

First Draft
March 13, 1956

TO: Commissioner for Refugees
FROM: Walter W. Mode
SUBJECT: Review of August 6, 1955, Report Concerning Proposed Reorganization of the Commissariat for Refugees

In the study of the central office of the Commissariat for Refugees, it was proposed that some time after six months, the Michigan State University team would review the recommendations which were made to the Commission. Inasmuch as that six months has expired, we undertook to review the suggestions which were made in an attempt to examine which of our recommendations had further acceptance in actual practice. This study has taken place during the latter part of February and the first of March, 1956, through a series of interviews with the Commission's personnel. We should hereby like to report our findings by first listing the recommendation, then our observation and comment.

In looking at the report, three basic principles were initiated. Following that, other suggestions on organization were made. After that, supplementary procedural suggestions were given. We shall take them up in that order.

Separation of Line and Staff

It appears that the Refugee Commission has made a sincere attempt to place most of the suggestions which were made in our August 6 report into effect. However, generally speaking, the attempt to follow the suggestions has been hampered either by the magnitude of the job which the Commission had to do or the inability to accomplish all of the suggestions within the brief space of time. It appears that any major reorganization such as that proposed in our two reports would of necessity require more than a six-month period.

Notwithstanding this general observation, it does appear that more could have been done in streamlining the organization if additional effort had been put into the job. This is not meant to be critical because only the Commission is in a position to determine priorities of action. We do believe, however, that had the Commission extended effort in remolding its organization to fit the second phase of the refugee problem, its current organizational difficulties would have been much less.

In way of explanation, we have observed that the job of the Refugee Commission will of necessity go through three or four phases. We considered the first phase the movement of refugees from the north to the south and getting them placed in some location. We term this "resettlement." The second phase, and the one for which we designed proposed reorganization, was that of rehabilitating large groups or villages of refugees. We have termed this "group rehabilitation." We have not suggested organization for a third and inevitable phase; namely, of individual rehabilitation into the community and economic life. Undoubtedly this phase will be for a later time, and in all probability, must be taken over by existing ministries.

Of course there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between any one of these phases. For instance, at the present time, the first phase is still continuing in the Cai San Project in which large groups of people are taken from one place and resettled in Cai San. We clearly differentiate this project from the larger one of group rehabilitation through the project method proposed by U.S.O.M. We have stated this general observation as a preface to the basic principles because it is essential to understand this over-all series of events in order to place in perspective the proposed organization and its problems.

Getting back to the first suggestion, of separation of line and staff, we find that in the Director of Resettlement, which includes the unit concerned with execution of approved sub-projects, has been reorganized along functional lines rather than a mixture of functional and geographic criteria. This revision or reorganization appears to be a direct result of our recommendations, and we observe that it is an improvement. However, the directorate still contains a small personnel office which thus contains an inter-mixture of line and staff activities. Our observation and suggestion is that further consideration be given, and continued effort be made in reorganizing so that this inter-mixture of line and staff activities be separated.

Mixed Program and Administrative Operations

We find that historically, administrative operations are included within the program itself. The general core to the operating organization consists of two major functions: plan and execution. We find in both of these major program operations certain administrative services which are confused with the direct operating programs. For instance, we still find payroll operations intermingled with the payment of expenses for the refugee program itself. It also appears that in an effort to follow the suggestions made, one of the sub-units of the directorate of resettlement was taken from that directorate and supposedly brought to directorate status. It is quite obvious that an attempt was made to follow the recommendations, but the actual responsibility placed in the planning unit was never really coordinated through the use of technicians and manpower so that both the plans and the execution of the plans could be made by a coordinated working team. This must be realistically faced in order that a more smooth-running operation can be made.

Need for Decentralization

On paper and in conversation, lip service is given to decentralization; and we believe a sincere attempt has been made to follow the suggestions. The myriad of problems inherent in any shift of this nature has caused extreme delays. Therefore, even though we see an attempt at decentralization, we believe that bold administrative steps are necessary by the Commissioner or by the President in order that the job can be done. If this decision is not made timely, the refugees are the ones who will suffer. We would recommend immediate action in the appointment of responsible officials even if it takes the key administrative personnel from the central office in order that the field organization can be established and become a working force in the Refugee Commission. The MSU Field Administration staff will continue to stand ready to assist in whatever way it can to see this step become a reality. This one factor above all others should establish the refugees on a self-sufficiency basis in a brief period of time if properly carried through.

