

Assessment of Geneva Conference
Southeast Asian Resource Action Center : July 24, 1979

1. ASSESSMENT OF GENEVA CONFERENCE

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Q: How do you feel about the conference last week in Geneva on refugees?

A: Clearly, in terms of meeting immediate problems, the conference was a success. But I would point out that more remains to be done in the long process of finding durable solutions to the tragic humanitarian and security problems stemming from the situation in Indochina.

— The key questions still unresolved are whether Vietnam is willing to provide the protection of human rights and livelihood for its people called for in the UN Charter and the Declaration of Human Rights, and whether it is willing to seek a political rather than a military solution in Kampuchea. Without an affirmative answer, the people of Indochina will continue to suffer and the situation will continue to pose serious problems for the other countries of the area.

— I am pleased with the progress that has been made on resettlement since the Tokyo Summit. At that time there were international resettlement pledges of some 125,000; today there are over 265,000. Our action in doubling the number of refugees has been matched by others.

[Page 2]

— An additional \$190 million has been pledged to support the operations of the UNHCR, plus the 50% share of the budget which Japan — in an extraordinary act of statesmanship — has stated it would contribute. The Philippines made another extraordinary gesture in offering a site for a Center to accommodate 50,000 refugees, thus helping relieve pressures on Malaysia and Thailand. Other countries have acted magnanimously as well.

2. POSSIBLE SECURITY COUNCIL SESSION ON REFUGEES

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Q: Now that the Geneva meeting has focused attention on the humanitarian aspects of the Indochinese refugee problem, do you intend to call for a Security Council meeting to bring political pressure to bear on the Vietnamese for their part in causing the refugee problem?

A: We will be consulting with other governments, and carefully reviewing the situation in the region, as we decide whether to call a meeting of the Security Council.

— Discussion of Indochina in the Security Council may well be useful. In the aftermath of the Geneva meeting, there is a continuing threat to the peace and security of Southeast Asia stemming from the presence in Kampuchea of some 200,000 Vietnamese troops. Treatment of peoples inside Kampuchea and Vietnam which forces them to flee inflicts great loss of life and misery upon those who remain and causes major problems for neighboring states.

3. AUTHORITY AND FUNDING FOR REFUGEE ADMISSIONS

[Page]

Q: Won't the Congress have to approve your decision to double our quota of Indochinese refugees from 7,000 to 14,000 a month? What is your authority for making that decision?

A: At the Tokyo Economic Summit I announced that the United States intended to double its Indochinese refugee resettlement rate. My decision is of course contingent on the availability of the necessary funding and refugee admissions numbers.

— I believe that we will have sufficient funds and admissions numbers for the remainder of this fiscal year, as we accelerate our admissions rate toward our goal of 14,000. But the Congress will clearly have a role in providing funding for the fiscal year that begins October 1. I plan to submit our amended 1980 budget soon, and hope for the earliest possible Congressional action. Many members of Congress have expressed their support for my decision. I hope that the Congress will meet our requests.

— The Congress will also have a role to play in making sure we have the necessary admissions numbers. The Congress is now considering the Refugee Act of 1979, which transfers to the President the authority to determine the total number of refugee admissions each year. Once again, we have indications of strong Congressional support and expect action on the bill in September so that it will go into effect by October 1. If the bill is not passed, we will have to ask the Attorney General to authorize a new "parole" program for FY 1980.

4. NEW U.S. STEPS TO AID INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

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Q: At a time when arrival rates of Indochinese refugees in first-asylum countries in Southeast Asia are running as high as 60,000 a month, shouldn't we be doing more for the Indochinese refugees than admitting 14,000 a month?

A: We *are* doing more for the Indochinese refugees. We are doubling our resettlement rate to 14,000 a month. In addition, I have approved a number of other measures that I hope will provide substantial relief to the refugees and the first-asylum countries in Southeast Asia. Vice President Mondale announced these steps in Geneva last Saturday at the UN-sponsored meeting on Indochinese refugees.

— First, we are trying to save lives at sea. The Navy has alerted all of its ships and aircraft in the region to be alert for refugees and to render all possible assistance to vessels in distress. Wherever feasible, they are altering their routes into the areas where refugees are likely to be located and to spend the maximum time possible in those areas while still meeting operational requirements. In addition, four ships from the Military Sealift Command will soon assist in transporting refugees to new processing centers in Southeast Asia and will thus be in the same area, operating under these guidelines.

[Page 2]

— Second, we will be submitting several requests to the Congress for additional funding to cover our increased contribution to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a substantial share of the cost of establishing new refugee processing centers in Southeast Asia, and an initial contribution to a proposed International Resettlement Fund designed to help developing countries absorb refugees.

