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COMMITTEE PRINT

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REFUGEES FROM INDOCHINA: CURRENT
PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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REPORT

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DECEMBER 28, 1978, TO JANUARY 13, 1979

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS
OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



APRIL 30, 1979

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(II)

FOREWORD

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, D.C., April 30, 1979.

This report has been submitted to the Committee on Foreign Affairs by a special study mission, conducted by Hon. Lester L. Wolff, chairman of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, between December 28, 1978 and January 12, 1979.

The findings in this report are those of the special study mission and do not necessarily reflect the views of the membership of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI,
Chairman

(III)

LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

Hon. CLEMENT J. ZABLOCKI, *Chairman,*
Committee on Foreign Affairs,
House of Representatives,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: Attached is a study of the refugee situation in Indochina by a congressional delegation which I headed to East and Southeast Asia in early January 1979. This study follows on hearings which the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs conducted on the refugee problem in the last Congress. Taken together the two parts provide a description of the evolution of the refugee problem over the last year or so, from a congressional viewpoint.

In transmitting this report, I would like to commend Congressman Joel Pritchard of the subcommittee for his great interest and effort in pursuing the investigation of the refugee problem in Thailand. Congressman Pritchard was the first Member to visit some of the refugee camps described in this report. He was assisted by staff members Chris Nelson, James Przysup, Vance Hyndman, and Jon D. Holstine of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Asian and Pacific Subcommittee. Staff also assisted in preparing this report, based on observations and exchanges of views among the delegation and with individual officials and refugees.

We make a number of recommendations in the report. Among these are proposals for greater international efforts to agree on effective relief for the refugees, and ways in which the United States can improve its own refugee program. The subcommittee found much accomplishment on the part of the United States, United Nations, and other officials in alleviating the poor circumstances of Indochinese refugees. However, there were many grounds for concern. We found the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Southeast Asia to be tentative and somewhat uncertain in its approach to refugee problems. We are not sure that American dollars which support a large part of the UNHCR budget are being well spent. Apart from UNHCR problems, we believe that there is more than normal corruption in certain areas of the refugee relief and support operation. Finally, we are convinced that there still is lacking genuine international commitment to do more than ameliorate the physical plight, and that only slightly, of the Indochinese refugees.

Many of the concerns of the subcommittee are rooted in the jurisdiction of the Committee on Foreign Affairs for the oversight of matters affecting our relations with other countries. At bottom, the case of Indochinese refugees is a diplomatic as well as a humanitarian problem. Its solution is a diplomatic matter. The State Department budget which is supervised by the International Operations Subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee contains funds for the U.S.

contribution to the United Nations. It contains the moneys which operate the U.S. refugee program overseas. In short, Foreign Affairs and Asian and Pacific jurisdiction is traditionally and legally rooted in the House rules on this subject.

While the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, and, I am sure, the Foreign Affairs Committee welcomes the interest and cooperation of the Committee on Judiciary and the Subcommittee on Immigration, Refugees, and International Law, as it is now called, I would like to take this opportunity to observe that clear lines of responsibility are essential to our effective functioning.

I trust that you and the Foreign Affairs Committee, will continue to support the traditional and appropriate role of the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs with regard to the international and diplomatic problem of refugees from Indochina. It is an issue which is a point of contention with the governments of Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, the Philippines, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and others. In short, it is an issue which, with your support, this subcommittee will continue to address to the fullest extent.

Sincerely,

LESTER L. WOLFF, *Chairman,*
Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the following report and the hearings recently released¹ the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs voted, on March 12, 1979, to make the following recommendations with regard to the international problem of Indochinese refugees.

(1) Until and unless the United Nations, the voluntary organizations, and the individual members of the international community embark on a concerted effort to resettle the Indochina refugees, the temporary host nations will be able to provide only the bare necessities of life for those refugees who live to reach their shores.

(2) Once a long-range program is underway to assure resettlement for the great majority (if not all) of the refugees, the particular problems presently existing in the camps will be much easier for the host nations and the volunteer organizations, working together, to resolve. In this regard, a proper balance should be struck between resettling land refugees and boat people, since land refugees constitute by far the majority.

(3) The United States, France, Australia, and Canada have almost entirely served as havens for resettlement, as have Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines almost entirely bore the burden of initial refuge. The subcommittee suggests that there is no moral excuse for this situation. The United Nations, and particularly those nations which were so vocal in condemning the Vietnam war, have shirked their responsibilities now that the war is over.

(4) The subcommittee would stress that a key to stimulating the resettlement of Indochinese refugees is to stop thinking of these people as burdens for the potential host nations. Indochinese refugees are a good investment in the future. They are hardworking, have high skill levels, and are obviously motivated to participate in a free enterprise system.

(5) The subcommittee recognizes the great initial cost of accepting large numbers of refugees and that it will take time for the refugees to become economically self-sustaining. The subcommittee is also cognizant of the political and economic risk of straining local conditions by introducing refugees. With these problems in mind, the subcommittee suggests that the Asian Development Bank favorably review applications from host nations for joint development projects which would allow communities and regions with refugee populations to be economically self-sustaining, rather than a burden on the host countries or on the world.

(6) The subcommittee welcomes the endorsement by the ASEAN nations, under Malaysia's leadership, of the offer by Indonesia and the Philippines to make islands available for temporary resettlement of refugees. These islands, to be supported by international funding,

¹ "Refugee Crisis in Indochina, 1978," hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

would serve as a safe and humane haven for refugees fleeing Indochina, relieve the temporary host nations of the present refugee populations, and remove the fear that many host nations will be permanently saddled with a "residue" of refugees. The subcommittee notes, however, that it understands that the island refuge is intended as a temporary haven, and not a permanent "dumping ground" for the unfortunate human beings who have been forced to flee their homelands.

(7) The subcommittee notes that even under the present conditions which limit the ability of the temporary host nations to meet the needs of refugees, more can be done to ease the plight of the residents of the camps. While sensitivity to local political and social factors must be borne in mind, the fact is that the food, water, and sewage situation in most camps is still inadequate. Camp conditions can be improved, in some cases dramatically, to relieve the human suffering. Key to this process is a more sustained effort by United Nations officials to back up the work of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees field representatives and members of the voluntary service organizations who actually work in the camps. The subcommittee notes that efforts to raise the morale of camp residents—particularly in Malaysia, where mail deliveries are prevented as an act of policy—would appear to offer dividends far in excess of any presumed benefit of withholding such amenities from human beings cut off from their families for months, even years, without word.

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INDOCHINA REFUGEES: CURRENT PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

INTRODUCTION

The problem of Indochinese refugees in Southeast Asia began in April 1975, with the fall of Saigon and Phnomh Penh to their respective adversaries. Since then, almost half a million have fled Indochina, while another 160,000 Khmer have taken refuge in Vietnam. These refugees present a problem which is not going away, but instead is assuming catastrophic human and political dimensions. Almost 200,000 refugees crowd refugee camps in Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Hong Kong; 250,000 have already been resettled in the major countries of permanent asylum. Politically, the situation reflects disturbed circumstances in Indochina, and the export in a real sense of those disturbances to the other countries of Southeast Asia. At least two-thirds of the refugees are housed temporarily in countries where they are ethnically and politically unwelcome.

There are two aspects of the problem from an American viewpoint. In the first place, the United States has had a refugee program since the beginning which needs evaluation as to efficiency. In the second place, the problem is international, involving the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, national and local officials of several governments, and voluntary agencies from several countries. It involves the fundamental question of whether most countries of the world are willing to offer either permanent resettlement for refugees or economic assistance for their maintenance, or both.

In the interest of understanding how these concerns, both American administration and international attitudes, affect the fate of the hundreds of thousands of refugees, the study mission visited Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines. Altogether members and staff visited six camps housing almost 100,000 people and talked with responsible United Nations persons, U.S. embassy officials, national leaders and local officials. The mission sought to learn how appropriately and efficiently U.N. funds apply to the refugee situation, and the prospects for cooperation of the world community to bear responsibility for this growing problem. In pursuing this task the delegation had the benefit of earlier staff work in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand.

In understanding the refugee problem, and points at which difficulties may arise, it is useful to examine in sequence the outflow of refugees from countries of origin, what happens to them in countries of first asylum, and how they ultimately find their way to permanent homes in third countries. Some aspects of this have been previously well-covered by the international press,² other elements are not so well known. Thus appropriate emphasis is afforded the latter.

² See newspaper clippings in appendix 8.

THE OUTFLOW

The number of refugees has radically increased in recent months. While some 22,000 departed Thailand in 1978, the number still in camps increased by 40,000. In the same year more than 85,000 boat people appeared at various land falls in Southeast Asia. The land refugees, while not receiving as much attention as the boat cases, thus increased by some 45 percent over 1977, the largest such increase since the first flood of refugees in 1975.

The mission was not able to prove in any definitive way the motives for refugee departure from their homeland. Restraints of time made such an investigation impossible. However, there are some observations which should be made. The U.S. Department of State testified on more than one occasion in 1978 that circumstances in Indochina were such that many Vietnamese chose to risk their lives in small boats on the open sea, rather than remain in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Severe, even draconian, efforts to reorganize the society in the Indochinese states, include forceable transfer of middle class and small business people from urban settings to rural new economic zones, where food supplies are uncertain and social services nonexistent. Life in Cambodia has been adequately described in the subcommittee's hearings and in public sources. A newly arrived Khmer refugee in Aranyaprathet confirmed that repressive, brutal Khmer Rouge practices toward the Khmer peoples continued to the very end of the Pol Pot regime, even in the face of mounting Viet-puppet Khmer military pressure.

Most of the refugees are nonideological, and are in search of relief from what they consider intolerable situations. In addition to the Vietnamese and Khmer practices described in our hearings and confirmed by conversations with refugees in Southeast Asia, there were additional insights offered by Laos in Thai camps. The Pathet Lao Government in Vientiane also imposes forced extraction of rice and services from the public, on threat of sending the recalcitrant to seminars, forced labor camps from which few return. Estimates as to the population of these camps range from 40,000 to as many as 250,000. A calculated best estimate according to responsible sources puts the figure at 45,000 to 50,000.

HMONG TRIBESMEN

A special sort of problem exists in the case of the Hmong or Meo tribesmen. Many of the Hmong worked closely with the United States during its involvement in Laos. Most of the Hmong apparently do not support the central government in Vientiane. Whether or not they were associated with American military efforts before 1975, they are subject to attack by Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese army units, according to their own accounts. Recently they have alleged that the forces of Pathet Lao and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (PL and SRV) are using chemical warfare against them. No refugees demonstrating symptoms of such agents have appeared in Thailand. It is possible that none have survived to escape Laos. Refugees who do escape insist that hundreds have been effected by this new form of attack. Some observers have suggested that in certain areas of Laos, attempts are being made to eliminate the Hmong entirely.

No one has an entirely easy trip from his country of origin. Aside from the well-reported hazards of the boat people—unseaworthy crafts, high seas, pirates, and lack of provisions—the trek to Thailand is often difficult for the Lao, Hmong, and Khmers. Many report encountering armed patrols and being fired on. In one case a Hmong child of 11 years saw his entire extended family, including parents, aunt, uncle, and cousins, die under Pathet Lao fire while crossing the Mekong. The Kampuchean border is mined, as well as patrolled, so that very few women and children and only some men make it to Thailand. There are frequent accounts of sizable groups starting out only to have but a few arrive in Thailand.

BOAT PEOPLE

The subject of much recent public attention, the Vietnamese boat people are a special case in some respects. Mainly Chinese in ethnic origin, they come from Southern Vietnam, usually from the area of Ho Chi Minh City. In boats that are often about to sink, they arrive on the shores of the east coast of Malaysia, or sail into Manila Bay or Hong Kong Harbor. Their reasons for coming vary. Some seem to be on the boats almost by accident, while others are definitely fleeing a political or economic system that no longer favors them.

One question which has received considerable attention is whether the refugees leave Indochina expressly to come to the United States. Most refugees interviewed answered in the affirmative for those who have relatives already in the United States or elsewhere in North America, of course migration to the United States is even more attractive. There are refugees who have sought nothing more than to leave frightful circumstances. One Khmer had never seen an American before he arrived at Aranyaprathet, and had no thought of going anywhere except Thailand, where he wanted to have a small farm and to be left alone. Laotians, or lowland Lao, traditionally have been able to move in and out of Thai territory and society with minimal friction due their ethnic similarity. Vietnamese and Khmers often expect hostile treatment from the Thais and Malaysians for a series of ethnic and political reasons, but it is unlikely that anyone can tell with precision the intent of most refugees when they float, swim, or walk out of Indochina, except to leave that area.

RETURNING GUIDES

Associated with this is the practice in Thailand of refugees who return to guide others out. In both the Lao/Hmong and the Khmer camps it is understood that internees disappear from camp and re-visit their homeland to help friends and relatives pass border guards and minefields. This system seems highly organized and certainly increases camp size.

Both the Vietnam and Laos Governments appear to be complicit in the exit of refugees, although it is difficult to determine the extent and level of government authority involved. One Laotian told of paying \$100 to a Laotian official to cross the Mekong unharmed. With Vietnam there appears to be at least one syndicate operating to facilitate and exploit the traffic. There seemed to be no real evidence available to the subcommittee on its recent visit; however, several press accounts have alleged that the Vietnamese have developed a

system which is at least quasi-legal, whereby refugees purchase the right to leave Vietnam. According to informants familiar with the Vietnamese approach to social reorganization, Hanoi considers permitting the Sino-Viets to leave as a humanitarian alternative to worse fates.

Subsequent congressional delegations reported that the Government of Vietnam had collected upwards of \$30 million from refugees as they left the country. There seems to be mounting proof that the refugee problem is a result of official policy.³

COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM

First official contacts in countries of asylum are not always identical. Depending on the country, nationality of the refugee, and the local authority, refugees may encounter local law officers, provincial officials, military personnel, or in some instances representatives of the UNHCR. Along the Cambodian frontier of Thailand, for example, Thai military units sweep constantly to prevent Khmer Rouge infiltration. Thus most Khmer refugees have had to convince the Thai military of their status or face being forced back into Cambodia.

Both Malaysia and Thailand seek to channel refugees into specified locations as soon as possible after their arrival. Since Malaysia's experience is largely with Vietnamese or Sino-Vietnamese who are ethnically distinct from the Malay Moslem population of West Malaysia, and who arrive quite obviously over the high seas, it is a simple matter for the Malaysian authorities to collect refugees and place them in detention. The few boat people who arrive in Thailand are also easily controlled.

Refugees who arrive by land from Laos in Thailand are a different matter, however. Lowland Lao have traditionally moved across the Mekong and in and out of Thai society. Managing the flow of Lao refugees into Thailand is a more difficult task, and is likely to involve officials from various jurisdictions.

Before admission to a camp, many Laotian refugees are likely to spend time in custody of Thai officials, while the refugees are screened for potential hostile infiltrators. In one instance, 350 refugees had been camped on the lawn of an upcountry provincial magistrate for almost 8 weeks when the mission was in Thailand. Sometimes only heads of families and adult males are detained, but meanwhile the status of the other family members is in doubt. From July 1978 to January 1979, there was a decrease in the population of the detention center at Nonkhai, but a surge of refugees could fill the center up again at any moment.

Refugees in detention have only recently begun to come under the practical and official jurisdiction of the UNHCR or the voluntary agencies. Conditions in the detention center at Nonkhai were obviously much less favorable than in the camp a few hundred meters away. Access is not always available to these detention facilities for UNHCR or voluntary workers. UNHCR has increased its efforts in recent months to check police stations in refugee areas for

³ See newspapers clippings in appendix 8.

recent arrivals and to monitor their treatment. Both UNHCR field personnel and officials from the Bangkok office participate in this operation. Voluntary agencies also expressed a concern to the delegation about this problem. In most instances the refugees involved move fairly soon into main camps.

