in 1972, giving a memorandum and chronology of events (Congressional Record, 2/9/72, pp. H 1027-30). Aspin pointed out that "the documents indicate that the movement surely will not be voluntary. Surveys among the local population, conducted by the Agency for International Development itself, indicate that the vast majority of the peasants are opposed to moving 450 miles." The foreign service officer's letter suggests how persistent the transfer idea has been, and how certain U.S. responsibility is for it:

Proposals for moving people out of I Corps have a long history. I saw memos in Vietnam indicating that back in 1968 the Americans and the South Vietnamese wanted to move up to 200,000 refugees out of I Corps. Only a year ago, the Director of the War Victims Directorate in Saigon, Mr. Franklin Stewart, announced that 200,000 to 400,000 refugees would be relocated, although plans had to be shelved because of premature publicity and the resulting outcry.

While plans were kept under cover for a while after that publicity, I saw the old proposals being revived during the summer of 1971 even after the American government denied that any moves were being planned. Sure enough, now I see that since the first of the year, 1,500 people have been moved in what probably will be a much larger relocation in the future.

As evidence of larger shifts intended, Dr. Phan Quan Dan, the Vietnamese minister in charge of the program, confirmed to me shortly before I left Vietnam that he hoped to move 330,000 people by the end of this year from Quang Tri, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai provinces in the northernmost region of South Vietnam.

I suspect the American government is doing this because it is a very costly program. I personally know of several American officials who are working with the Vietnamese on resettlement sites with the Vietnamese, and know of the deep American involvement in the move. Moreover, it is the American government which is supplying the airplanes for the move and which is paying for it as well.

(Congressional Record, op cit., emphasis added)

American airplanes will be used to transfer 300,000 people 450 miles away from their native villages. The above document notes: "George Jacobson, Acting Deputy for CORDS, who was now made aware of the plan, suggested the possible use of airplanes." George Jacobson is now head of the organization which replaced CORDS after the ceasefire; his title is Special Assistant to the Ambassador for Field Operations (SAAFO; see Note 104).

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There they remain dependent on U.S. handouts instead of being allowed to farm their own fields.

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SLIDE

SOURCE: U.S. Army Photo CC-67955 CAPTION: VIETNAM - CORDS ACTIVITIES
The Philippine advisor hands our CARE packages at Cu Thanh/Cam Lam. The packages contain small tools, sewing machines, games and writing books. 26-29 May 1970 Photo by SP4 Joel M. Shanus USA Sp Photo Det, Pac UNCLASSIFIED BY USAPA, 16 July 70

TEXT

"The cost of food alone for people in refugee camps, American officials say, is \$4 million a month, almost all of which is paid by the United States." (New York Times, 3/22/73, p. 12)

Corruption

While the camps are funded by the U.S., they are operated by Saigon government officials, and the pervasiveness of reported corruption would suggest that

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I suspect the American government is also aware of the plans for the future and that it is not only aware of the plans but is also aware of the fact that the American government is supplying the airplanes for the move and which is paying for it as well.

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