— Third, we are also continuing our efforts to get other countries to increase their financial contributions and resettlement offers. We are urging other countries to provide land or construction and financial help to build Refugee Processing Centers and funds for the international resettlement fund. We hope that all of these international efforts will convince the first-asylum countries to continue to offer safe haven to all arriving refugees while we search for permanent homes for them.

5. "MORATORIUM" ON REFUGEE DEPARTURES FROM VIETNAM

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Q: How will Vietnam's agreement to a moratorium on illegal refugee departures affect the way the United States deals with the political aspects of the refugee problem?

A: We have not yet learned the details or significance of the Vietnamese agreement to a moratorium on the departures. We will be watching closely to see how this pledge is translated into action. We have long supported the idea of regularized departures under safe conditions for those wishing to leave.

— We of course want to end the loss of life at sea and alleviate the pressures on first asylum countries. But we would view negatively any attempt by the Vietnamese to use the moratorium as a sanction for denying the human rights of any Vietnamese, especially those who may express their wish to leave. The Vietnamese have a continuing obligation to recognize their responsibilities under the UN Charter and universal declaration of human rights to treat their own people humanely so that they will not feel compelled to flee.

6. MALAYSIA/THAI/INDONESIAN REFUGEE POLICY

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Q: What is our position on the policy of some Southeast Asian governments refusing to accept refugees, by sea or by land?

A: We have been concerned that some governments in Southeast Asia may not continue their previously generous policies of offering first asylum to refugees fleeing the countries of Indochina. Clearly we deplore any policy that might lead to a loss of life. But we understand the burden that the first asylum countries have had to bear with some 370,000 refugees already in camps and arrival rates running as high as 65,000 a month.

— The Malaysians and others have always tied their acceptance of new refugees to assurances that the refugees will eventually be resettled out of the region. We are confident that the cumulative effect of decisions taken at Geneva will enable these governments to resume their humanitarian practices.

Q: We are pleased that many other nations have made additional commitments shortly before and during the Geneva Conference. For example, in addition to our own commitments to double our admissions from 7,000 to 14,000 per month, the Canadians have offered to resettle an additional 50,000 by the end of 1980, the British will accept 10,000 in the next few months, and the French will

[Page 2]

resettle an additional 10,000 over their earlier level of 12,000 per year. The Chinese have also offered resettlement opportunities to 10,000 refugees.

— The Philippines' magnanimous offer of a Refugee Processing Center should also help relieve pressures on the first asylum countries.

7. "Moratorium" on Refugee Departures from Vietnam

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Q: How will Vietnam's agreement to a moratorium on illegal refugee departures affect the way the United States deals with the political aspects of the refugee problem?

A. We are not sure exactly what the Vietnamese agreement to a "moratorium on illegal departures" means. They made their announcement privately to the UN Secretary General, and we have not yet received any details directly. We will be watching closely to see how this pledge is translated into action. In any event, we believe that the Vietnamese still have an obligation to recognize their responsibilities under the UN Charter and universal declaration of human rights to treat their own people humanely so that they will not feel compelled to flee. In addition, we believe that the Vietnamese have an obligation to allow regularized departures under safe conditions

for those still wishing to leave. We would view negatively any attempt by the Vietnamese to use the moratorium as a sanction for denying the human rights of any Vietnamese, especially those who may express their wish to leave.

8. Indochinese Refugee Resettlement Rate

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Q. I understand that the Department of State is not presently admitting 14,000 refugees per month from Southeast Asia. When do you expect that we will be able to resettle 14,000 per month?

A. We plan to bring 12,000 refugees to the United States in July, 13,000 next month, and 14,000 per month commencing in September.

9. Funding for Refugee Programs

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Q. When will the additional funds that the Administration is requesting for refugee assistance be appropriated?

A. I expect that the Congress will appropriate the necessary funds for refugee assistance and admission by late September for the coming fiscal year.

10. Cost of Resettling Indochinese Refugees

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Q. How much will the United States spend on refugee assistance in FY-1980?

A. The total cost of refugee assistance to the United States government in Fiscal Year 1980 is estimated to be nearly \$890 million.

11. Cost of Resettling Indochinese Refugees

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Q. What will be the cost of resettling 84,000 more Indochinese refugees to the United States?

A. We estimate that the Department of State will require about \$106 million to assist the 84,000 Indochinese refugees who will be resettled to the United States. An additional \$84 million will be needed to assist those refugees receiving assistance from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Last, \$17 million will be needed to finance our recently announced efforts to assist boat refugees who are in distress in the sea lanes off of Vietnam. HEW estimates that the cost of domestic assistance to the 84,000 refugees in the first year after their arrival will cost about \$97 million.

12. Destination of Rescued Refugees

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Q: Will refugees picked up by U.S. ships in the South China Sea be taken directly to the United States?