In the Philippines, refugees who are admitted for first asylum find their way more or less directly into the official camps operated in the Manila area. In the case of the refugee ship *Tung An*, which appeared in Manila Harbor just before the mission arrived, Filipino authorities and the local UNHCR representatives met with refugees on the ship itself. There was unwillingness to have the delegation visit the ship but enterprising journalists made conditions there a matter of public record. Refugees who had come in smaller groups and had been put ashore on other islands in the Philippine archipelago were transferred directly to official camps. There UNHCR and the Philippine Ministry of Social Services and Development jointly administered the refugee program.

LIFE IN THE CAMPS

Most refugees in Southeast Asia are living in camps operated jointly by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the local governments, and voluntary agencies. The map following shows locations of camps in Thailand. While conditions vary from camp to camp and country to country, there are certain common factors. These include at least minimal shelter, food, water, some medical care, and limited educational and vocational activity. They generally do not provide any real opportunity for constructive activity, so that boredom is endemic. Efficiency of administration varies sharply.

One salient factor aggravates the problem of adequate facilities for the refugees. The sheer magnitude of numbers of refugees coming to Malaysia and Thailand makes management extremely difficult. The problem in Thailand is demonstrated by the following figures:

REFUGEE ARRIVALS BY YEAR IN THAILAND

	1975	1976	1977	1978	Total
Arrivals.....	77,241	35,558	35,370	67,429	215,978
Departures.....	-12,755	-24,178	-14,021	-26,297	-77,251
Residual population.....	64,486	75,866	97,595	138,727	138,727
Percent increase over past year.....		18	29	42	

CURRENT REFUGEE POPULATION

	Land	Boat	Total	Percent of total
Lao (includes Hmong).....	119,178	0	119,178	86
Khmer.....	14,566	216	14,782	11
Vietnamese.....	1,788	2,979	4,767	3
Total.....	135,532	3,195	138,727	100

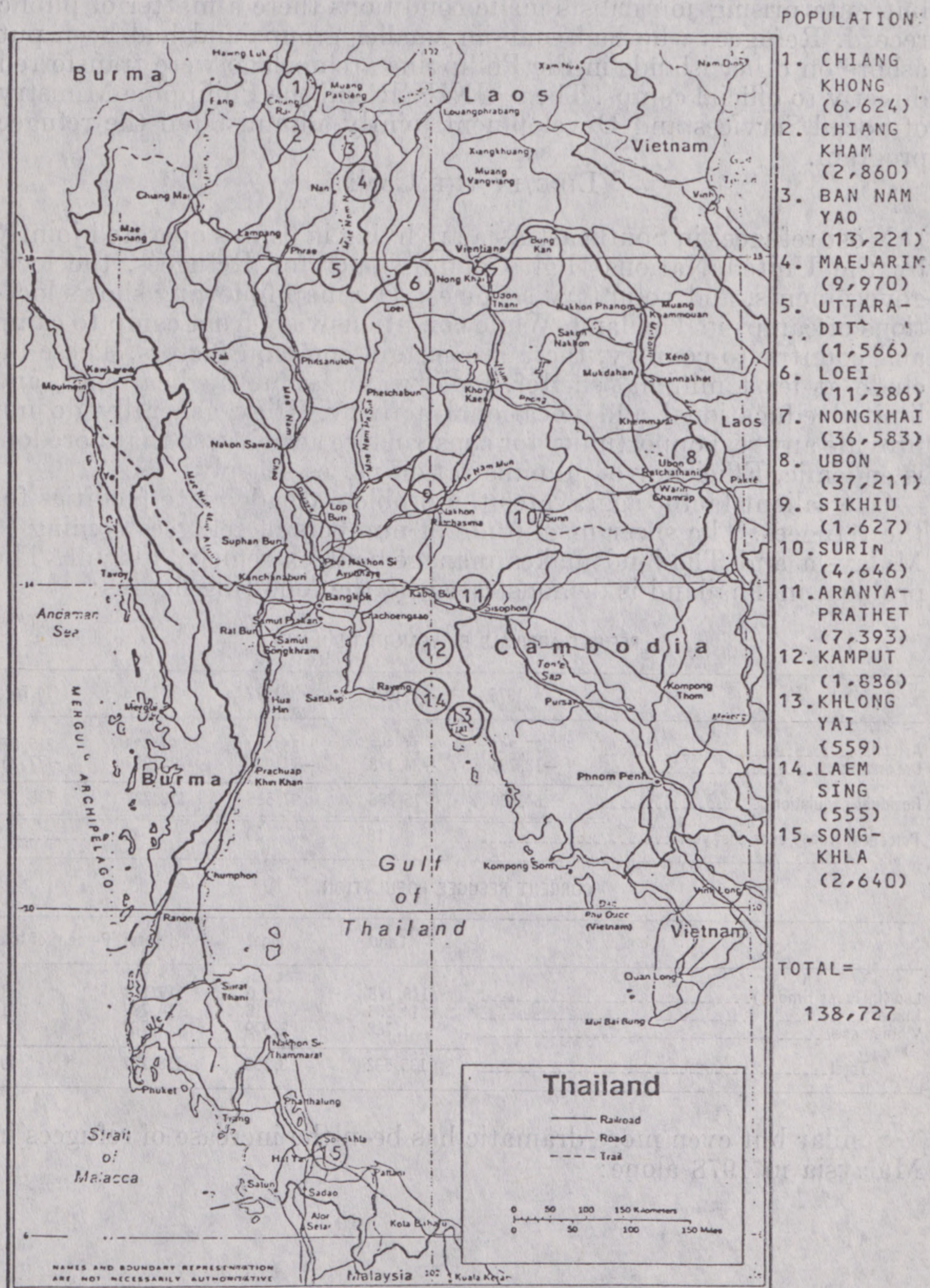
Similar but even more dramatic has been the increase of refugees in Malaysia in 1978 alone:

Arrivals in Malaysia—1977-78

Monthly average arrivals:

August to December 1977	542
January to June 1978	2,181
July	4,092
August	1,486
September	3,731
October	9,994
November	19,281
December	10,500

REFUGEE CAMPS IN THAILAND [AS OF 1 JANUARY 1979]



Monthly average departures:

August to December 1977	429
January to June	1,131
July	1,688
August	1,310
September	1,396
October	1,985
November	1,413
December	3,840
Cumulative arrivals since August 11, 1977	69,252
Cumulative departures since August 11, 1977	20,193
Current camp population (as of January 10, 1979)	48,436

Conversations with UNHCR officials, voluntary agency personnel, and American refugee officers revealed that the rapid increase in the numbers of refugees is the single factor most complicating efficient management of the problem. There was general agreement that political, economic, and administrative difficulties, including opportunities for graft and corruption, were greatest in refugee areas where growth had been sudden and sizable. In contrast, some camps in Thailand, where the refugee population had stabilized at levels ranging from 6,000 to 13,000, have escaped many of the shortcomings experienced in the huge camps at Nonkhai and Ubon in Thailand and Pulau Bidang in Malaysia. Park Chom, a camp in Loei, Thailand, with a population of 11,386 (as of the date of the mission), has begun to operate successfully as an economic unit in productive connection with the surrounding countryside and population.

Another complicating factor is the combination of agencies and elements responsible for running the camps. Funding for the camps comes through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In Thailand, supervision of the camps is in the hands of the Thai authorities—usually the provincial governor or vice-governor and a camp commander. Operation of the facilities is largely the work of the voluntary agencies.

SHARED AUTHORITY

While such a division of labor seems reasonable, it rarely works smoothly. In Thailand lines of responsibility are almost deliberately blurred, so that UNHCR shares authority with its partners—the “Center for Displaced Persons from Indochina” (part of the Ministry of Interior), and the voluntary agencies. The U.N. organization avoids any obvious actions which might be construed as initiating policy for Thailand; Thai officials do not gain control of all refugee relief programs. Given the complicated administrative structure, as the American refugee coordinator in Thailand observed, it is a pleasant surprise that the camps operate as well as they do.

The arrangement in the camps is intended to provide minimal rations to prevent starvation or malnutrition. Each person receives rice, vegetables, and some meat on a regular basis, or is supposed to. The amount actually distributed seems to vary depending on the camp in question, so that it is not certain that all inhabitants are equally well nourished. In many instances refugees tend gardens to supplement official food supplies. Similarly, any cash income either from indigenous business enterprises or remittances from outside is spent for food.

RATION PROBLEMS

Failure to provide rations can be the result of inefficiency, oversight, or corruption. Where camp sizes have grown tremendously in a few months, the amounts of foodstuffs available are rarely in line with requirements. At Ubon, Thailand, for example, the number of refugees has grown from 12,000 to almost 40,000 (by one count) in just a year. With such a rapid increase of persons to feed and house, it has proved difficult for Thai and other officials even to be sure of the identity of the inhabitants, not to mention providing the security necessary to prevent the theft of rice and extortion schemes. Both problems were reported at Ubon. Likewise the growth from 500 to 30,000 in 6 months of the Malaysian camp at Pulau Bidong has also made smoothly systematic provision of rations very difficult.

INADEQUATE HOUSING

Housing is also a service which is often inadequate. In Thailand UNHCR funding supports the construction by camp labor of shed-like buildings which house several families. However, the space available in such shelters is almost invariably less than the number of refugees in the camps, especially at Nonkhai and Ubon. In July, there were 26,000 people at Nonkhai and official housing for about 16,000. The difference appeared to be about as great in January. In Ubon the shortage is more marked. There, where from 38,000 to 40,000 refugees are huddled in the 300 acres which used to house U.S. military stores, refugee-constructed "private" dwellings fill every available location. When someone is so fortunate as to leave his property goes on the market. Older Malaysian camps like Pulau Besaar appeared to have permanent dwellings built mainly by refugee labor, perhaps at refugee expense; the island camp which now receives the boat people, Pulau Bidong appeared to offer only huts with plastic film roofs. It is worth noting that the Malaysian Government intends to close Pulau Besaar and to transfer any remaining refugees to Pulau Bidong. The refugees in Thailand are usually able to purchase bamboo and grass thatch on the local market, and thus construct their private dwellings; such materials have long been exhausted on Pulau Bidong.

IMPROVEMENTS

Circumstances have improved at two Thai camps since a staff visit last July (1978). At Nonkhai housing official construction should provide at least eight new units, a new Hmong school, a new meeting hall, and an expanded market. Internal commerce has grown, and the camp closely resembles an up-country Thai village. Vegetables, fruit, and meat products, as well as general necessities and clothing, are available within the camp. At Aranyaprathet, officials claim that the attendance has doubled at its technical center. Cottage industries producing improved handicrafts, and training refugees in new skills were apparent. Health care also seemed improved over 6 months earlier. Not all these improvements were the result of better administration, but natural human resourcefulness has been permitted to make constructive contributions to camp life.

CAMP PROBLEMS

Nonetheless there remain several severe problems. There are inadequate educational facilities, and no real constructive activities for high school age students to be found in any camps anywhere that the mission visited. Aside from some apprenticeship programs in Aranyaprathet there are few technical training opportunities. A center previously in operation at Ubon had been closed. In addition, water is often inadequate or unclean. Pulau Bidong, for example, boasts only a few wells, and no really sanitary facilities. Water is both in short supply and unhealthy. At Ubon there is a high water table permitting digging multiple wells, but only a few of these shallow sources offer truly potable water. UNHCR was buying water for Pulau Bidong in January; a barge was on its way from Singapore with 106,000 gallons which was supposed to last 6 days. Sewage disposal is virtually nonexistent. At Aranyaprathet open ditches serve as sewers. On Pulau Bidong there are no over-the-sea privies, which would be a cheap and relatively effective arrangement for disposal; instead 30,000 people are using in-ground latrines which are often uphill from the few wells which are working.

Perhaps the most insidious problem, which is to be found in even the most physically comfortable camps, is that of boredom and enforced idleness. In some instances there has been violence and family tension attributable to these circumstances.

RESPONSIBLE AGENCIES

The main responsible organ in the refugee system is the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Based in Geneva, the UNHCR has representatives in many locations where there is need to care for refugees. At present the largest UNHCR office in the world outside of the Geneva headquarters is in Thailand. There are two officials, Pierre Jambor and Martin Barber, in the Thai office. They have some five field workers responsible for monitoring the use of U.N. funds which they disburse, in addition to observing the circumstances and conditions of the refugees. The officials in the Bangkok office claim that they have the best monitoring system that UNHCR has anywhere and good access to the appropriate agencies of the Thai Government.

In countries where the UNHCR functions it works through implementing agencies—in Thailand the Ministry of the Interior and in Malaysia the Red Crescent Society (Malaysian Red Cross). In the Thai Ministry of Interior the appropriate office is called the "Center for Displaced Persons from Indonesia," a title which reflects a certain Thai sensitivity about the refugee problem.

PROCEDURES

The procedure followed by UNHCR in Thailand is to make an agreement with the Thai agency regarding financial and operational purposes. Agreed on funds are transferred in installments. Whenever 80 percent of an installment has been disbursed, the UNHCR transfers the next installment. UNHCR receives copies of all contracts let by the Thais in fulfillment of the agreement, although it is not always able to evaluate all transactions. Field representatives have access to

rice, for instance, in order to take samples for analysis and checks on quality. In general the arrangement is workable and achieves its purpose, despite the occasional problems previously discussed.

Financial arrangements are of course not cheap, even when UNHCR keeps its costs per day per person down. For 1978 UNHCR spent approximately \$14 million in Thailand, amounting to about 30 cents daily for each refugee. In Malaysia the comparable figure totaled about half that spent in Thailand, or about \$7 to \$8 million for proportionately fewer refugees. The difference is that the daily individual cost is about 3 times that in Thailand.

PASSIVE ROLE

If there are more fundamental difficulties in UNHCR's operation, it should stem from the somewhat passive role which it has either chosen or has had forced upon it. As an agency of the United Nations functioning in and with the cooperation of sovereign states—whether Thailand, Malaysia, or the Philippines—it is reluctant to initiate what it calls a "policy." Thus it must wait for the Royal Thai Government to move to respond to a new challenge or problem. In Malaysia there is a similar difficulty in that refugees are not a popular matter. Moves which appear to accommodate refugees too completely are politically dangerous for both the Malaysian and the United Nations officials.

UNHCR has to proceed carefully because officials of all countries resist the appearance of easing the arrival or life of refugees. Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore earlier told a group of Congressmen that welcoming any refugees was cruel because it encouraged others to come out.⁴ The level would soon be reached where no more could be taken by Singapore or by others. The question of whether the refugees came out because they would go anywhere rather than stay in their homeland, or because they knew there was somewhere relatively comfortable to go, seems to have been resolved. Despite the cramming of tens of thousands of boat people into small quarters in Malaysia, they still come out. Despite the risk of drowning, rape, and pillage by the pirates of the South China Sea, refugees still set out. Despite the difficulties of the first ship the *Huey Fong* both the *Hai Hong* and the *Tung An* still came filled with thousands of refugees. Despite official Thai attempts to shut the Laotian border in November to January 1977-78, refugees still sought to come across, although in reduced numbers. Despite Khmer Rouge patrols on the inside and Thai patrols on the outside of Cambodia, a trickle of refugees has continued into Thailand.