SECONDARY SUGGESTIONS

1. Two Sections of Rehabilitation. Our earlier comments suggested that this has been done in the organization but that there was a disproportionate emphasis at the present time.
2. Four Directorates. This seems to have been accomplished on paper, but there still contains a certain amount of inter-mixture as commented earlier.
3. Inspector-General. Suggestion carried out.
4. Absorption of Commissariat Regional Délégués into Proposed Field Offices. We have been told that this is being proposed but as yet has not been completed.

5. Contacts with Provincial Services. We believe the initial contacts with the provincial chiefs through the office of the Commissioner General was initiated in a meeting on _____ at which time the entire proposed reorganization was discussed. We further understand that the instructions have gone to the field, advising them of their relationships with the provincial chiefs.

6. Flexibility of Field Staff. Although we are not able to review the actual field staffs in operation, we gathered that the field organization will vary in accordance with the needs. Further comment on this matter will be given in our six-month's review on the proposals for field organization.

SUPPLEMENTARY PROCEDURAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Establishment of Commission Goals. If the Commission had established operating goals, they were not in evidence during our review. It is suggested that further effort be made in this direction and that they be put in writing so that the entire Refugee Commission staff will understand and know these goals and the schedule of operation.

2. Spirit of Project Achievement. As an administrative device, we think much more could be done by the Refugee Commission in establishing project newsletters, visual displays and other techniques so that greater esprit de corps can be achieved. It is encouraging that the Refugee Commission has gone beyond the letter of recommendations and strengthened the administrative service by creating a small unit for documentation and study. This office serves as a central depository for official documents such as decrees, administrative decisions, and the texts of approved sub-projects. It also interchanges documents with interested national ministries. Another encouraging

sign is the centralizing of all mimeograph services for the Refugee Commission in the administrative services.

3. Project Schedules. An attempt was made to schedule projects so as to eliminate backlogs and pile-up of projects. We believe, however, that much more can be done by using a routing schedule sheet on which dates of action will be entered by each official as the project moves along the road to completion. From our conversations it was learned that the Commission was going to establish in its field organization and enforce its rule so that the completion of the project would be made within a definite period of time. We believe this is essential.

4. Emphasis on Field Work. Our earlier comments covered this suggestion and further review will be made at the time we study the recommendations made for the field organization of the Refugee Commission.

Our review of the August 6 report has been made in an effort to assist the Refugee Commission in its work. It is hoped that wherever we have been critical we have offered suggestions for improvement; wherever we have been complimentary we have given praise where it is due. Our general observation, if we were asked to make a summary rests in this fact: When we first reviewed the organization, there were approximately 1100 employees, most of this is Saigon; at the present time, there are approximately 850 employees, and many of those are actually in the field. If we were looking for perfection, we of course should like to have had all of the suggestions perfectly implemented. We do feel, however, that because of the tremendous problems which the Refugee Commission has been forced to face, they have done a very commendable job in improving the organization. It is our sincere hope that they will continue to make progress at an increased rate of speed so that in the end, the human beings now known as refugees can in the very near future drop that title and become ordinary citizens of Free Vietnam.

From a review of the personnel figures (see attached charts), the Commission has made a sincere attempt to move its employees from Saigon into the field. This appears to be especially true in the health section.

In discussing the personnel problems with the Commissioner of Refugees, he advised that requests had been made through the President to receive additional technical assistance. The Commissioner made a request on _____ for 61 technical persons to be loaned for an emergency period. Recently, he made a similar request. If his request for technical assistance on a loan basis could be put into effect, it would greatly assist and speed the work of rehabilitating the refugees. The Commissioner was also asked to give specific illustrations of the type of personnel which he should like to have. He supplied as illustration the following names and departments for which they worked: _____. Obtaining this technical help seems to us to be a critical matter. We recommend that top priority be given to providing such services through the regular departments on a loan basis.

We should like to urge continued effort by the Refugee Commission to place more emphasis on implementing the suggestions which were made. We should also like to compliment the Refugee Commission for its past effort. Considering the problems which it has been forced to face, it can take courage in facing the current problems in an effort to improve the organization. It is our hope that the Refugee Commission will continue to make progress at an increased rate of speed so that the people now known as refugees can soon become ordinary citizens of Vietnam.