A: No. It has been our long-standing policy to provide guarantees of eventual permanent resettlement to refugees in distress on the high seas rescued by U.S.-owned or registered ships, if such guarantees are necessary to disembark the refugees at the next regularly scheduled port of call. At the port of disembarkation, UN refugee officials interview them to find out if they qualify for resettlement programs of any other country. Those who qualify to enter the United States and those not accepted by any other country will eventually come to the United States. But they will spend some time in a United Nations-sponsored refugee camp or transit center until their papers are processed and they receive the necessary medical and other clearances.

13. Legal Emigration from Vietnam

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In May, 1979, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reached agreement with the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) on the legal departure of persons from Vietnam. It was agreed that the UNHCR would facilitate the implementation of the January 12, 1979, announcement by the Vietnamese Government that it would permit the orderly departure of persons who wish to leave Vietnam for countries of new residence. The selection of people will be made on the basis of lists given to the UNHCR by Vietnam and the receiving countries; persons whose names appear on both lists will qualify for exit.

Because of the monumental wave of refugees fleeing Indochina, the United States Government must allocate all refugee parole numbers to these people. Thus, we are now able to accept directly from Vietnam only those people who qualify under regular immigration procedures.

At the present time the American Embassy in Bangkok is coordinating the program to admit to the U.S. these legal emigrants from Vietnam, and all approved immigration petitions should be forwarded to the Embassy. The United States Government can include on the list of Vietnamese residents eligible for resettlement here only those who are American citizens or who have approved visa petitions for whom visas would be immediately available (i.e. where there is no priority cutoff date due to the oversubscription of that visa preference category).

In May, our Embassy in Bangkok prepared the first list for the UNHCR. It contained approximately 3500 cases, covering some 5000 people. Additional lists for the UNHCR will be prepared as new approved petitions are received by the Embassy. The SRV indicates its list is made up of those who have applied for exit permission.

We urge all persons interested in family reunification with Indochinese relatives to keep in mind that under normal circumstances, United States law permits only certain types of relatives to immigrate to the U.S. A petition for immigration must be filed by the relative residing in the

[Page 2]

U.S. as the first step. If you are a United States citizen, you may file a petition for the immigration of your:

1. Spouse (common-law or unconsummated proxy marriages are not recognized)
2. Sons and daughters and their spouses and minor children
3. Parents or step-parents (if the step-parent became that before you were 18)
4. Brothers and sisters (including also their spouses and minor children)
5. Fiance or fiancée (can include common-law or proxy marriage)

If you are a lawfully admitted permanent resident of the United States, you may file a petition for the immigration of your:

1. Spouse
2. Unmarried sons and daughters of any age

If you are in the United States on refugee or parole status, you may not file a petition for your relatives. You may, however, apply for adjustment of status to that of a permanent resident when you have been in the U.S. for two years, and we recommend that you apply as soon as you are eligible. You should also apply for United States citizenship as soon as you are eligible (in most cases five years after your arrival in the U.S.).

Petitions for the immigration of relatives may be filed with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) office nearest you. At this time we are recommending that all petitions for people who are currently in Vietnam be forwarded by the INS to the American Embassy in Bangkok upon INS' approval of the petition. (Should you know that your relatives have departed for the People's Republic of

[Page 3]

China, you should request the approved petition be forwarded to our Embassy in Beijing (Peking). In filing an I-130 petition on behalf of people residing in Vietnam, you must be certain to include an accurate and current address for the beneficiaries. If you do not, there will be no way for UNHCR to provide the necessary assistance in their legal exit.

Many individuals not included among the list above of relatives eligible for immigration petitions may be eligible for consideration in the categories open to certain members of the professions, persons of exceptional ability in the sciences and arts, or skilled and unskilled workers in short supply who receive certification from the Department of Labor. Further inquiries regarding these categories should be referred to the INS.

If you are able to file the required I-130 immigration petition on behalf of your relatives in Vietnam and have it forwarded by INS to Bangkok, you should also file an affidavit of support (a notarized statement of your willingness to support your relatives, and your ability to do so) and send it, along with supporting evidence such as a statement from your employer concerning your employment and salary, to the Embassy in Bangkok. If you entered the U.S. as a refugee with a sponsor, you may wish to ask advice on this matter from your sponsor.

If you filed petitions in behalf of relatives in Vietnam prior to April 30, 1975, you must renew the validity of the petitions. All documents sent to Saigon prior to this date are irretrievable. In order to reinstate such a petition, you should contact the field office of the INS or the U.S. Consulate where you originally filed the petition. If the petition was filed at the Embassy in Saigon, you should contact the nearest INS office. When contacting the INS or the American Consulate, include a copy of the 1-171 notification of approval form you received at the time of petition approval or any other papers you may have regarding the approval of such a petition. Request the office to review its files and send updated information to the Embassy in Bangkok (or Beijing if the beneficiary is known to be in the People's Republic of China now).