POLITICAL DANGER

There is also a political danger in providing care for refugees which is better than conditions enjoyed by the local populace. Most refugee camps seem to be located in poor areas. Many Thais and Malaysians do not have even an imperfectly guaranteed protein ration. And, even though the UNHCR is providing funding for the refugee support, it is assumed by many local Malaysians and Thais that their Governments are paying to care for the refugees. In fact considerable amounts

⁴ See "Refugee Crisis in Indochina, 1978," hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs.

of money enter the economies when the refugees purchase goods and services locally, so that the net economic effect is favorable rather than a drain.

Nonetheless there is concern that to plan too far ahead for refugees is to invite them to appear. The UNHCR, Thai, and Malaysia Governments are committed to respond only when they must, not to prepare for future refugee populations whose needs will have to be met even temporarily. As a result when surges of refugees have occurred they have caused massive problems in bringing services in line with requirements. Even when circumstances seemed to indicate that refugee populations would expand, as when the Vietnamese overran Cambodia early in 1979, UNHCR representatives in Bangkok were obviously reluctant to discuss plans to deal with a likely increase in Khmer refugees. The UNHCR field officer at Ubon, while impressive in ability and dedication, despite a spiraling camp population through 1978 did not receive his appointment to Ubon until September of that year.

Thus when refugee populations stabilize somewhat, administration is relatively efficient. However, in conditions of rapid expansion UNHCR seems constitutionally unsuited to do more than pursue the problem. Whether this is due to a reluctance to add personnel to UNHCR's Southeast Asian staff to the extent that the operation there would be larger than the home office, or sensitivity to cost, is unsure. It is certain that at present UNHCR cannot hope to do more than trail the quickly breaking developments surrounding Indochina.

VOLUNTARY AGENCIES ⁵

Neither the UNHCR nor the Thai or Malaysian Governments could function in the refugee camps as well as they do without assistance from privately funded volunteer organizations. Some 16 such groups have personnel in Thailand working in various refugee camps or in Bangkok. Some are mission-oriented, others are philanthropic, and still others are service bodies with special functions. Some, like the International Rescue Committee, are based in the United States and not only work with refugees in the field, but also help their resettlement in this country. The map following indicates the location of many of the "Volag" workers, as they are called. The appendix contains a complete list of the agencies in Thailand.

These voluntary workers, often paid a minimal salary, perform a variety of tasks. IRC supports medical personnel at various Thai camps, including coordinators, doctors, medical assistants, and nurses. Food for the Hungry International operates pig and chicken raising projects, sewing, and a milk reconstitution/distribution program in different camps. The Save the Children Federation also provides medical personnel in Ubon.

Voluntary workers also do much of the preliminary evaluation and documentation of refugee applications for admission to the United States under the Indochinese parole program. The section below concerning the American refugee system reflects the importance of the volag workers in this connection.

⁵ See appendix 5, page 30.

ICEM

The Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, or ICEM, is another organization whose services are important to the Indochinese Refugee Program in Southeast Asia. Originally formed to assist the movement of peoples in post-war Europe, ICEM has developed into an international specialized agency. It provides two services in Southeast Asia. One is the medical screening for refugees coming into the United States and the other is arranging air travel for refugees from Thailand to the United States and elsewhere.

ICEM functions are an important aspect of the U.S. refugee program, and the organization exists in Thailand essentially because of the American program. The ICEM financial arrangement calls for reimbursement of expenses incurred in the processing of each refugee plus a per capita surcharge. The most expensive aspect, of course, is air travel. Refugees travel by regular commercial carriers, usually American companies. ICEM negotiates the air fare, which averages around \$460 per adult to the United States. Children from 12 to 18 years of age cost \$160, while the youngest children cost \$12 each. In addition to the air fare, there is a fee for the medical examination, which currently costs \$4 per person. ICEM has effected a saving by changing this procedure. Previously the physical examination took place in Bangkok where it cost \$6. By the time the delegation visited Thailand they had changed to a system of contracts with local hospitals up-country where the necessary examinations were cheaper. In addition to the air fare and the physical examination fee, there is a surcharge of \$30 per refugee. This fee supports the cost to ICEM of running an office in Bangkok.

ICEM's medical procedure is both inexpensive and highly necessary. Up-country hospitals perform chest X-rays, blood tests, and general physical examinations to insure that a refugee would carry no infectious disease to the United States. There have been reports that refugees with infectious conditions have passed through these examinations without detection. At present there is no effective way to monitor or even spot check the physical condition of refugees. However, the majority of those entering the United States are free of contagious diseases.

While ICEM has lowered the cost of its medical examinations it has not been as effective in negotiating lower air fares. Charter flights are unworkable, because the expense of flying empty aircraft from North America to Bangkok eliminates any savings. In the absence of any alternative, U.S. commercial companies must serve. Since American carriers are thus guaranteed full planes at any time, they should perhaps consider lower fares. It is not clear that ICEM has aggressively sought more favorable rates for the refugees.

ICEM is a key link in the American refugee system. However, there are other aspects of this program which should be considered at this time, because they explain how refugees leave countries of first asylum for permanent resettlement abroad.

FUNCTIONING OF THE AMERICAN PROGRAM

Since 1975 the United States has accepted some 40,000 Indochinese. During the initial airlift there were about 130,000 who came to the United States. Currently about 50,000 a year are authorized to enter the country. Their selection and transportation to the United States is the responsibility of the Refugee Section of the U.S. Embassy in Thailand and its counterpart in Malaysia.

Because the American program for Thailand has been operating since 1975, the procedures are well established and reflect much experience. Generally well systematized, the American procedure is depicted in the flow chart in appendix. 2.⁶

The American program consists of several steps. The first is the initial registration of the refugee and determination whether there is a desire to travel to the United States. This step is handled by voluntary agency personnel. At that time the refugee is classified as to eligibility for consideration for parole on the basis of four administrative categories.⁷ These categories were devised to rationalize the flow of would-be refugees at the fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh. They were based on the principle of closeness of association with the United States, so that by means of a fairly elaborate procedure refugees can be classified as to eligibility. These standards were devised by the Department of State. At the time of the first interview a dossier is begun for each refugee family.

The second step is another interview which is intended to reverify the eligibility of the refugee. By this time the caseworker has initiated any correspondence necessary to verify U.S. Government employment or the presence of relatives in the United States. When this has been accomplished, the refugee and his family proceed to the next step, which is an interview by a representative of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The INS official examines the refugee family's documentation and checks to see that the refugees' situation actually corresponds with the facts in the dossier.

The step is in some respects pro forma, because the INS must depend almost entirely on the documentation and background provided by the caseworker. When the immigration officer approves the refugee and his family for parole they join a pool of those eligible for admission to the United States, they receive a medical examination, and await transportation to the United States.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS

There are certain areas which present potential problems, especially in Malaysia where the system has developed almost overnight.

One problem is the ability to be certain that refugees in every case are who they claim to be. There is clear evidence that the refugees have often been in touch with relatives and friends in the United States. They are well informed as to what to tell an interviewer. The refugees are also in camp for several days or weeks before being interviewed. They know what questions are being asked, and what answers gain them entrance to parole programs. They present themselves precisely in the terms prescribed by American law and regulation. There

⁶ See p. 19.

⁷ See list in appendix 7, p. 37. Prior to publication, the State Department added a fifth category especially for Cambodian refugees.

is some question whether the system is able to guarantee correspondence between reality and legal requirements. It is possible that the current procedures only guarantee that the refugees who come to the United States are capable of coping with the system.

Finally, because the refugees in many instances must wait until a sponsor has come forward, they may wait for several weeks before actual departure. This problem is partly because the sponsoring process is handled through a half dozen voluntary agencies whose procedures vary. There is also a general lack of information as to what is involved in sponsoring a refugee family.⁸ As a result there are several thousand refugees who could be taken from Thailand and Malaysia much more quickly and thus release financial and personnel resources for other persons not so quickly resettled elsewhere.

COMPELLING PROBLEMS

The most salient problems the delegation perceived therefore are set forth as follows:

INTERNATIONAL

(1) The Indochinese states continue to create conditions which impel refugees to leave. In the case of the Vietnamese boat people departures have become at least quasi-legal. This situation has created the enormous difficulties experienced by Malaysia in 1978.

(2) The UNHCR responds slowly to increased challenges of exploding refugee populations. By not adding personnel until there is no question that they are necessary, UNHCR's capabilities must almost always be less than the task at hand requires.

(3) UNHCR, in its relations with host countries, is too diffident in pursuit of its aims and of administrative excellence, either by nature of the situation or by design.

(4) Even with UNHCR financial support the countries of first asylum continue to have politically explosive and ethnically hostile refugees in their midst. Resettlement lags severely behind increases in arrivals.

(5) Resettlement efforts continue to lag behind need. So far the United States, France, Australia, with increasing assistance from Canada, have been main countries of permanent asylum. Many other developed countries, including those who have criticized American policy in Indochina, have not made a single move to accept refugees.

AMERICAN CONCERNS

(1) There is a possibility of misrepresentation or fraud in the procedures whereby refugees are screened for admission to the United States.

(2) The economics of ICEM's operation, including level of air fares for refugees and the \$30 surcharge.

(3) The system of obtaining sponsors which currently does not permit a smooth transition between the refugee camps and the United States, or the American practice of keeping refugees in Southeast Asia until sponsorship is obtained.

⁸ See appendix 6 for description.

RECOMMENDATIONS

INTERNATIONAL STEPS

The first problem is to obtain a genuine international interest in an agreement to deal with the refugee problem. This should include a commitment to provide both economic assistance and opportunities for permanent resettlement. Further, there should be assistance in resettling any refugee groups who may ultimately remain (with the acquiescence of the host country) in countries of first asylum.

American posture toward an international approach to the refugee problem could include:

(1) Support of current levels or more of American acceptance of Indochina refugees over the next 3 years, at least.

(2) Encouragement to other nations to accept refugees for resettlement, by a matching arrangement whereby the United States would accept for every Indochinese refugee admitted to countries of Western Europe (exclusive of France) and Japan an additional refugee into the United States up to a certain limit.

(3) Encouragement of international financial support for refugees both in countries of first asylum and of permanent asylum, when those latter are not among the developed nations. This would include either use of International Financial Institution grants or loans, or special multilateral aid commitments, perhaps again on a matching basis. There are countries where there is room for new people who would come as part of a development program rather than as a burden. Pilot projects have been designed which would offer a way to treat the refugees as a resource, and not merely as international flotsam and jetsam.

AMERICAN PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS

On the assumption that the United States will continue to admit refugees, the American program should be improved. The following considerations could assist that purpose.

(1) Reexamine current procedures for interviews and review of refugee status. The proposal is not to stop refugees from reaching the United States, but to protect the integrity of American standards. The General Accounting Office is preparing a study at subcommittee request which addresses this problem in some detail.

(2) Once refugees are declared eligible for parole, bring them to the United States to a central point or points where they would await sponsorship. This procedure has been proposed by Leo Cherne of the Citizens Commission for Indochinese Refugees as an improvement over the current system.

(3) Reexamine the relation between the U.S. refugee program and the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration. Can air fares be lowered? Can the surcharge be eliminated? Does the U.S. Embassy need ICEM?

(4) Encourage UNHCR, American, and other officials to pursue improvement of refugee conditions on minor points. These might include granting of improved access to refugee facilities for religious leaders, privacy of mail, and such amenities which would improve refugee morale.

DELEGATION CONCERNS REGARDING THE ISSUE OF POW/MIA'S IN CONNECTION WITH REFUGEE SITUATION

The delegation, in accordance with subcommittee responsibilities for oversight of the issue of American prisoners and missing in Southeast Asia, undertook to pursue certain inquiries on this mission.

The large numbers of refugees leaving Vietnam and Laos, where hundreds of American servicemen disappeared during the Indochinese conflict, offer potential for intelligence as to the fate of these prisoners and missing. It is not clear to the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs that the screening of refugees for such information has been assiduous enough. There have been arguments that to seek such information too vigorously would induce refugees to manufacture accounts to obtain more favorable consideration for entry into the United States. However, staff investigations and conversations with American officials in Thailand on earlier missions had revealed that even refugees already approved for admission to the United States had not been interviewed concerning possible knowledge of Americans in their countries.

The delegation therefore undertook to pursue with officials in Bangkok the concerns of the subcommittee in this regard. The delegation was impressed with the knowledge, attitude, and dedication of Lt. Col. Paul Mather, liaison officer for the Joint Casualty Resolution Center, official U.S. agency with responsibility for pursuing information as to American servicemen killed, captured, or missing in combat circumstances. At the time of the mission Lieutenant Colonel Mather and one noncommissioned officer were responsible for substantive interrogation of refugees with appropriate information, not only in Thailand but also in Malaysia. Since that time an additional noncommissioned officer has been added to Lieutenant Colonel Mather's staff. It appeared that when voluntary agency officials learned of any information in possession of refugees, they normally notified Lieutenant Colonel Mather. Although there was an interview process which provided some useful MIA information, it was not thoroughly applied in first interviews of refugees. Since the screening system depended on the voluntary agency interviews to alert Lieutenant Colonel Mather and his staff, the subcommittee strongly encourages American officials in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, and in other capitals of countries of first asylum, to direct that such information be specifically sought.

The delegation also intended to take up the matter of American prisoners and missing in Southeast Asia when it visited Hanoi. However, because of the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia just as the delegation was scheduled to visit the Vietnamese capital, the planned visit was cancelled. Because the subcommittee chairman and members believed strongly that the appropriate and orderly procedure for the return of remains of American servicemen was through regular American military channels, the delegation was prepared to acknowledge any offer of remains by the Vietnamese but to insist that they return such remains separately. The subcommittee continues to consider orderly procedures in this regard to be essential to normal relations with the Vietnamese.

APPENDIX 1

REFUGEE SITUATION IN THAILAND

GENERAL/REGIONAL

Since April 1975 about 500,000 persons have fled Indochina (not including about 160,000 Khmer who fled to Vietnam).

Since the U.S. airlift of 130,000 Indochinese from Saigon and Phnom Penh in 1975, about 60,000 refugees have been accepted by the United States; 40,000 by France; 13,000 by Australia; 6,000 by Canada and 5,000 by all other countries.

There are presently almost 200,000 Indochinese refugees in region—140,000 (70 percent) land refugees in Thailand and 60,000 boat refugees (including almost 50,000 in Malaysia alone; Thailand has just over 3,000 boat refugees).

More than 85,000 boat refugees fled Vietnam during 1978; most in second half of year; 3 record months were:

Region:

October	12, 000
November	20, 000
December	15, 000

Thailand:

October	800
November	1, 500
December	1, 000

Dimensions of land problem—Ethnic breakdown of 140,000 refugees in 13 land camps:

Ethnic	Population	Percent
Lao	65, 000	47
Hmong and Highlander	55, 000	40
Cambodian	15, 000	11
Vietnamese from Laos	2, 500	2

Land camps grew by more than 40,000 in 1978 (from 98,000 at the end of 1977).

Monthly arrival rate for refugees is about 4,000 of whom almost all are from Laos (only 100 to 200 Khmer); 70 percent of arrivals from Laos are ethnic Lao, remainder Hmong and some Vietnamese.

Although about 2,000 refugees monthly depart for resettlement abroad, camps have been growing at 3,700 per month.

CAMP PROBLEMS

Confinement (40 percent of population in camp for over 3 years).

Boredom; social, psychological stress.

One in three refugees in Thailand are children 12 years of age or younger.

THIRD COUNTRY RESETTLEMENT

The United States has accepted a total of 40,000 Indochinese refugees from Thailand since 1975; France has accepted about 30,000 refugees; and Australia about 5,000.

During 1978, about 25,000 refugees departed from Thailand:

The United States has taken about 15,000; France about 7,500; Australia about 3,200; and Canada about 200; other countries account for the remainder.

Despite current resettlement programs, for every three refugees who arrive in camps, only one departs.