[Page 4]

Once INS has informed you that your petitions are being forwarded to Bangkok, you may wish to inform your relatives with approved petitions to apply to the Vietnamese authorities for exit permission under the terms of the UNHCR-SRV agreement of May 30, 1979.

When our Embassy in Bangkok receives names of the persons who have been permitted to leave and are about to exit (i.e. when the names appear on a manifest of a UNHCR charter plane or of the regular weekly Air France flight), the Embassy notifies the petitioner in the U.S. directly via cable.

There are no U.S. Government funds available to pay for the travel to the U.S. of immigrants from Vietnam nor to pay for their expenses in Bangkok during processing. Petitioners therefore should be prepared to provide all transit and transportation costs for the people they wish to have join them. Transit costs while in Bangkok are about \$300 per adult; this covers food and lodging, medical and visa expenses, and incidental expenditures. Transportation from Ho Chi Minh Ville costs \$106 per adult. The cost from Bangkok to California is \$325 when the travellers

are granted the refugee fare arranged by the Inter-Governmental Committee on European Migration (ICEM). All transit and transportation costs for this program are being administered by ICEM, and the petitioner is expected to make arrangements directly with its office at the following address:

ICEM Lincoln Building (Suite 2127) 60 East 42nd Street New York, N.Y. 10017

If the petitioner is unable to bear all of the travel expenses, she/he may apply for a travel loan from ICEM. All transit costs for processing in Bangkok, however, must be borne by the petitioners and deposited with ICEM prior to the immigrants' departure from Vietnam. Payment to ICEM does not guarantee that relatives will immediately leave Vietnam.

13.1. Refugees in the PRC

[Page 5]

To the best of our knowledge there are currently about 160,000 people who have fled Vietnam into the People's Republic of China, most of them ethnic Chinese and most of them former residents of North Vietnam.

Former residents of Vietnam currently in the PRC who desire to come to the United States to live may be admitted only by qualifying for U.S. immigrant visas as described above. They do not qualify under the current refugee parole programs, as these apply only to "land refugees" granted temporary asylum in Thailand, and to "boat refugees" who left Vietnam by small boats and were subsequently granted temporary asylum in other countries. All approved petitions on behalf of people known to be in the PRC should be sent to the American Embassy in Beijing.

13.2. Documents

INS requires that all supporting documents must be submitted in the original. If the applicant desires to have original documents returned to him, and if copies are by law permitted to be made, he may submit photostatic or typewritten copies. Photostatic copies unaccompanied by the original may be accepted if the copy bears a certification by a notary public, or by an immigration or consular officer acknowledging that the copy was compared with the original and found to be identical. A foreign document must be accompanied by a translation, certified by the translator as to the accuracy of the translation and as to his competency to translate. (Copies of a certificate of naturalization or citizenship should not be made as it is illegal).

14. FACT SHEET

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14.1. Legal Departure from Vietnam

14.1.1. UNHCR-SRV Seven Point Agreement

Concluded in May 1979, the Seven Point Agreement represents a Vietnamese Government understanding with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to permit the departure of Vietnamese citizens who wish to leave to join relatives abroad or to work. Although such legal immigrants are not technically "refugees," the UNHCR has undertaken to facilitate these departures by coordinating resettlement in recipient countries. The Vietnamese and the recipient countries are to prepare lists of those whom they will permit to leave, or accept for resettlement period. Those appearing on both lists will be "qualified" for exit from Vietnam. Those not on both lists are to be the subject of further discussions.

14.1.2. U.S. Response to UNHCR-SRV Agreement

Because of the monumental wave of refugees fleeing Indochina, the United States Government must allocate all refugee parole numbers to these people in countries of first asylum. Thus, we are now able to accept directly from Vietnam only those people who qualify under regular immigration procedures. The program, which is being coordinated by the American Embassy in Bangkok, is designed to reunite American citizens/permanent residents with qualified relatives who still are living in Vietnam.

Family reunification has been the subject of bilateral discussions between the United States and Vietnam for a number of years but, despite Vietnamese promises to be generous in their consideration of these cases, only a few individuals ever were permitted to leave. Following the UNHCR-SRV Seven Point Agreement, the United States declared its willingness to cooperate with the UNHCR and SRV, and to provide directly to them lists of individuals who would qualify for U.S. immigrant visa processing based on petitions filed by their American citizen/permanent resident relatives. The first of these lists was provided to the UNHCR in May, with subsequent lists following as

[Page 2]

additional petitions have been received and catalogued at our Embassy in Bangkok. We expect that the numbers of people from our lists approved to leave by the Vietnamese Government will be expanding in the near future. To expedite the processing of these cases, we have set up a special Vietnamese Processing Unit in our Embassy in Bangkok.