U.S. PROGRAM

About 16,875 land refugees will be approved during the period May 1, 1978, to April 30, 1979.

Waiting time for a U.S. immigration interview is now a minimum of 1 year because of the backlog of qualified refugees.

About 10,000 Lao and about 10,000 Hmong, and other highland refugees, now qualify under criteria of close association with the United States but for whom there are no available U.S. parole numbers.

SUMMARY OF REFUGEE SITUATION IN THAILAND, DEC. 31, 1978

	Arrivals	Departures	Residual population	Percent increase over past year
Refugee population (1975-78):				
1975.....	77,241	12,755	64,486	
1976.....	35,558	24,178	75,866	18
1977.....	35,750	14,021	97,595	29
1978.....	67,429	26,297	138,727	42
Total.....	215,978	77,251	138,727	
	Land	Boat	Total	Percent of total
Current refugee population:				
Lao (includes Hmong).....	119,178	0	119,178	86
Khmer.....	14,566	216	14,782	11
Vietnamese.....	1,788	2,979	4,767	3
Total.....	135,532	3,195	138,727	100
Cumulative departures (1975-78)		Current rate of land population growth		
United States.....	36,176	Average monthly arrivals.....		4,000
France.....	31,480	Average backlog registrations.....		1,700
Australia.....	4,957	Average gross monthly camp increase.....		5,700
Others.....	4,638	Average monthly land departure.....		2,000
Total.....	77,251	Net monthly land increase.....		3,700
	Ceiling	Approved	Departed	Remaining allocation
U.S. refugee programs in Thailand (as of Dec. 31, 1978):				
1975 Lao program.....	3,466	3,412	3,412	54
1976 expanded parole program.....	10,050	10,050	10,050	0
1975-78 Vietnamese/Cambodian parole, conditional entry humanitarian parole, and immigrant visas.....	Indefinite	8,731	7,761	Indefinite
1977, Indochinese parole program:				
Land.....	8,000	8,000	7,231	0
Boat.....	2,306	2,306	2,286	0
1978: Indochinese parole program: Boat.....				
Land.....	16,875	9,719	3,350	7,156
Boat.....	Indefinite	1,023	540	Indefinite
Total.....	52,099	42,789	36,176	9,310

AMERICAN REFUGEE PROGRAM IN THAILAND FLOW CHART

LAOS
CAMBODIA
VIETNAM
FRANCE
AUSTRALIA
CANADA
Other Third Countries
UNITED STATES

T H A I L A N D

REFUGEE CAMP

SELF-RESETTLEMENT
RTG JAIL
DETENTION CENTER

BANGKOK TRANSIT CENTERS
SUNN PLU
DIN DAENG

RTG/UNHCR CAMP-ENTRY & FOOD ROLL REGISTRATION
U.S. PAROLE PROGRAM REGISTRATION
OTHER THIRD COUNTRY PAROLE PROGRAM
INDEFINITE RESIDENCE
PRE-INS INTERVIEW & REVERIFICATION
U.S. IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE INTERVIEWS
REJECTED
APPROVED POOL
OUTPROCESSING
APPROVED POOL
DOCUMENTATION (PHOTOS, VOLAG BIO, FINGERPRINTING)
MEDICAL PROCESSING
PREDEPARTURE INTERVIEW

NOT QUALIFIED
QUALIFIED POOL
APPROVED POOL
APPROVED POOL

U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM - PROCESSING SEQUENCE

P-Registers and categorizes refugees in camp
R-Separates & tabulates qualified, non-qualified cases
R-Opens qualified files & makes master list
C-Identifies qualified cases for INS presentation
C-Sends Visa Falcon cables (Cats. I, II, III, IV)
C-Sends Red Cross relative verification cables (Cat. I)
C-Sends USG employment verification cable (Cat. II)
E-Reviews and scores civil/military histories (Cat. III)
C-Prepares interview lists, INS forms, file envelopes.
E-Re-interviews and presents refugees to INS officers
I-Interviews refugees and approves or rejects them for U.S. parole
C-Logs, approved persons, and completes Volag bios
V-Sends Volag bios to ACVA, logs sponsor assurances.
S-Tabulates INS actions, assigns alien numbers.
M-Assembles data on approved cases for computer input
C-Monitors medical, security, administrative clearances
C-Corresponds with refugees, Volags, and sponsors
C-Prepares I-94's for cleared cases
C-Forwards envelopes to ICE: 6 cases ready move.
C-Prepares pre-departure packets for refugees, ...
T-Interviews refugees in camp for family changes, ...
T-Meets incoming refugees to verify arrival
T-Maintains refugee transit and status records.
T-Distributes clothing allowance
T-Informs refugees of their status if travel is delayed
T-Notifies caseworkers of refugee departures

ABBREVIATIONS:
P-Prescreening
R-Research
C-Caseworker
E-Ethnic Affairs Officer
I-Immigration & Naturalization Service Officer
V-Volag Liaison
S-Statistics
M-Computer
F-Field Assistant
T-Transit Officer

APPENDIX 3

APPEAL TO HON. JOEL PRITCHARD BY HMONGS OF NONKHAI CAMP

LAO REFUGEE CAMP BAN VINAI,
Pakchom-Loei, Thailand, January 5, 1979.

Subject: Request of Hmong refugees of Laos to immigrate to the United States of America.

Hon. Mr. JOEL PRITCHARD,
Congress of the United States,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. JOEL PRITCHARD: We are agreed to request to you, sir, that our country has been totally taken over by the Communists with the knowledge and involvement of the super powers who signed a treaty which resulted in the takeover.

Upon these precipitous developments occurring so quickly before our very eyes, we the Laotian people who had formerly been involved in resisting the Communist North Vietnam side-by-side with the United States, were facing the revenge of these Communist enemies, and the loss of human rights, therefore had to flee from this Communist menace and leave our beloved country and ask for temporary asylum in Thailand at this time.

Even though Laos has fallen to the Communists, we still have confidence in you, sir, and the American people and the people of the free world, that you will not fail to act to preserve your reputation for upholding human rights and your good example in the resistance of the Communists. Your Nation, sir, and other free world nations have land and economies sufficient to support the Hmong refugees of Laos who desire to begin a new life, for our numbers.

Dear sir, we beg to inform you that we are tired of war and loathe the fears in this world with which the Communists threaten us again. Because Lao Red and North Vietnam have a great plan to extinguish all of the Hmong people in this world with all their possibilities and said that:

1. Hmong people who are still staying in Laos now all are General Vang Pao and America's soldiers, defectors, and intelligent agents.
2. The refugees who had gone to Thailand just to form a group training for return to fight in Laos, not really refugees.

(All of these causes which create by Lao Red and North Vietnam are causeless: and lie every body in this world)

By these causes, North Vietnam and his gloves Lao Red are trying to destroy Hmong's people as many as they can such:

A. Use aircraft and all war weapons to kill Hmong people since 1975 until now included the resistances zones and the zones which before were communist with Lao Red and his box North Vietnam as Phu Nhai Phu Yer.

B. Separate members in the family into 2 pieces as Phu Long Phu Lat and Phu Nhai Phu Yer as:

B1. Children who are 8 years old with father live in one place.

B2. Children who are under 7 years old with mother live in an other place than the North Vietnam's troops got to maltreat which the Occidental named hybridize (hybridization).

C. Sent their troops to intercept every foot-path and trails where Hmong people use to flee out the country, if they see any where they kill all.

Therefore, we base our appeal upon the President Jimmy Carter's policy of standing for human rights and beg to request you your government, congress, and American people to give consideration to the following points:

1. Please extend the refugees program until all refugees in Thailand are accepted.
2. Please give the legal number to the Hmong refugees to immigrate to the United States as Vietnamese and Cambodians, because Hmong refugees are one half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of all Indochinese refugees in Thailand now, with comparison. And we see

the Hmong refugees who had gone to the United States can adapt to the local society and skill without problem. So please give more alien numbers to the Hmong refugees and do not make them a lot of conditions.

3. We beg to inform you, sir, at this time, the North Vietnamese have increased their strength in Laos to 90,000 troops. If you, sir, and your Government are not going to accept all the Hmong Refugees, would you kindly completely drive out all the North Vietnamese from the land of Laos, so that the Laotian people will not have to be concerned with or involved with America in this refugee problem.

4. If you, sir, and your Government, do not give consideration to taking Hmong refugee to the United States, these refugees will have to be involved in a war of revenge which the people of Laos face without question, and when refugees to become involved in this war, the American people must surely be involved also.

It is impossible to plan anything for the refugees who volunteers to stay or those in Laos who desire to come to Thailand because we don't know how the situation will be. But as for the refugees in Thailand at this time, all of them to a man 100% are United in this request.

Affirming all the above mentioned reasons, we trust that you, sir, the congressmen and the American Government will solve this problem.

In conclusion, the Hmong refugees hopeful that you will give them consideration with humanitarian.

With the Greatest Respects.

1. Mr. Vang Yee. The Representative of Hmong refugee in Thailand.
2. Mr. Vue May. Deputy of Vinai Camp.
3. Mr. Vang Neng. Deputy of Vinai Camp.
4. Mr. Lee Pao Vang. Chief of Hmong Nong Khay Camp.

APPENDIX 4

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON EUROPEAN MIGRATION: STATISTICS, FORMS, AND PROCEDURES

Movements to United States from Thailand monthly during 1978

January	653
February	494
March	831
April	1,007
May	1,303
June	1,559
July	1,248
August	1,561
September	1,437
October	1,513
November	1,565
December	1,384
Total	14,555

AMERICAN FLIGHTS AVAILABLE FOR REFUGEE TRANSPORTATION

U.S. Air company: Participating carriers: Routings	Arriving flight	Arriving port: International fare	Domestic destinations	Domestic fare	Comments
Northwest Orient (NW): Thai International (TG), Cathay Pacific (CX), Air France (AF), Alitalia (AZ): Bangkok-Hong Kong (Manila)-Tokyo-Seattle. Bangkok-Hong Kong (Manila)-Tokyo-Honolulu/Los Angeles. Bangkok-Hong Kong (Manila)-Tokyo-Honolulu/San Francisco. Bangkok-Manila-Chicago. Bangkok-Hong Kong (Manila)-Tokyo-New York.	NW-008 NW-022 NW-010 NW-004 NW-008	Seattle: US\$371/adult. Honolulu: US\$371/adult; Angeles: US\$371/adult. Honolulu; US\$317/adult; Francisco: US\$371/adult. Chicago: US\$437/adult. New York: US\$454/adult.	Connection via Chicago to Midwest, East, Southeast. California, Southwest, south Midwest, Southeast. do. Midwest, Southeast, east coast. East coast, Northeast.	50 percent economy on internal Northwest connections. Normal economy fare on other domestic companies.	All Northwest arrivals spend 1 night in Hong Kong or Manila and arrive in the United States next day. Departure possible Sunday through Thursday.
Pan American (PA): Bangkok-Los Angeles. Bangkok-San Francisco. Bangkok-Tokyo-New York. Bangkok-Tokyo-Honolulu.	PA-002 PA-006 PA-800 PA-896	Los Angeles: US\$371/adult. San Francisco: US\$371/adult. New York: US\$454/adult. Honolulu: US\$317/adult.	California, West, Southwest, south Midwest, Southeast. do. Northeast. Honolulu only.	Normal economy fare on domestic connection.	Same day connection, Bangkok to United States available every Monday, Wednesday, Friday, though sometimes PA will include Hong Kong overnight in group itinerary.
Trans World Airways (TW): Thai International (TG): Bangkok-Paris-New York (London).	TW-803	New York: US\$454/adult.	Northeast.	Normal economy fare on domestic carrier.	Departures every Monday, Thursday, arriving 1 day later.

Map showing routing and destination of refugees in the United States by carrier



AIR COMPANY USAGE, 4TH QUARTER, 1978

	Northwest		Pan Am		Trans World		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
October	872	57	649	43			1,521
November	850	54	715	46			1,565
December	651	47	595	43	138	10	1,384
Total	2,373	53	1,959	44	138	3	4,470
Average	791	53	653	44	46	3	1,490

SPACE: 1ST QUARTER, 1979

Airline----- P.O.E.-----	Northwest					Pan Am					Trans World		Totals by P.O.E					Total	
	LAX	ORD	SEA	SFO	Total	HNL	J. F. K.	LAX	SFO	Total	J. F. K.	Total	HNL	J. F. K.	LAX	ORD	SEA		SFO
January-----	160	160	580	-----	900	15	-----	655	100	770	-----	-----	15	-----	815	160	580	100	1,670
February-----	180	160	500	-----	840	60	-----	775	-----	835	-----	-----	60	-----	955	160	500	-----	1,675
March-----	140	160	560	-----	860	30	-----	600	190	820	-----	-----	30	-----	740	160	560	190	1,680
Total-----	480	480	1,640	-----	2,600	105	-----	2,030	290	2,425	-----	-----	105	-----	2,510	480	1,640	290	5,025

Note: J. F. K. = New York, LAX = Los Angeles, ORD = Chicago, SEA = Seattle, SFO = San Francisco, HNL = Honolulu.

U.S. REFUGEE PROGRAM IN THAILAND: PROCEDURES AND PAPERWORK

1. A family is approved by INS, and JVA caseworker immediately provides ICEM with a photocopy of the family's immigration dossier.
2. From the information on the dossier photocopy, ICEM establishes a family registration sheet in two copies, one for later action and one for statistic keeping only. These are kept together on file by T-number until the family is ready for travel and ICEM action at a later date.
3. At the time of INS approval, ICEM Staff working with the INS team fingerprints refugees over 14 years of age for including in the travel dossier, and photographs each family members, Photographs are utilized later at the time of travel document.
4. In camps where medical examinations are performed, all family members undergo medical examinations shortly after INS approval. Results are received and the medical examination form is certified by the ICEM medical officer if no class A medical conditions have been detected, ICEM operations and JVA are informed of families medically fit to travel by means of a list. Smallpox and Cholera vaccinations are also obtained and booklets provided by the Thai Red Cross.
5. When the assurance of sponsorship from ACVA is received and the family is determined ready to travel by JVA and U.S. refugee section, the travel dossier containing immigration documents is passed to an ICEM staff member working in the U.S. Refugee Section Office.
6. ICEM staff at U.S. Refugee receives the travel dossier, makes an initial documentation check, and establishes family member envelopes for separation of individual documents with a checklist attached according to the age and documentation requirements of each person.
7. When the ICEM worker completes the initial check he forwards the travel dossier to ICEM operational section with a daily list as record.
8. The program control section of ICEM operations receives the dossier and registers in a logbook the location of the family, date of receipt by ICEM voluntary agency and airport of final destination.
9. Program control informs statistics of cases received and now with ICEM, and separates the working copy of the family registration, enters the voluntary agency and destination information accordingly. ICEM statistics transfers the statistics copy of the registration to his active files and counts the case as with ICEM.
10. The ICEM operations officer maintains control of the transit center population on the basis of arrivals from camp and foreseen departures, as reported daily by ICEM statistician. When a sufficient number of refugees are available for movement in one camp and sufficient space foreseen available in the transit center, a movement list is typed and passed to UNHCR to arrange movement with the Ministry of Interior of the Royal Thai Government.
11. When a family's arrival date in Bangkok has been established, a tentative air booking for departure from Bangkok is made by the operations officer. The booking information is noted on the family registration and the proflight (or group) list is established.
12. As bookings are made, the proflight is passed to program control for logbook registration of departure date. The movement section then receives the dossier and separates the registration from the dossier, which is passed to the documentation section.
13. The movement section types name lists to be passed to air companies to obtain bookings to final destination in the USA.
14. When the air company provides requested bookings, information is entered on the family sheet and booking telexes are sent to ICEM/New York City for notification to agencies of expected arrivals of refugees. ICEM Headquarters in Geneva are informed of bookings notified to New York.
15. Movements section types Thai exit permit.
16. Promissory notes are typed by ICEM documentation section following the calculation as shown on the registration. The schedule of repayment of the airfare loan is based on the flat rate of USD 320 per adult.
17. Travel documents are typed for each family by documentation section.