14.1.3. U.S. Consular Officials in Vietnam

Responding to a UNHCR suggestion which had Vietnamese concurrence in principle, the United States agreed that the sending of U.S. consular officials to Vietnam under the aegis of the UNHCR would facilitate our ability to issue immigrant visas to relatives of U.S. citizens and resident aliens. Such a program is useful because, according to U.S. law, potential immigrants are required to present adequate documentation to demonstrate their relationship to U.S.

citizens/permanent residents, pass a medical examination, and be personally interviewed by a U.S. consular officer. To continue all of these functions in Bangkok, as we have been doing, means additional expenses to the petitioners, who must support their family members in Thailand during the review period. The processing in Bangkok also complicates our arrangements with the Government of Thailand to move the potential immigrants within two weeks when medical or documentary difficulties arise. Thus, processing the cases in Vietnam would mean that any and all eligible immigrant applicants who are able to depart Vietnam after processing there could proceed directly to the United States. This would accelerate their arrival in the U.S. We are awaiting the conclusion of discussions between the UNHCR and the Vietnamese Government which would finalize the procedures by which American consular officials will operate in Vietnam under the aegis of the UNHCR. In the meantime, we have increased the staff of our Vietnamese Processing Unit in Bangkok, in anticipation of their visits to Vietnam and to meet current and projected increased Vietnamese approvals for departure.

14.1.4. Direct Flights from Vietnam to the United States

[Page 3]

On several occasions it has been proposed that the United States consider direct flights of individuals from Vietnam to the U.S. For the moment, this is not a practical solution to the movement of these family members. As indicated above, the process of issuing visas to prospective immigrants is being handled in Bangkok so that any initial movement from Vietnam must be funneled through the city. In addition, the numbers which have been leaving Vietnam are not sufficiently large to warrant use of direct charter flights; commercial reservations have been adequate. Once the United States is able to process sufficient number of cases at any one time to warrant use of direct charter flights, the United States remains willing to use this method to move immigrants directly to the United States. Such a procedure would of course require the approval of the Vietnamese Government.

15. VIETNAM'S REFUGEE MACHINE

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Approximately 413,000 refugees from Vietnam are scattered throughout Asia; some 240,000 are in southern China, and most of the rest are in camps in Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Indonesia. The rate of arrivals has increased markedly since January 1979. The numbers in camps are those who succeed — many do not. An inestimable number of those who set out perish at sea, victims of rough weather, unseaworthy, overcrowded craft, or pirates.

Vietnam has created elaborate but highly efficient machinery for virtually expelling what it considers its undesirable population. This involves principally the 1.5 million ethnic Chinese, but also anyone Hanoi regards as potentially disloyal. Indeed, ethnic Vietnamese are making up an increasing percentage of the boat refugees.

Since the Spring of 1978 alone tens of thousands have been systematically pressured into leaving, subjected to organized extortion, stripped of all but a few belongings and put to sea.

By some estimates Hanoi last year netted \$115 million — approximately equal to its known official exchange holdings from the refugee trade. This economic consideration plus Hanoi's security concerns assures that the refugee exodus will continue

15.1. The Officials

The Vietnamese leadership decided in Spring 1978 that worsening relations with China made Vietnam's Chinese minority of 1.5 million a fifth column that had to be eliminated. Chinese were encouraged to leave through a systematic campaign of persecution. Ethnic Chinese, including those who had lived peacefully in the north since 1954, were dismissed from their jobs and threatened with

[Page 2]

conscription or transfer to a New Economic Zone.* By midsummer, thousands of Chinese had joined the stream of ethnic Vietnamese fleeing by boat to non-Communist Southeast Asia. Hanoi cut back on the program in late 1978 after Vietnam's neighbors complained, but the program resumed full tilt in late March 1979 after the border war with China during February and early March.

Two special offices were created in early 1978 to manage the program: one in Haiphong for the northern half of the country and one in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) for the southern half. Subordinate offices are located in provinces with the largest ethnic Chinese populations. Originally located in government buildings, the offices were moved to unofficial facilities to preserve the fiction that the government is not involved.

Day-to-day administration of the program rests with the local Public Security Bureau, the political police. It certifies the passenger list for each boat, collects the fees, and sets the date of departure. In some cases Public Security Officers themselves arrange for the purchase and repair of the boats. Total processing originally took about six months, but now can be accomplished in as little as one month.

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New Economic Zones are primitive communes generally located on remote agricultural land. People assigned to New Economic Zones receive little if any real assistance from the state; they are expected to be self-reliant. Many Vietnamese, particularly urbanites, regard transfer to a New Economic Zone as a death sentence.