18. After refugees arrive in Bangkok, documentation staff meets the refugees in Bangkok transit center and obtain signatures on Thai exit permit, promissory notes, and travel documents. Travel documents are presented to U.S. Refugee Section officials for signature and stamping, and with the exit permit are presented to the immigration division of the Thai Government for exit approval of the refugees.

19. Travel dossiers, documents, and exit permits are finally checked for completion and returned to the movements section for departure.

20. Movements personnel receive tickets from air companies and check for accuracy against the advance copy of the ICEM nominal roll.

21. Movement staff prepare Thai immigration departure cards, ticket cover explaining the refugee's travel, and ICEM baggage tags.

22. Airport handouts are assembled for the refugees. These include information for the sponsors regarding social security, and an explanation to the refugee in his language, and an explanation to the refugee in his language of airport, airplane and travel procedures.

23. ICEM/Hong Kong is informed in advance of bookings for those groups that spend overnight in Hong Kong in order to assist in transit.

24. With 24 hours before departure ICEM medical staff does a predeparture medical check of departing refugees in order to determine current health and fitness to travel. A medical pre-embarkation certification is signed by the medical officer.

25. The final size and composition of the groups is checked and certified by the ICEM operation officer who signs the final departure nominal roll.

26. At the transit center at pickup time, refugees are given ICEM stickers for their baggage.

27. Refugees are escorted by ICEM staff to the airport for departure. ICEM staff guides the refugee groups through airline check-in and Thai immigration. In the departure lounge the refugees are briefed on their travel, and given their documents contained in a large white plastic bag showing the ICEM insignia, and upon which is written the name of the refugee and voluntary agency for easy identification upon arrival in the United States.

28. Departure confirmation is telexed to ICEM Headquarters in Geneva.

29. Departures are registered in logbook and statistics. Departure statistics, along with all refugees with ICEM according to processing stage, are recorded daily.

30. Nominal rolls are forwarded to ICEM headquarters Geneva, ICEM/New York, and interested parties in Bangkok for statistical and accounting purposes.

ICEM MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS FOR U.S.-DESTINED REFUGEES FROM THAILAND

This paper outlines steps and procedures taken to identify and document both communicable, excludable and nonexcludable types of medical and physical disorders.

I. REGISTRATION AND PRESCREENING IN THE CAMP

The JVA staff attempts to identify potential medical deferrals from their first contact with a refugee in the camp. When JVA registration and prescreening teams have their first contact with a refugee, any visually identifiable medical conditions are noted on the prescreening bio. This is done for both potentially qualifying and nonqualifying registrants. For example, prescreeners are specifically on the lookout for leprosy, mental retardation, mental, narcotic addiction, and other identifiable disabilities. In addition, other conditions such as pregnancies, war injuries, or mental defects will be noted if identified by the prescreener. Such observations identify potential medical deferrals at an early date. Following the registration and prescreening phase, refugees who qualify are interviewed some months later by the Immigration and Naturalization Service officers. Following INS approval, a Volag biographic form is filled out which is used to solicit the sponsorship for the refugee. Disabilities noted at prescreening stage are recorded on the bio, as well as any additional observations. For those refugees approved by INS for U.S. parole, JVA and ICEM then utilize the following procedures for conducting medical examinations, followup treatment and final out-processing.

II. ICEM MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Medical examinations are performed in accordance with USPHS requirements. Refugees must have a chest X-ray, blood test and physical examination prior to entry to the United States. The basic ICEM test includes these tests which are principally designated to detect class A conditions (chancroid, gonorrhea, granuloma inguinale, infectious leprosy, lymphogranuloma venereum, syphilis, active tuberculosis, mental conditions, mental retardation and narcotic addictions) which can potentially exclude a refugee, or immigrant, from entry into the United States. All persons 16 years of age and older must have chest X-rays and blood tests (about one-third of refugees are under the age of 16). Physical examinations or conditions are conducted on all persons of any age, to detect any diseases such as skin diseases, blindness, cataracts, infections possible mental deficiencies. Although USPHS no longer requires small pox vaccinations or cholera immunizations prior to entry in the United States, at Refugee Section request, both smallpox and cholera continue to be given to refugees destined for the United States. Each refugee is provided with the yellow WHO booklet which should reach the sponsor or local resettlement office with the refugee.

(A) *Procedures for initiating and conducting medical examinations*

Several days after INS completes a round of approvals in the Nong Khai, Loei, Ubon, Leaming, and Songkhla camps, JVA caseworkers submit a list of newly approved refugees to ICEM Medical Services Bangkok. ICEM then coordinates with provincial hospitals in Songkhla, Laemsing, Ubon, and Nong Khai to have these cases bussed, under the supervision of an ICEM nurse, to the provincial hospital. There, they receive chest X-rays, blood tests, and physical examinations, as well as any special tests which might be required, such as cardiologies, eye tests or mental disability tests. In the case of Loei refugee camp, medical examinations are conducted by an ICEM mobile medical unit.

When the examinations have been completed, the medical reports are sent to ICEM Bangkok, where the Coordinator of ICEM Medical Services reviews all of the reports. For all cases which are medically cleared, a list is sent to JVA. For all cases which have a class A, B, or C deferral, a list is sent to JVA annotated to explain the reason for the deferral and approximate period of deferment.

Medically cleared cases are called forward to Bangkok for onward movement to the United States, provided an assurance has been received. For the other 10 camps around the country, where lack of adequate facilities make it impossible to conduct examinations locally, the refugees are moved to the Bangkok transit center, where their examinations are conducted at the Chulalongkorn University Hospital.

(B) *Procedures for notifying JVA of refugees with disabilities*

If any physical or mental disabilities are detected during the medical examination of a refugee, ICEM notifies JVA. If the disability is class B or C, JVA insures JVA Volag is aware of the condition before the refugee departs, so that the Volag and sponsor are prepared for the refugee.

(C) *Procedures for conducting refugee camp or transit center medical followup*

For cases examined in one of the five up-country camps, and found to have a class A deferral such as TB or positive sereology, medical treatment continues in the camp. Follow-up treatment is generally administered by one of the voluntary agency doctors working in the camp. Treatment for TB and VD cases are given in accordance with the requirements of United States Public Health Service. The same procedures are followed in Bangkok for refugees having their medical examinations in Bangkok.

(D) *Procedures for clearing class A deferrals*

The two principal class A deferrals in the camps are TB and positive sereology. These two communicable diseases receive follow-up treatment and are retested until the ICEM medical doctor determines that their disease has been arrested sufficiently to reclassify as class B. When a refugee receives a reclassification as class B, and if he has no other "hold" he will be processed for onward movement to the United States. Meanwhile the medical records for class B refugees, which often times require followup treatment are forwarded to JVA for forwarding to the appropriate New York voluntary agency office.

(E) *Procedures for clearing class B and C deferrals*

Refugees who have class B or C medical deferrals are authorized out-processing and movement to the United States. Their medical records are sent to JVA. JVA then sends the records to the appropriate voluntary agency.

(F) *Procedures for preembarkation check*

In conformity with ICEM regulations, all refugees departing for the United States are examined visually 24 hours prior to embarkation for the United States by either the ICEM doctor or ICEM nurse. This examination is designed to identify those refugees with infectious diseases, such as measles, mumps, or those refugees who appear to be unable to travel on account of a health disorder. If the doctor feels they are unable to travel he will place them on hold and notify JVA. For refugees cleared for travel, a certification is signed confirming their fitness for embarkation.

(G) *Procedures for notifying USPHS and Volags of class A, B, and C medical condition*

For all cases with medical conditions, the complete medical file under seal of confidential envelope accompanies the refugee for presentation to USPHS representatives at port of entry. At the same time, JVR receives duplicate medical records from ICEM. JVA then forwards the records on to the appropriate Volag, in addition to sending a telex notifying the Volag that the records are in route. For cases originating from Loei, Nong Khai, Ubon, Laemsing, and Songkhla JVA receives the medical records approximately at the time the list goes out to the camps to call them forward to Bangkok. This is usually a week to 10 days prior to arrival in Bangkok.

If Volags receive no records they may assume that no medical deferral was detected during the medical examinations.

(H) *Procedures for notifying Volags of cases requiring urgent medical treatment or followup*

There are, on occasion, refugees who require immediate medical treatment upon arrival in the United States. In such cases, ICEM notifies JVA and JVA will notify the New York Volag office by telex or telegram of the details and urgency of the case. We have asked the New York Volags to acknowledge that stateside arrangements have been made before final booking of the refugee is made.

APPENDIX 5

LIST OF REFUGEE RELIEF ORGANIZATIONS IN THAILAND, 1978-79

COMMITTEE FOR COORDINATION OF SERVICES TO DISPLACED PERSONS IN THAILAND (CCSDPT)

(2948-B. Soi Somprasong 3, Petchaburi Road, Bangkok 4, telephone 252-5904)

Mr. Dulal Borpujari, Chairman; Mr. Reginald E. Reimer, Secretary; Dr. Ronald C. Hill, Treasurer; and Mr. Lanjul Chairatana, Member-at-Large.

A. MEMBERS

CAMA—CAMA Services, Inc., SEAsia, 28/2 Pracha-Utit Lane, Pradipat Road, Bangkok 4, telephone 279-7725.

Mr. Reginald E. Reimer, director; Mr. David Andrianoff, project coordinator, P.O. Box 1, Udornthani, telephone 222-406; Mr. Andrew Bishop.

CCTD—Catholic Council of Thailand for Development, 2 Soi Saensuk, Prachasongkroh Road, Bangkok 10, telephone 277-3354, 277-5052-3.

Mr. Pranom Srion, managing director; Mr. Sombat Thavorn, project and welfare department.

CRS—Catholic Relief Services, 12/1 Convent Road, Bangkok 5, telephone 233-7441.

Mr. Joseph S. Curtin, Jr., project director; Mrs. Phongchan Nabangchang, secretary.

FFFM—Finnish Free Foreign Mission, P.O. Box 3, Loei, Thailand, telephone Loei 811-633.

Mr. Toivo J. Yrjola, coordinator of refugee program.

FHI—Food for the Hungry International, GPO Box 2830, Bangkok, telephone 252-7150.

Mr. Dulal Borpujari, Asia director; and Ms. Sumitra, secretary.

TBM—Thailand Baptist mission, GPO Box 832, 6/2 Soi Chidlom, Ploenchit Road, Bangkok, telephone 252-7078.

Dr. Ronald C. Hill, administrator; Mr. Doug Ringer, refugee coordinator, P.O. Box 3, Chanthaburi, telephone 311-925.

IRC—International Rescue Committee, 5 Convent Road, Bangkok 5, telephone 233-7509.

Mr. Ron Drago, administrator, IRC/U.S. Embassy refugee immigration program; Mrs. Lucinda Drago, Ms. Nancy McLaren.

MSF—Medecins Sans Frontieres, Kanikar Court, 128 Saladaeng Road, Bangkok 5, telephone 234-3031-6, extensions 21 or 29.

Dr. Gilles Ress, representative.

OMF—Overseas Missionary Fellowship, 135 Pan Road, Silom, Bangkok 5, telephone 234-2133.

Mr. David Lickard, Thailand, superintendent; Ms. Francoise Cristinel, Transit Centres; Mr. Andrew Way, Bangkok superintendent, 44 Pikul Lane, South Sathorn Road, Bangkok 12, telephone 286-3512.

PVO—Project Vietnam Orphans, P.O. Box 11-1482, Bangkok 11, telephone: 252-4521 (office) or: P.O. Box 55, 4/3-4/4-4/5 Santipap Road, Aranyaprathet, Prachinburi.

Mr. Robert Ashe, administrator; telephone: XXXXXXXXX (home); telephone: Aranyaprathet 231-383.

SCF—The Save the Children Fund, P.O. Box 11-1053, Bangkok 11, or: Apt. A—Hydon Compound, 221 Soi 4 Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 11, telephone: 252-9314.

Mr. C. Leopold, Mr. Vuthichai, assistant.

SPM—Scandinavian Pentecostal Mission, P.O. Box 1, Aranyaprathet, Prachinburi. Ms. Gorel Krohn.

TDH—Tom Dooley Heritage, Inc., P.O. Box 11, Pua, NAN, or: c/o YMCA, 27 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok 12.

Mr. Lloyd Dakin, administrator; Dr. Michael Toole, medical director.

WVF—World Vision Foundation, of Thailand, P.O. Box 1717, Bangkok, or: Kasemkij Bldg., 120 Silom Road, Bangkok 5, telephone: 233-2862-3.

Mr. Fram Jehangir, director; Mr. Paul W. Jones, relief and development coordinator; and Mr. Albert Stetr, deputy R. & D.

YMCA—Young Men's Christian Association, 27 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok 12, telephone: 286-1542, 286-2580; 286-5134, 286-5135.

Mr. Lanjul Chairatana, director; Ms. Pannee Peerasathien, Mr. Chanchai Viranond, and Ms. Julie House (OSB).

YWCA—Young Women's Christian Association, 12 South Sathorn Road, Bangkok 12, telephone: 286-5764, 286-0126.

Khun Boonchuan Hongskrai and Khun Prathumporn Thongpradit.

B. PERMANENT OBSERVERS

ICEM—Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration, 3 Patpong Road, Bangkok 5, telephone: 233-7110.

Dr. Albert Corcos and staff and Mr. J. Schiltz.

ICRC—International Committee of the Red Cross Delegation in Thailand, P.O. Box 11-1492, Bangkok 11, or: 924/9 Ruam Rudi 1, Bangkok 11, telephone: 252-2358.

Mr. F. Amar, head of delegation; and Mr. Verner Knobel, deputy.

TRC—Thai Red Cross Society relief division, 1873 Rama IV Road, Patumwan, Bangkok, telephone: 252-7976, 252-8181, Extension 196. Dr. Tawan S. Bunnag.

UNHCR—United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, P.O. Box 2-121, Rajdamnern, Bangkok 2, or: United Nations Building, Rajdamnern Avenue, Bangkok 2, telephone: 282-9171-91.

Pierre Jambor, regional representative; Mr. Marlin Barber, deputy.

C. ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

OHI—Operation H.E.L.P., Inc., c/o Y.M.C.A., 27 Sathorn Road, Bangkok 12. Mr. Richard (Buzz) Thompson, representative.

D. VISITORS

FFAC—Friends for All Children, 125/26 Ruam Rudi 4, Bangkok 11, telephone: 252-7620. Ms. Doddie Dosh, administrator.

NRD/NCA—Norwegian Refugee Council/Norwegian Church Aid, G.P.O. Box 81, Bangkok, or: 7/2 Sukhumvit 18 (Soi Pichit) Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok 11, telephone: 391-7098.

Mr. Tove Bjerkan, regional representative for South East Asia; Ms. Aym-on Supawatvorakun.

CCIT—Church of Christ in Thailand, 14 Pramuan Road, Bangkok 5, telephone: 234-6562. Mr. Pisarn Amart.

E. EMBASSIES INVOLVED IN REFUGEE MATTERS

American Embassy, 95 Wireless Road, Bangkok, telephone: 252-5040-9. Mr. Thomas Barnes, office of refugee operations.