15.2. The Middleman

The middlemen are the link between the official structure and the people who want to leave. Most middlemen or “organizers” are Chinese who were southern businessmen before the Saigon government fell in 1975. They often arrange for the departure of a number of boats before leaving themselves.

The middleman enlists the passengers, collects the going passage price, and negotiates the per capita

[Page 3]

exit tax with the Public Security Bureau that grants permission to leave. He then locates a boat and arranges for any needed repairs. Because building materials are scarce, he must often acquire them from the Public Security Bureau. The organizer must arrange for fuel, supplies, a chart, and compass on his own. These items are available on the black market.

The demand for boats is so great that a boat construction industry has sprung up in some southern ports. Most are 15 to 25 meters in length with a lean-to, two toilets, and a small cooking platform above deck. Ventilation pipes carry air to the passengers below deck. Small irrigation engines are sometimes used for power. These frail, often overloaded craft are easily swamped in rough seas.

15.3. The People

Refugees are exploited at every turn once they declare their intention to leave. Those who still have jobs soon lose them, and ration cards are often reduced or invalidated. They generally sell all their personal property or forfeit it to the state. The price of passage does not include a safe conduct pass to the point of embarkation, so bribes must be paid at each check-point along the way.

Once at the embarkation point, refugees often must wait in holding camps until the Public Security Bureau grants permission to leave. The wait, which can stretch into months, forces the refugees to draw down further whatever funds they have with them.

The Vietnamese authorities in charge of the program wash their hands of the refugees as soon as they board the boats. The refugees must then still elude the coastal patrols. If they are stopped by the authorities, they must pay additional bribes before they can press on for the open sea.

Not all the refugees deal with middlemen. Many deal directly with the Public Security Bureau, and the fees they pay go into the pockets of the security officials. As a result of such arrangements, the refugees generally become unofficial passengers who do not appear on any

[Page 4]

manifest and who are crowded aboard the boats at the last minute. As many as 20 percent of the boat's total passengers may be unofficial.

15.4. The Money

The passenger price varies, but generally it ranges from six to 10 taels of gold per adult (approximately \$1,800 to \$3,000), half of that for children and no charge for those under six. * Bribes and living costs in the camps add to the expense. Middlemen can make a considerable profit — perhaps as much as \$1,000 to \$2,000 per passenger — but their overhead is also high. Large boats can cost as much as \$180,000, not including fuel and supplies.

The state and corrupt officials along the way make the greatest profit. An exit tax of approximately \$1,000 to \$1,300 per capita is charged. In some cases the Public Security Bureau collects a portion of the purchase price of the boats — as much as 40 percent — and in other cases the bureau itself is in the boat business. Strict currency regulations force private boat builders to deposit their earnings in the state bank where they are hard to retrieve.

All figures are approximate, but the *Far East Economic Review's* estimate that last year Vietnam made \$115 million from refugee taxes seems reasonable. ** This is approximately equal to Hanoi's annual hard currency export earnings or to its known official foreign exchange holdings.

A refugee must pay in gold. A great deal of gold was in private hands when Saigon fell, and a covert banking system has evolved to transfer it to the people who need it. The rich may already have enough gold to be able to convert their belongings into sufficient

[Page 4]

gold to pay for passage. Others must seek help from an overseas relative. This benefactor can remit money to his relative in Vietnam through state channels, but the exchange rate is unfavorable. Most prefer to transfer a lump sum in hard currency to a Vietnamese expatriate who still has funds in Vietnam. He then instructs a friend or relative in Vietnam to transfer an appropriate amount of gold to the potential refugee.

15.5. The Outlook

The exodus will continue for some time. Vietnam has approximately 1.5 million Chinese residents to draw from, and over the long term, it is not just an ethnic Chinese exodus. More and more ethnic Vietnamese are purchasing

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A tael of gold equals 1.21 ounces or approximately \$302 figured at \$250 per ounce.

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The figure is calculated by multiplying the estimated number of refugees by the average cost per person.

bogus papers documenting them as Chinese in order to escape. In 1978, about 29 percent of the boat arrivals at the Pulau Bidong camp on the east coast of Malaysia were ethnic Vietnamese; the proportion is now 52 percent ethnic Vietnamese.

16. THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM

[Page 5]

In the four years following the collapse of the governments of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos in 1975, well over 900,000 Indochinese have fled their homelands to permanent or temporary asylum elsewhere. Of the first great exodus in 1975, 168,000 are permanently resettled in non-communist countries, and 63,000 remain in first asylum in other non-communist countries, generally Thailand or one of the other Southeast Asian neighbors of Indochina that have become the main first asylum destinations for escapees from Indochina.

Throughout 1976 and 1977, almost 90,000 more people escaped from Indochina, essentially in a continuation of the original flight of those who had fought the communists, been associated with the previous regimes or with the U.S., or opposed the new authoritarian rulers.