Australian Embassy, Anglo-Thai Building, 7th floor, 64 Silom Road, Bangkok, telephone: 233-5970-9. Mr. Louis Magee.

APPENDIX 6

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE LETTER AND EXPLANATION OF SPONSORING ARRANGEMENT

NONG KHAI, *July*^{*}18, 1978.

Re IRC medical assistance to new refugees.

Mr. CAREL STERNBERG,
I.R.C. Executive Director,
New York, N.Y.

DEAR SIR: I know I really must find time to get this report to you. Sometimes, I do find a few minutes at night, but each time I try to start, I feel overwhelmed with what I mean to write.

You will probably agree with me that the emergency situation in the different detention centers (DC's), notably Phon Phisai and Bungkan districts, takes priority over the general reports from the camps, except the wards that admit the sick newcomers. Therefore, my emphasis now is in this area.

Enclosed are photos of recent new arrivals. Again, as with previous pictures that I've sent, each is "worth a thousand words." However, I wrote notes on the back of some. I am very careful about the negatives and for fear that they get lost in the mail, I am not sending any yet.

Reports from newcomers are truly distressing. With their little crops destroyed by poison gas, they leave their villages with no food provisions. For weeks they hide in mountain jungles avoiding Vietnamese and Pathet Lao patrols. They eat roots and leaves, sometimes poisonous mushrooms. Nobody dares beg for rice from Lao settlements. Many contract malaria; whiplashes from brambles and bushes get infected and become festering ulcers; their feet terribly swollen. When enemy troops sight them, they are fired upon and a number sustain gunshot wounds which, too, get readily infected.

Out of the thousands who leave the villages only a few hundred reach the river where more are decimated by drowning. Women with babies traditionally strapped to their backs are so faint with hunger, pain and fear that they lose consciousness while being towed by the "stronger" members of the family. When they regain consciousness, the babies at their backs have died of drowning.

The Mekong river at this time is quite swollen and debris swirls wildly in the current. Being mountain people, the Hmongs are helpless in water and cannot swim. They grab on any number of floating objects, banana stalks, dead limbs of trees. A few manage to bring empty plastic gallon containers, still others inflate ordinary grocery plastic bags. It is not unusual to find these survivors clinging to their makeshift "life-savers" even long after they have been in the detention centers. They carry them up to the hospital wards where they finally get proper treatment.

Those delirious with fever due to various causes simply float unmindful of which side of the river they are. They are plucked out of the water by fellow escapees. Then they are picked up by Thai patrols and brought to the nearest detention center.

The horror and misery of their flight to safety is etched in their blank, tear-stained faces. Men and women weep readily at the nightmarish memory of their ordeal. Husbands, wives, children, parents have been lost in the process. Gone is the familiar look of initial elation found among newcomers. One is ready to assume that they know very little the difference between communism and freedom. Their main concern is to escape oppression and annihilation of their tribes.

At the local detention centers, their foremost need is for rest. They are seen sprawled on the ground not caring much for food. But hunger soon takes over from fatigue. The food served by the Thai authorities, while not meant so, is just right for their alimentary tract: rice and soup with vegetables well done. Even the bland diet cannot be tolerated by the digestive system of those who have suffered prolonged starvation. They develop vomiting and diarrhea or severe gas pains.

The IRO medical team is almost always on the spot to render first aid to the new arrivals. No one knows for sure when they come, but the need to follow up treatment and change wound dressings of previous cases almost daily, prepares the team for any new ones coming. Antibiotics, vitamins, fever pills are literally dropped into the mouths of semiconscious patients. Abscesses are incised, drained, and dressed, ulcers debrided, gunshot wounds cleaned and stitched, recent abrasions painted with disinfectant. Bandage, gauze, cotton, and plaster are used by the kilograms. Cleaning salves and tinctures flow. * * * God, they deserve every little help we can give them; they deserve everything!

After a few days at the first detention center, usually 3 or 4 days, they are transported to the stockade in the main district of Nong Khai—another detention area. Here it is easy to get out those who need immediate hospitalization and are readily given permission to move to the camp hospitals. The others are left and taken care of by a CRS paramedic team.

Our doctors and nurses at the wards are doing a very fine job, oftentimes working overtime: cleaning, cutting hairs, dressing wounds, administering fluids and other medications; feeding; bathing babies; or just plain chatting with those who are disconsolate. Some are too weak to wash what little clothing they have especially those with bowel incontinence. These we provide with old clothing when available or we buy new ones.

The continuing need for emergency funds is evident. We buy medicines for the detention centers. Our regular, monthly supply is good only for the camp OPD and ward patients. Sleeping mats for the inpatients as some of them have to stay on the floors when beds are full, sometimes two in one. When the patients are discharged, they take with them the mats, pillows, blankets, and mosquito nets. They don't have enough for the whole family.

In spite of the grimness of the situation the mortality is almost negative. They recover slowly with proper nutrition and medication and good nursing care. Only one newborn baby died 5 days after she was brought to the Nong Khai Hospital. She was born right after the young (widowed during escape) mother crossed the river. The baby was premature and developed respiratory distress.

How long the emergency period will last is anybody's guess. Our previous predictions have failed. We thought that with the rising water level of the Mekong River, the influx will abate. During the month of May 2,375 new refugees (mostly Hmong, a few Laotians and Vietnamese) were transferred to the camps.¹ In June, 1,365 new refugees moved into the camps. And as of yesterday afternoon, July 17, already 1,677 have been cleared from the detention center and brought to the camps. Many more are now waiting to get inside. Hundreds more are coming almost every day and fill up the district DC's as soon as they are vacated, or even before they are completely emptied.

This is up to the minute situation at the DC's and at our wards. I hope, sir, you will bear with the delay in writing of what I reported to you during our meeting in Bangkok. The general camp report will follow as soon as I finish it.

Let me just add here now that your visit not long after that of Mr. Cherne and group is most encouraging to us. Not every refugee is aware of your deep concern and continuing efforts to support them, but the number of those who benefit from this concern and efforts is great indeed.

Best regards to all.

Sincerely and respectfully,

DOMINICA P. GARCIA, M.D.

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE COMMITTEE

SPONSOR INFORMATION SHEET

1. *What is sponsorship?*

The International Rescue Committee considers private or group sponsorship to be a service offered to the IRC and to refugees entering the United States under its auspices. While it can take many forms, sponsorship is essentially assistance to a refugee in achieving familiarity with and self-sufficiency in his new life. Sponsors are a refugee's main point of contact with American society, and they can help him interpret this society as it affects his life—in terms of language, housing, employment, schooling, and all aspects of daily life.

¹ Departure for third countries from the Hong Khai camps: May, 567 individuals; June, 631; July, no departure yet.

2. How long does sponsorship last?

There is no fixed time for sponsorship. Ideally, sponsors are fully involved with a refugee until he is self-sufficient and his family is well-launched in America. This is a gradual process, with the refugees taking an increasingly independent role in their own resettlement, while the sponsors' role becomes one of adviser and friend. Self-sufficiency and independence come at varying rates, from just a month or two to several months, depending on the circumstances of the individual refugee family and the type of community in which he is being resettled.

3. What are the legal responsibilities of a sponsor?

Sponsorship entails no legal obligations. Refugees enter the United States legally and, like everyone else, are legally responsible for their own actions.

4. What financial commitment is a sponsor making?

Sponsorship is as much a matter of time as of money. What a refugee really needs is his sponsors' time—to take him and his family for job interviews, for health care, for school enrollment, and to familiarize him with local services, public transportation, shopping centers, et cetera. Prior to the refugee's arrival, the sponsor devotes time to locating housing, furniture, household goods, and initial food supplies.

Money, of course, is also part of this. IRC can provide some financial backing for the sponsorship. This could be first and last month rent and deposit on an apartment the sponsor has located, or help purchasing furniture, clothing, and food. The specifics can be worked out between you and the local IRC office, based on specific needs of a refugee family. This agreement will be concrete prior to the arrival of the refugees.

All Indochinese refugees are eligible for Federal assistance under the Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP), administered by local public assistance offices. International Rescue Committee prefers that refugees get employment as soon as possible, rather than relying on cash assistance. This is not always possible, however, as some families have no wage earner, or have health problems, or some other condition precluding immediate employment. Also, some localities have few entry-level jobs available for non-English-speaking and/or unskilled persons. In such cases, there is no recourse except public assistance. Persons receiving IRAP cash assistance should at least be enrolled in English and/or vocational training classes (available free to Indochinese in most areas), toward their eventual self-sufficiency. We do encourage enrolling refugees for medicaid and food stamps as soon as possible after arrival.

5. What are some of the specific things a sponsor can or should do for a refugee?

Enclosed is an outline of what IRC considers resettlement responsibilities.

6. How much choice does a sponsor have in selecting a family, and how much notice before their arrival?

As soon as a refugee is approved for entry into the United States, his bio-data is sent to New York, for allocation to local offices. Consequently, the local International Rescue Committee office knows the general background of each individual or family well before arrival. The office will do its best to match any requests you may have concerning ethnic background and family size. Criteria for admission to the United States do not contain any requirements as to language ability, education, skills or resettlement, however—a person is a refugee because of his past, not his future. Many of the families who particularly need the help of sponsors are large, or unskilled, or from remote, unsophisticated areas.

There is usually little advance warning of arrival. We are processing about 3,000 persons a month for entry into the United States, and last-minute switches, medical holds, cancellations, and similar problems are endemic. And processing is lengthy—it may be 6 or more months before an approved refugee reaches the United States, or it may be a matter of weeks. Ideally, International Rescue Committee is notified 7 days prior to arrival, but in practice this is often only 3 to 5 days. We have no control over this, so it is an area for great patience. Many items such as furniture, clothing, housewares, and nonperishable food may be stockpiled in advance. A great number of these items can be obtained through donations, which will help to reduce expenses.

7. *What type of housing should a sponsor provide?*

Experience has shown that sponsorships work best when a refugee family does not live with its sponsor. Joint living puts a strain on both parties, in terms of language, privacy, and conflicting cultural patterns. A modest apartment, with rent the family will be able to afford on a low wage, is far easier for everyone involved. Most refugees will have lived in very small houses in their own countries, with only one or no bedroom, so they do not expect or like large, lavishly furnished living quarters. Sufficient beds, a dinette set with a chair for each person, and a sofa and chair are the basic required furnishings. Bureaus, lamp tables, desks, separate dining room furniture, et cetera, are not essential.

The kitchen setup is equally simple. The food your family is used to is somewhat similar to Chinese food, with rice being the major staple. They eat a lot of fresh fruit and vegetables, usually quick-fried or parboiled in a light stock, and are sparing in their use of meat. Before your family arrives, you might provide for them a wok, a tea kettle, a rice cooker or large covered pan, one or 2 smaller sauce pans, a frying pan, a teapot and cups, rice bowls, chopsticks, a soup spoon each, and a small set of cheap flatware, a cleaver, a paring knife, a spatula, a wood cooking spoon, paper products, cleaning utensils and buckets. For staple foods, a 25- or 50-pound bag of long grain rice, cooking oil, garlic, salt and pepper (both black and dried red), sugar, green tea, and bottled fish sauce (available at oriental grocery stores), plus some fresh fruit and vegetables, and perhaps a chicken.

8. *What likely problems should a sponsor be aware of?*

Because most refugees have spent 6 months to 2 years in a refugee camp, with poor food and little medical attention, health is likely to be a problem. We encourage sponsors to apply for medicaid for their family immediately, and schedule them for physicals and immunizations as soon after they arrive as possible. Nearly all have intestinal parasites, and respiratory and skin diseases are common. None of these endanger the sponsor or the community, however, as refugees do receive medical exams prior to departure for the United States, and are not allowed to travel if a communicable disease is detected.

While not really a problem, trauma and culture shock are conditions of which a sponsor should be aware. Refugees have all been through a gruelling experience, and rarely have any previous experience or real knowledge of western life. Small successes in own work, and the availability of others of their own culture, help them through the initial period. It is enormously helpful if, prior to the refugees' arrival, sponsors have located others of the same language and/or ethnic group in the immediate area, who can be available to the refugee family. This will also help with the language problem, as sponsors will probably need assistance in communicating, particularly in situations such as medical exams.

Time is another problem. Again, experience shows that the most successful sponsorships involve more than one sponsoring family, so that there are a number of different persons involved, each of whom can cover a special area: homemaking, employment, education, introduction to local services, et cetera. This is also easier for the refugees themselves, as they then do not feel overly dependent on any one individual.

Sponsors should remember that both language and cultural differences are a constant factor, and should be careful to spell things out slowly and fully when dealing with appointment times, meeting places, special instructions, and the like.

Sponsors should also bear in mind the special mobility of the rootless. Once in the United States, refugees may find distant relatives or hear of good jobs in distant places. They may decide to go without notice, or they may ask your advice. While refugees are, of course, free to travel at will, you should remind them there is unlikely to be any assistance available to them beyond the initial sponsorship.

9. *What help can we get from International Rescue Committee?*

The financial help agreed upon prior to the family's arrival.

Assistance in technical matters, such as immigration and family reunification.

Backup on any problems you cannot solve locally.

Limited bilingual service.

Emergency help, at any time.

In general, the local International Rescue Committee office itself acts as sponsor, so help from private groups allows us to offer resettlement to more refugees. International Rescue Committee offices are generally fully occupied with those families for whom they have not located local sponsors, but they are available to help you whenever you have been unable to come up with your own solutions.

RESETTLEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Arrival and postarrival assistance generally required by incoming refugees:

I. ARRIVAL AND PLACEMENT

- A. Airport reception, immediate food and clothing, housing, initial orientation.
- B. First days: social security cards, immediate health needs, public transportation orientation, further clothing and food shopping, maintenance money.

II. RESETTLEMENT PLANNING WITH FAMILY

- A. Permanent housing, based on employment location, family size, and income level.
- B. Health examinations for all, including TB tests. Immunizations for children.
- C. School enrollment: Regular public schools for children, ESL classes for adults.
- D. Extensive orientation, usually on individual family basis.
- E. Analysis of self-sufficiency potential and means:
 - 1. Employment: assessment, locate possible employment, job interviews pre-employment counseling, obtaining necessary work clothes, explaining employee benefits, sometimes accompany on first day of job to translate.
 - 2. Public assistance registration and documentation as needed. Medical coupons for all; SSI for aged or disabled; food stamps if required.
 - 3. Assessment of language and skills training requirements, local availability of free classes, enrollment, transportation arrangements.
 - 4. Provision of or referral to special programs as required: For handicapped, homebound, illiterate, and so forth.

III. LONG-RANGE RESETTLEMENT

- A. Continued monitoring of resettlement progress.
- B. Family counseling: Family, education, medical and employment problems. Immigration, family reunion, and relocation considerations.
- C. Continued orientation and assistance with adjustment problems: Social, legal, financial.
- D. Job upgrading and introducing additional family members into the labor market.
- E. Involvement of community resources into the resettlement process.
- F. Emergency financial assistance.

APPENDIX 7

LIST OF INDOCHINESE REFUGEE CATEGORIES OF ELIGIBILITY FOR PAROLE TO THE UNITED STATES

CRITERIA FOR ADMISSION TO U.S. LONG RANGE PROGRAM (LRP) FOR INDOCHINESE REFUGEES

Category Ia

Close relatives of persons who entered the United States before June 14, 1978. Close relatives are defined as spouse, parent, son, daughter, grandparent, unmarried sibling, and unmarried grandchild. If a person entered the United States after June 14, 1978, only that person's spouse and unmarried children under 21 years of age are considered eligible as category I relatives.

Category Ib

Unaccompanied children and young adults, 17 years of age and under, whose parents or guardians are deceased or were otherwise unable to leave their country of nationality or most recent residence to accompany the minor: provided that no offer of resettlement is made to the minor by another country.

Category IIa

Former U.S. Government employees who held supervisory or otherwise meaningful positions for at least 1 year subsequent to January 1, 1962, or workers such as janitors, drivers, gardeners, and guards if they were so employed for at least 5 years subsequent to January 1, 1962.

Category IIb

Persons who were not officially U.S. employees but who were so integrated into the immediate structure of an official U.S. Government office as to appear to be such employees. An example of such a relationship would be a military interpreter assigned to assist and serve as part of the staff of a U.S. Government office. Numbers will be small in this category which will not include units or groups of persons. The time periods for eligibility are the same as those for category IIa.

Category III

Refugees who because of a previous close association with the United States were persecuted by or were in fear of being persecuted by the Communist regime. Time formerly spent in prison for political reasons or in reeducation camps in Communist countries of Indochina should be considered in determining eligibility under this category. If another country offers to resettle refugees in this category, however, they cannot be accepted under long range program, unless the refugee is 20 years of age or under, has a blood relative in the United States, and has no such relative elsewhere outside of the countries of Indochina. Moreover, before they can be considered for inclusion in long range program, refugees, other than those included in this exception, must be willing to accept an offer of resettlement from another country if it makes such an offer. Following are examples of refugees who can be included in category III:

Category IIIa

Former employees of U.S. foundations, voluntary agencies, or business firms who held supervisory or otherwise meaningful positions for at least 1 year subsequent to January 1, 1962, or other workers employed by such U.S. organizations for at least 5 years subsequent to January 1, 1962.

Category IIIb

Persons who because of their status in the civil service or Armed Forces of the former governments of the Indochinese countries were closely associated with U.S. Government policies or U.S. Government-supported programs.

Category IIIc

Persons educated or trained in the United States or abroad under U.S. auspices.

Category IIId

Persons who received individual U.S. military combat awards or decorations.

Category IIIe

Spouses and unmarried children of persons who would have qualified under one of the above categories, but who are dead or were unable to escape.

Category IIIf

Vietnamese refugees escaping by land from Laos and now in camps in Thailand. Such refugees shall be given priority under category III but not to exceed 125 per month beginning October 1, 1978. It is anticipated that this will permit the Royal Thai Government to close the Vietnamese camp at Sikhiu, Thailand, as soon as those refugees now in the camp are resettled abroad.

NOTE: These are examples only and do not include all refugees in category III. Nor should every refugee who fits in one of these examples automatically be included in long range program. Each post should exercise judgment and narrowly define category III to include only refugees who in fact were closely associated with the United States and fled from persecution or fear of persecution because of that association.

Category IV

Other refugees who because of obviously compelling reasons should be granted parole on humanitarian grounds. Like refugees in category III, those in category IV cannot be accepted under long range program if they are accepted by another country unless the refugee is 20 years of age or under, has a blood relative in the United States, and has no such relative elsewhere outside of the countries of Indochina.

Priority in the allocation of numbers under category IV will be as follows;

Category IVa

Married siblings of persons who entered the United States prior to June 14, 1978.

Category IVb

Close relatives, defined in category I, or persons who have entered the United States since June 14, 1978, except that spouses and unmarried children under 21 of persons who entered the United States after June 14, 1978, are eligible under category Ia.

Category IVc

Persons 20 years of age or under who have a blood relative in the United States and who have no such relative elsewhere outside of Laos, Cambodia, or Vietnam.

Category IVd

Refugees who have education or work experience which would assist in their resettlement; or have shown personal initiatives while in camp such as enrolling in language courses; or have undergone particularly difficult experience in their home country or during their escape; or for whom other special humanitarian circumstances exist.

Category IVe

Remaining refugees by date of registration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Category V

Cambodian Refugees: A separate quota is established for Cambodian refugees to be implemented at the rate of 625 refugees per month beginning on October 1, 1978, or at an annual rate of 7,500. Cambodians who departed for the United States after October 1, 1978 are to be counted with this quota. Priority of eligibility as among Cambodian refugees will be based on the factors in categories I-IV above taken in that order.

No matter what category the refugee head of family (principal applicant) falls under, his or her accompanying close relatives fall in the same category as he or she does. For this purpose, accompanying close relatives are defined as spouse, parent, grandparent, and unmarried son, daughter, sibling, or grandchild. Other more distant accompanying relatives may also be included in the same category as the principal applicant if they are judged by the post to be dependent on him or her. If refugees eligible for an immigrant visa have accompanying dependent relatives not eligible for such visas, such dependent relatives should be judged for eligibility for parole as if the principal applicant were entering under refugee parole.

The judgment of the Consular and Immigration and Naturalization Service officers will be the determining factor for acceptance of refugees in all of the above categories. The final decision rests with Immigration and Naturalization Service.

APPENDIX 8

PRESS REPORTS

[From the New York Times, Nov. 23, 1978]

200 VIETNAMESE DIE OFF MALAYSIA COAST¹

A REFUGEE BOAT CAPSIZES AFTER IT IS TOWED OFFSHORE BY POLICE

(By Henry Kamm)

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, Nov. 22.—About 200 refugees from Vietnam drowned today when the fishing boat on which they had escaped capsized after it had been towed from the Malaysian shore by the police. More than 50 refugees on board survived.

An official of the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Kuala Trengganu, scene of the disaster, witnessed the events, 180 miles north-east of Kuala Lumpur.

Meanwhile, the freighter Hai Hong, carrying more than 2,500 Vietnamese refugees, remains off Port Klang, on Malaysia's west coast, while negotiations continue on the details of where they will be resettled.

The fishing boat arrived this morning in the small port of the capital of Trengganu, the state where most Vietnamese refugees reach shore. According to a survivor, some local people greeted it by throwing stones.

A police launch attached a rope to the boat and towed it into the river mouth, on which the town is situated. Local boatmen fear the river mouth because of its treacherous currents and sandbanks. Few of the refugee boats from Vietnam are manned by experienced seamen.

This morning the fishing boat was set loose in the river mouth. It could not be learned whether the police instructed the refugees to proceed to Pulau Bidong, an island refugee camp about 30 miles out in the South China Sea, or merely chased it off.

The boat ran onto a sandbank and capsized soon after the police launch had turned back. Tonight the overturned wreckage of the boat was still visible, mired in the sandbank. Many victims are believed to be trapped in its hold. Only about a dozen bodies had been recovered, including those of at least two children. About a third of those fleeing from Vietnam are children.

Today's tragedy occurred as the Malaysian Government, amid growing concern over the record number of refugees from Vietnam reaching its waters, announced the formation of a task force to stop the flow. Malaysia, while granting temporary asylum to more "boat people" than any other country, considers them illegal immigrants.

A highly placed official said privately, however, that for the time being the Government contemplated no change in its policy of accepting those refugees who make it ashore.

Informed sources suggested that internal political reasons might have provoked the formation of the task force. The official said that the creation of the new group headed by Maj. Gen. Ghazali Che Mat, might have a positive effect for the refugees in making the issue a federal rather than a state matter. He said that states had refused land for the opening of new refugee camps, causing large-scale overcrowding and lamentable hygienic conditions in such camps as Pulau Bidong, where nearly 20,000 refugees are crammed on a beach.

The creation of the task force was announced in Parliament by Home Affairs Minister Muhammad Ghazali bin Shafie, who is in charge of all security matters. In private conversations, he has stressed Malaysia's continuing humanitarian concern for the refugees. But he said that the mounting flow was making the granting of asylum increasingly difficult.

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[From the New York Times, Nov. 17, 1978]

THOUGHTS OF REFUGEES LANGUISH ON AN ISLAND OFF MALAYSIAN COAST¹

(By Henry Kamm)

16,000 MORE IN MAKESHIFT CAMPS ON COASTAL ISLAND

PULAU BIDONG, MALAYSIA, Nov. 15.—Approaching this island by fishing boat from the mainland port of Kuala Trengganu, about 30 miles across the South China Sea, one sees visions of a tropical paradise.

The beach of white sand is only a bit too shallow in its curve to be called crescent-shaped, but tall coconut palms sway languidly in the breeze, and from a distance children in the water look the way carefree islanders are supposed to look.

The bleak reality sinks in only when the boat comes close enough to allow one to see that only the rim of the beach is bare. Behind it stretches a vast shantytown, a congested warren of shacks and tents. In each shack there are several compartments, in each compartment layers above layers of planks; each compartment harbors a family of Vietnamese refugees.

More than 16,000 people sit about with little to say to each other, or walk barefoot aimlessly in the mud. They go to cut wood, they build shacks, they fan small wood fires to heat food or boil water. The stench of human waste hovers in the air.

Groups study English without textbooks; they write letters that rarely reach their destinations. Some dream of what they left behind, and they wonder if there is a future.

Pulau Bidong is not amenable to human habitation. The only level land is the beach; the center of the island is a steep, heavily wooded peak. Fresh water is severely limited; of the four wells that have been dug, only one yields drinkable water.

With the continuing flow of refugees, food is extremely short; the warehouse is nearly empty. Although the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the organization that provides the food, has sufficient stocks on the mainland and supply boats to bring it across, the island is ringed by a coral reef, and flat-bottomed boats are needed to bring the food ashore. Only one such boat, a small one, is available.

The passage from the mainland to Pulau Bidong is treacherous, the monsoon season is just beginning, and there soon may be stretches of several days when the island will be inaccessible. United Nations representatives express grave concern over the possibility of famine.

Heavy monsoon rains, according to a United Nations official, will also jeopardize the supply of fresh water, because a rise in the water table, unavoidable as the rains run off the mountain, will cause latrines to spill over into the wells. This would necessitate transporting water, as well as food, to the island. The people on Pulau Bidong require six tons of rice every day.

MALNUTRITION MAKING ITSELF FELT

Several of the 30 refugee physicians on the island, who have organized several dispensaries, say that malnutrition, particularly the absence of vitamin C, is making itself felt. They say that their diet contains no green vegetables or fruits, and that even minor cuts invariably become infected. There children and a pair of newborn twins have died so far.

Diarrhea is endemic, according to the doctors; the logbook of one of the dispensaries showed that 212 patients were treated today, and all but a few suffered from diarrhea. But according to one of the doctors, Nguyen Duong Don, "We are above all afraid of cholera. This camp could disappear in a day."

"It is ironic," Dr. Don continued. "With 30 doctors for 16,000 people, this camp has probably the best doctor-to-patient ratio in the world. But we are doing no good. We lack everything—medicine to treat the sick, and equipment to solve the fantastic sanitary and hygienic problems."

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[From the New York Times, Nov. 17, 1978]

2,500 VIETNAMESE ON SHIP REJECT A MALAYSIAN DEAL¹

(By Henry Kamm)

OFFER OF SUPPLIES REQUIRES THAT THEY LEAVE THE AREA

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, Nov. 16.—More than 2,500 Vietnamese refugees aboard a decrepit freighter anchored off the coast here refused an offer today to allow their ship to be resupplied because it was part of a Malaysian ultimatum. Malaysia said that it would resupply the ship, which is critically short of water and medicine, only if its passengers accept a Malaysian refusal to grant them temporary asylum and leave its waters.

Resupply is critical because many sick passengers need medicine and also because the bulk of the ship's food stores consist of rice, which is useless without drinkable water.

The vessel, the Hai Hong, has been anchored off the west coast of Malaysia since Nov. 9. Yesterday the Government reiterated that the passengers were not refugees because of a widely held belief that they left Vietnam with the complicity of authorities there, paying for the right to emigrate.

A French offer yesterday to give asylum to an unspecified number of the passengers beyond its regular refugee quota heightened diplomatic efforts here to persuade Malaysia to hold off on its threat to force the Hai Hong into international waters and to reconsider its refusal to let in the Vietnamese.

The badly overcrowded freighter has already been repulsed by Indonesia, and two other nearby nations, Thailand and Singapore, are even more restrictive in their attitudes toward receiving "boat people" than is Malaysia. The result of Malaysia's relative tolerance toward people who flee Vietnam had been the most dramatic rush of refugees to the east coast of this country since the end of the war in Indochina more than three years ago.

The United States is reported ready to take those refugees who fit into its immigration priorities, but has made no public offer of immediate action, as France has. Refugee officials here hope that the French initiative will encourage other countries to come forward with similar offers. Many of the Vietnamese have close relatives in the United States or worked closely with the American Government or military during the war.

If a sizable number of the 2,500 can be given guarantees of asylum, the officials hope to persuade the Malaysian Government to let the remaining passengers disembark and go to a refugee camp.

Arrivals of refugees this month already total 8,000 compared with 10,000 for all of last month. And last month's refugees more than doubled the September arrivals.

The beaches of the province of Trengganu, where most of the boats land, are strewn with the hulks of squat Vietnamese fishing boats. Four lie on the beach of a resort hotel in Kuala Trengganu, the state capital.

SENT TO UNINHABITED ISLAND

The Malaysian Government sends all the refugees reaching Trengganu and neighboring provinces to the island of Pulau Bidong, which was uninhabited until August. Yesterday, this correspondent visited the island, which is normally off limits to all outsiders. The population was 16,300, compared with a total of 35,000 Vietnamese refugees in all Malaysia. At least 2,000 refugees are temporarily sheltered on mainland beaches awaiting transport to Pulau Bidong, and several hundred newcomers arrive on the mainland every day. Pulau Bidong has nothing that suits it for human habitation. The only flatland is a sandy beach, and fresh water is severely limited.

Although much is unclear, informed officials believe that either the Vietnamese Government, or at the least local authorities, are permitting or putting pressure on members of the ethnic Chinese community to flee. Perhaps three-quarters of the current exodus from Vietnam consists of ethnic Chinese.

VIETNAMESE PURPOSELY SILENT

The Vietnamese are naturally reluctant to disclose too many details, so as not to close off the only exit open from a strongly repressive country. None professes to know anyone higher than a middleman is arranging their departure. They say that the middlemen are always ethnic Chinese who do not join the escape. This ignorance of the organization may be true in the escapes of individual boatloads,

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but a voyage like that of the 2,500 who left in a number of individual boats, then headed for the Hai Hong somewhere off central Vietnam, must include people who were briefed on a mid-ocean rendezvous.

United Nations refugee representatives in Southeast Asia are already hard-pressed to persuade governments that people who flee their country with the possible collusion of the authorities and pay to make their way out are as much refugees as those who flee in secret. The United Nations convention on refugees purposely does not include in the definition of a refugee any reference to how a person left.

Refugees say that since semi-official connivance in the flight of ethnic Chinese became noticeable in recent months, clandestine escapes, have become much more dangerous. Many of the Vietnamese have made numerous abortive tries and have had to live in hiding until their successful escapes.

In a narrative typical of semi-officially sanctioned escapes, a Saigon doctor, who asked not to be named because of close relatives remaining in Vietnam, described his departure.

A Chinese friend who knew of the desire of the doctor's family to escape, told him to give him a certain quantity of gold for each adult and half as much for each child and to be ready to leave within a week. A few days later, the family was told to come to a villa near Tan Son Nhut Airport. They found a number of people, Vietnamese and Chinese, assembled there, none of whom they knew.

Later that morning, a minibus appeared. They were driven to Rach Gia, a fishing port near the Cambodian border. At a roadblock near the port, the driver whispered something to the security people and was allowed to proceed. Travel within Vietnam normally requires official authorization.

The group was quartered in an empty warehouse facing the port, where a copious meal, including two roasted pigs, awaited them—a rarity in Vietnam, which is short of food.