In the first months of 1978, however, the situation changed radically. At that time, the Hanoi regime began a process of imposing the north Vietnamese model of society on south Vietnam and to reduce the latter to the status of a colony. Essentially, this meant that the population of the large cities was to be reduced and the business and professional class was to be eliminated. The surplus population was to be transferred to "New Economic Zones" (NEZ), often remote, ordnance-strewn, and barren areas in the countryside, since described as the "Vietnamese Gulag" because of the disease, malnutrition, and death rates.

The effects of these policies fell most heavily on Vietnam's ethnic Chinese minority, heavily-urbanized, cosmopolitan, and business-oriented. To this was added a long-standing anti-Chinese bias on the part of both the people and the regime, increasing the harassment of Chinese. This situation was reflected in a rising escape rate, beginning in April 1978. The composition of boat refugees from Vietnam, hitherto predominantly ethnic Vietnamese, changed to include high percentages of ethnic Chinese. The position of the Chinese minorities in Indochina worsened further as PRC-SRV relations deteriorated through 1978 including

[Page 2]

cessation of economic assistance. In mid-1978 about 160,000 ethnic Chinese fled overland to the PRC from north Vietnam before the PRC closed its border to further entries. Subsequent boat escapes have brought the total in the PRC to about 230,000. The Chinese attack on Vietnam in February 1979 apparently resulted in an escalation of official harshness toward ethnic Chinese, falling as heavily on ethnic Chinese in north Vietnam as it had in the South. Now, all ethnic Chinese in both North and South appear to be faced with a choice between going to a New Economic Zone or leaving Vietnam. Those leaving from north Vietnam have been going primarily to Hong Kong and Macau, following the coast or sometimes making a stop at Hainan, particularly in the present favorable sailing weather.

In Laos and Cambodia, meanwhile, other factors produced continued refugee outflows. In Cambodia, the brutalities of the Pol Pot regime resulted by late 1978 in a flow of at least 150,000 Cambodians to Vietnam, where most may still be in one or more refugee camps. Because of the military controls along the border with Thailand, it was not easy for large numbers of Cambodians to escape in that direction until the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia created widespread disorganization and even more hardship. Nevertheless, a constant stream of Cambodians did make its way into Thailand. In Laos, systematic extermination campaigns against the Hmong hilltribesmen by Vietnamese and Laotian forces caused mass movements of thousands of Hmong across Laos to the Mekong crossing points into Thailand, under constant attack. To this influx was added that of the lowland Lao by the tens of thousands, fleeing a restructuring of society much like that of Vietnam.

By mid-1978 it became apparent that some form of official collusion was behind many of the departures by boat refugees from Vietnam. The ethnic Chinese minority, deprived of means of making a living and without any prospects in the new society, had to buy escapes from an official agency. From recent reports, it appears that the sale of escapes is now Vietnam's major

[Page 3]

foreign exchange earner. Much of the money for escapes comes originally in the form of remittances from relatives already abroad, in the US and elsewhere, transmitted through middlemen with links in Hong Kong or Singapore as well as in Vietnam. In Vietnam, the funds are changed into gold which is then turned over to the authorities to finance exits either by small boat or by larger ships, generally decrepit vessels bought or leased for minimal amounts through businessmen outside Vietnam. These ships ostensibly pick up refugees in distress at sea off Vietnam and then show up in the ports of Southeast Asia to sit until asylum or resettlement is provided. (It must be noted that the passengers aboard large ships or small are no less refugees, making their escape the best way they can from an impossible situation)

Ethnic Vietnamese, it should be noted, still make up a large proportion of escapees from Vietnam. Many of them have had to wait until they or family members had served time in "re-education" camps or could emerge from hiding from the authorities because of involvement with previous governments or with anti-communist activities. Some were able to bribe their way out directly or by pretending to be Chinese. Many, however, were forced to evade internal and border controls to escape, often failing in several attempts and receiving punishment if caught.

The 1978 refugee exodus reached its peak in November when almost 22,000 boat refugees arrived in first asylum countries, with Malaysia bearing the brunt. The monthly arrivals for all of 1978 averaged 7,500. This year, the

Vietnamese expulsion program is operating at an all-time high, and the number of arrivals was almost 60,000 in May. But, now, the sailing weather favors Hong Kong, and the humanitarian attitude of the Hong Kong authorities has made them even more vulnerable to victimization by the Vietnamese strategy. From a few thousand at the beginning of the year, the Hong Kong refugee population shot up to over 50,000 by early June; on one day, almost 3,000 refugees arrived on about 30 small boats. In crowded Hong Kong, this influx has exacerbated an already almost unbearable situation created by a large influx of both legal and illegal entrants

[Page 4]

from the PRC. Malaysia, meanwhile, has been trying to force off seaworthy refugee boats, even though, in fact, about 15,000 additional refugees per month have still been able to remain. The rest have tended to sail on to Indonesia where the radical jump in refugee numbers — from 3,000 up to 30,000 — has caused extreme alarm. Being forced back to sea, or into Laos or into Cambodia, up to half the small boat escapees from Vietnam have drowned without a trace. In May alone almost 50,000 may have perished. Through the area, attitudes toward the refugees have hardened. Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia have announced decisions to bar even temporary asylum because they fear being overwhelmed by a refugee influx that, despite resettlement, may leave 500,000 in the first asylum camps in Southeast Asia by this September. Singapore has long done so. The Hong Kong government may well feel compelled to do likewise in time, and it has already enacted severe sanctions against persons engaged in bringing in illegal immigrants. Throughout Southeast Asia, the refugee situation is affected by the fact that no significant amount of permanent local resettlement has been possible, whatever the financial resources that could be made available. The countries of the region, apart from their development and population pressure problems, are seriously concerned over problems of communal strife, religious and ethnic antipathies, subversion, and insurgency; and these concerns are particularly heightened where Vietnamese and Chinese are concerned. Despite this, the humanitarian records of such sorely-tested countries as Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, as well as Hong Kong, have been very considerable; but increasingly, their formerly humane first asylum policies are being restricted severely. In the case of refugees fleeing across the Mekong into Thailand from Laos, from Cambodia, or escaping from Vietnam in overcrowded, unseaworthy craft, the vital problem is that of first asylum, a safe place to stay until resettlement can be arranged. The UNHCR oversees the care and maintenance of refugees in first asylum. With no possibility of local resettlement, the pressure on first asylum facilities must be relieved by temporary or permanent resettlement elsewhere. Such resettlement has always lagged behind the numbers in first asylum, leading to the huge buildups in first asylum countries.

[Page 5]

As the dimensions of the current refugee exodus became apparent, ASEAN concern manifested itself in a decision to establish a system of Refugee Processing Centers of which the first would be on an island provided by Indonesia. Resettlement countries could place refugees there who were eligible for future resettlement and thus increase the numbers they could take now from first asylum countries.

The two main needs, apart from first asylum facilities are resettlement opportunities and funding for the UNHCR. The U.S., France, Australia and Canada are the main resettlement countries with continuous programs of significant size. A wider range of countries provides financing for the UNHCR, often earmarked for the Indochines program. A number of countries unwilling to resettle many refugees compensate in part by helping financially. The US contributes about half of the UNHCR Indochina program expenses. Japan is beginning to contribute to UNHCR funding in a most significant way, and other countries are generous with regular and special contributions. The UNHCR Indochina budget, however, is likely to pass \$100 million this year under strains imposed by the current exodus.

There have been several calls for effective international action to head off what seems likely to become a massive human disaster. On June 13 the House International Affairs Committee Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs resolved to ask the Congress to call on the UN to convene a special session of the General Assembly to deal with the refugee problem. British Prime Minister Thatcher had earlier called for an international conference. We support these and similar moves to mobilize world resources to deal with the exodus from Vietnam and to indict the Hanoi regime for its shameful actions. However, we realize that previous conferences have produced only limited action, however welcome, and expect that this will be the case for those that may be held in future.

Condemnation of the SRV has tended to be muted or even confused by the evasion and dissimulation of Vietnamese representatives. They have artfully used the basic human principles of freedom of emigration and first asylum to pretend that they are allowing malcontents to leave freely,

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ignoring the fact that these people have been so pressured that they chose to leave despite enormous risk and hardship, and ignoring as well that the Hanoi regime has evaded its responsibilities to care for great numbers of its people, loading the burden on its neighbors. As a part of its diplomatic campaign, the SRV has announced ostensibly more liberal emigration regulations and made arrangements with the UNHCR to facilitate emigration for family reunification and other purposes, claiming that as many as 600,000 may be free to leave in this way. Family reunification, which could affect some 20,000 worldwide in the near future, if it can be accomplished, will be desirable on all counts. The SRV proposal of additional emigrants, however, ignores the difficulty of dealing with this additional flow while the 330,000 now in first asylum refugee camps throughout Southeast Asia still await resettlement.

The US is now admitting 7,000 Indochinese monthly for resettlement out of a world total of about 10,500 monthly. We are actively supporting initiatives to open up resettlement opportunities in developed and less developed

countries and, above all, to maintain the principle of humane first asylum in the heavily-burdened countries of Southeast Asia while a more comprehensive solution is being sought. We recognize, however, that, if the problem is ever to be resolved humanely, Vietnam will have to moderate its policies and accommodate under tolerable conditions that portion of its people now making such desperate efforts to escape.