[From the New York Times, Nov. 18, 1978]

WHILE REFUGEES WAIT OFF MALAYSIAN COAST, TALKS REMAIN AT IMPASSE¹

(By Henry Kamm)

KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA, Nov. 17.—While the freighter Hai Hong, loaded with more than 2,500 refugees from Vietnam, remained off Port Klang near here, critically short of water and medicine, negotiations on the fate of the refugees remained at an impasse.

The Malaysian position toward proposals offered by the United States, France, Canada and the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was described by a concerned diplomat as "intransigent."

A Malaysian Cabinet minister said in an interview that his country would not let ashore a single refugee whose acceptance in a third country had not been guaranteed by that country. Negotiations continued today, and after the sessions, some participants understood that Malaysia was demanding a joint guarantee by the Western countries that all of the refugees would be accepted as immigrants before refugee officials from any country would be allowed aboard the ship.

An official involved in the talks said that the United States Ambassador, Robert E. Miller, in outlining American interest in taking in some of the refugees, had stressed that this was not directly connected with the Hai Hong. Rather it was a recognition of Malaysia's mounting refugee problem and humane attitude in allowing thousands of Vietnamese refugees in small boats to land.

A FEAR OF INUNDATION

The issue for Malaysia, according to the Cabinet minister, is not the publicly stated one that the Hai Hong passengers were not genuine refugees but a fear that, if they were admitted to Malaysia's overcrowded refugee camps, other ships carrying thousands of passengers would follow.

Because Malaysia has taken the most humane attitude among Asian nations toward the refugees, 35,000 Vietnamese are now in Malaysian camps. The current rate of arrivals exceeds 10,000 a month.

The Cabinet member said that Western attitudes toward the Hai Hong passengers would affect Malaysia's future feelings about accepting any refugees from Vietnam. He said that domestic political pressure against the increasing number of Vietnamese was growing.

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Although no new talks have been scheduled, negotiations are expected to continue. In the meantime, Malaysia does not appear intent on pushing the Hai Hong out of its waters while hopes for an agreement remain alive.

SUPPLIES STILL BEING REFUSED

The refugees continue to refuse supplies from Malaysia, apparently because they feel that this would oblige them to accept Malaysia's rejection of their plea to land. They are asking that the United Nations refugee representative, Rajagopalan Sampatkumar, supply them. This remains under discussion.

Similarly, a physician sent here by a French voluntary medical group, Doctors Without Borders, has been refused permission to board the ship.

The authorities in Malaysia feel that while they are being humane in dealing with refugees the Western countries, in urging them to give temporary haven to all comers regardless of number, are pushing Western responsibilities off on Malaysia's shoulders.

The authorities here feel that the Hai Hong is a test of Western—particularly American—readiness to make good on assurances that Malaysia will not be left with refugees it accepted in transit in the belief that third countries were ready to give them asylum.

U.S. WILL ACCEPT REFUGEES BUT NOT FROM FREIGHTER

WASHINGTON, Nov. 17.—The Carter Administration offered today to admit to this country up to 2,500 additional boat refugees from Vietnam who are stranded in Malaysia while it tries to persuade the Malaysian Government to grant safe haven to that same number of refugees aboard the freighter Hai Hong.

A Justice Department spokesman, Terry Adamson, said that Attorney General Griffin B. Bell had informed Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance that he would make "a good faith effort" to admit the 2,500 beyond the quota of 25,000 set for the 12 months ending April 30. The decision culminates several days of debate within the Administration.

The State Department, led by its Human Rights and East Asian Bureaus, had been pressing for action within the Administration to rescue the 2,500 refugees on the Hai Hong, mostly ethnic Chinese, each of whom had been forced to pay up to \$2,000 in gold to be allowed to flee Vietnam. The Hai Hong has been denied haven by the Malaysians, who already have 35,000 "boat people" from Vietnam in cramped facilities.

Mr. Bell has been reluctant to admit the additional Vietnamese without consulting key Congressional committees charged with refugee affairs, since he had told them earlier in the year that the quota of 25,000 would be sufficient.

CONGRESS EXPECTED TO AGREE

But under pressure from the State Department, Mr. Bell agreed to reconsider even though the consultations are not likely before next month. It is thought that Congress will agree to admit the additional refugees.

State Department officials stressed that the United States was not offering to take the 2,500 refugees on the Hai Hong, but rather to take another group of 2,500 already in Malaysian camps.

"There's a long line of people, waiting to get out of camps," one official said. "What we're saying is that the people on the Hai Hong should be allowed into Malaysia to go to the end of the line. We'll take the 2,500 at the top of the list."

The Administration hopes that its offer, which was transmitted to the Malaysian Government today, will persuade Malaysia to rescind its order for the Hai Hong to leave its territorial waters. The ship has already been refused haven in several Southeast Asian countries, in part because its passengers apparently paid their way out of Vietnam, and therefore may not technically be considered refugees.

But the State Department yesterday accused Vietnam of human rights violations in demanding such payments and said they should not affect refugee status.

France has offered to take some of the Hai Hong passengers, and some other Western countries were also reported today to be prepared to take additional refugees.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 16, 1979]

EXODUS OF REFUGEES FROM VIETNAM IS ORGANIZED, PROFITABLE BUSINESS¹

(By Brian Eads)

HONG KONG.—It is now clear that the exodus of refugees from Vietnam is a highly organized, profitable racket encouraged by senior members of the Hanoi government.

Investigations here and in Asian countries playing reluctant hosts to the refugees reveal the mechanics of a traffic in which the Vietnamese authorities, Chinese entrepreneurs and would-be refugees are cooperating to serve their overlapping interests.

Respectively, each hopes to flush out southern Vietnam's large and incorrigibly bourgeois ethnic Chinese community, amass substantial amounts of gold and foreign currency in the process, and guarantee that the journey out of Vietnam is swift, without risk and made in relative comfort.

The system evolved last summer after Hanoi moved to absorb what remained of the south's Chinese-dominated private sector. The Chinese were unenthusiastic supporters of socialism, and Vietnam's split with China turned them into potential fifth columnists.

The Hanoi government set up a special department to coordinate the traffic under the control of Politburo member Nguyen Van Linh and accountable to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong.

Through tightly knit webs of family and business contacts in Asia and the United States, the overseas Chinese have done just that. Official sources here say that all five tramp freighters that have carried refugees into Asian ports since September were chartered for this specific purpose.

Syndicates have been set up to coordinate preparations on the outside. In the case of the first three vessels—the Southern Cross, the Hai Hong and the Huey Fong—the central figures were ethnic Chinese who left Vietnam legally shortly after the Communist victory in 1975.

Wealthy businessmen in Vietnam, unable to export their wealth, have eagerly financed would-be refugees in return for credits paid into overseas bank accounts by relatives and friends who have already left.

Chinese middlemen working for the government made it known that exit was possible without the dangers of capture, drowning or piracy that face those who leave by small boats.

The charge for an adult reportedly is 12 taels of gold (one tael weighs 1.3 oz.) valued at about \$3,500. Juveniles travel at half-price. Ethnic Vietnamese pay a 50 percent surcharge.

The money is paid to the middlemen, who in turn pay it to government officials. Refugees are allowed to take only hand luggage, the remainder of their assets being forfeited to the government.

Before the organizer's agent joins the freighter, a government official pays him the balance of gold remaining when the government tax has been levied; the government takes 10 taels, the agent two.

The system explains the contents of four oil-sodden sacks discovered last week aboard the Huey Fong, which carried 3,400 refugees into Hong Kong on Christmas Eve: gold leaf valued at \$1 million.

The usual system is for the organizer's agent and his gold to be taken off the ship at sea—the Southern Cross, Hai Hong, Tung An, and the latest arrival here, the Skyluck carried no gold. With the Huey Fong something clearly went wrong.

But the pantomine staged by the captain, crew and 3,000 refugees aboard the Skyluck illustrates the increasing difficulties of convincing anyone that the refugees were plucked from sinking boats on the high seas.

[From the Washington Post, Feb. 27, 1979]

HOLTZMAN SAYS REFUGEES PAID BRIBES OF \$30 MILLION TO VIETNAMESE AIDES¹

(By Jay Mathews)

HONG KONG, FEB. 26.—Refugees have paid an estimated \$30 million in bribes to Vietnamese officials in their attempts to leave the country, Rep. Elizabeth

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Holtzman (D-N. Y.) said today after an investigation at refugee centers throughout Southeast Asia.

The estimate, compiled from U.S. government interviews and Holtzman's talks with people who escaped Vietnam by boat, did not appear to include money paid to secretive business syndicates using old freighters to ship refugees to Asian ports.

Hong Kong sources indicate two freighters that brought a total of more than 6,000 refugees here recently may have collected a total of \$2 million in gold.

Holtzman, who visited Hanoi last week, said Vietnamese officials admitted that lower-level bureaucrats had taken money from illegal emigrants and housed them for the night before putting them on boats leaving the Vietnamese coastline. They denied any higher level corruption.

The Hanoi officials said they planned to introduce regulations soon that would allow people to leave the country on an orderly basis and discourage the dangerous clandestine boat trips that have led to possibly thousands of deaths by drowning, exposure and starvation.

Vietnamese Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh said last month that some Vietnamese would be allowed to leave the country legally, but that exit permits would be granted only to those not engaged in what the government considered important work.

The Hanoi announcement does not appear to have stemmed the flow of refugees in small boats arriving here and at other southeast Asian coasts, although there have been no reported landings or large freighters since Feb. 7.

Relief officials are convinced that the refugees boarded the ships through the cooperation of the ship owners and the Vietnamese government. They say there is no way several dozen small boats could have come upon the same freighter at the same time and been picked up by chance.

Hong Kong police investigating the alleged refugee syndicate say they have found clues in cables sent from one refugee-laden ship to its Hong Kong owners before arriving here. Cable copies on the owners' office were reportedly destroyed but police found a message copy at the main cable office here that said "Pic, up auntie."

Police believe "Auntie" means gold. Inquiries are being made about the alleged sale of gold leaf for a more than \$830,000 to a gold dealer here. Police sources said they suspect the gold was collected from the refugees and transferred off the ship before it reached Hong Kong.

After allowing refugees on board the Huey Fong, a freighter carrying 3,400 Vietnamese, to enter a refugee camp here last month, police literally tore the ship apart. They reportedly discovered more than \$1.3 million in gold leaf hidden behind metal plates.

The captain of the Huey Fong and seven others have been charged with conspiracy in the matter.

Huey Fong refugees interviewed in the last few weeks have admitted paying Vietnamese officials to clear the way for their getting in small boats to leave the country. They have been vague about how all the boats happened to be picked upon by the freighter.

Many said they were so sick and exhausted they did not pay attention to what was happening during the transfer. All those interviewed have denied paying money to the freighter owners or their representatives.

[From the Christian Science Monitor, Dec. 13, 1978]

WEST MOUNTS A RESCUE OF VIETNAM "BOAT PEOPLE"¹

MOST ARE REFUGEES OF CHINESE DESCENT, BUT CHINA SHUNS THEM

(By Elizabeth Pond)

For two days here the limelight fell on the losers, the forgotten and the betrayed—the refugees from an apparently never ending Indo-China war that no one wants to remember anymore.

Uncomfortably, the refugees reminded the world of their existence by drowning by the hundreds in the South China Sea in recent weeks as nation after nation refused to let their leaky boats land or to accept the refugees for resettlement.

¹ Reprint permission granted by the Christian Science Monitor.

Things are only slightly better now following the shock of those deaths—perhaps 100,000 in all—and the Dec. 11 and 12 conference here called by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

The 37 participating nations are far from fulfilling Commissioner Poul Hartling's opening plea for a "major and coordinated response to the problem." But they have at least pledged refugee contributions ranging up to the US \$15 million for 1979.

TEMPORARY CAMPS SET UP

Malaysia has more or less agreed to set up temporary camps for the "boat people," so long as these Vietnam refugees do not stay permanently in Malaysia and overwhelm the country.

And so these wanderers—the more fortunate ones—are now coming off their boats, boarding planes in Kuala Lumpur, and emerging half a day later a hemisphere away wearing blankets against the cold of a Hanover or Montreal that is as alien to them as the moon.

The others—the less fortunate ones—stay in the makeshift refugee camps in Malaysia and Thailand where some have already been living more than a year.

"The role of the UN conference in all this is to goad the conscience of the world into taking care of its refugees. The goal of the U.S., the initiator of the conference, is to prod other countries to match the U.S. acceptance since 1975 of 175,000 Indo-Chinese (perhaps 45,000 of whom are pure refugees unrelated to American participation in the Vietnam war).

MORE THAN 21,000 NOW

In the recent upsurge of Vietnam refugees the number of "boat people" has jumped from 3,000 in August to 8,600 in September, 12,500 in October, and 21,500 in November. A large number of these are ethnic Chinese that the government is glad to be rid of. According to the private estimate of one Western European diplomat this percentage runs as high as 90 percent.

Some reports from refugee camps in Malaysia estimate 60 percent. The refugees pay a reported \$3,000 each to smuggle themselves out of Vietnam past hostile Vietnamese police. Beyond their initial payment, they are often robbed twice, first by Vietnamese boarding the boats just before they leave Vietnam, second by Thai pirates on the open sea.

The diplomat's interpretation of the high numbers of refugees now escaping Vietnam, the relatively larger size of the boats now in use, and evidence that some of the boats have been newly built near Hanoi, is that the Vietnamese Government sanctions the exodus.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS BLAMED

In his conference presentation the Vietnamese Ambassador to France, Vo Van Sung, while not explicitly denying rumors that the government has a hand in the departure of the latest surge of refugees, attributed the leave-taking instead to economic hardship.

He also pointed out his country's burden in resettling some 150,000 refugees from Cambodia (20,000 of whom he said are ethnic Chinese who want to go to China but are refused admission).

This year the Vietnamese have expelled some 160,000 ethnic Chinese to China (Le Monde estimate). The majority of today's "boat people" are apparently also leaving because of the latest resurgence of centuries-old Vietnamese-Chinese hostility rather than because of the much hotter war on the Vietnamese-Cambodian border.

PEACE NEVER KNOWN

Whoever they are, any of these Vietnam refugees who are 40 and under have virtually never known peace. The Japanese occupation during World War II was followed by the protracted Viet Minh revolution against French colonial rule, then by America's Vietnam war, and finally by today's Vietnamese-Cambodian war. To these people the unending Indo-China war is no strategic contest, but a lifelong tragedy of destroyed homes and displaced families.

To date, according to UN figures, an estimated 800,000 persons have become refugees in Indo-China since North Vietnam won the Vietnam war in 1975. Roughly 200,000 of these have still not been granted permanent settlement by any country.

[From the Wall Street Journal, Nov. 14, 1978]

THE VOYAGE OF THE HAI HONG¹

(By Raphael Pura and Barry Wain)

On Oct. 15, a 1,580-ton coastal freighter called the Hai Hong steamed out of Singapore, empty but for its crew. Sailing under a newly acquired Panamanian registration, the 30-year-old vessel was apparently bound for Hong Kong, where its agents said, it was to be scrapped.

It never arrived.

Instead, 16 days after leaving Singapore, the Hai Hong glided into Indonesian waters and dropped anchor off the northwest coast of Borneo with a human cargo of 2,518 Vietnamese, many of them ethnic Chinese. Indonesian authorities refused to allow the passengers ashore, and the boat sailed on to Malaysia, where they also were refused permission to land. Conditions on board were described as horrendous, with many of the passengers too weak to move.

Today the story behind the voyage of the Hai Hong and how it acquired its passengers is being untangled with mounting alarm by Southeast Asian government ministries, embassies, consulates and United Nations officials from Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur to Hong Kong. The reason: Officials fear that the Hai Hong's voyage marks the opening of a new, and potentially explosive chapter in the three-year-old drama of the refugee exodus that began with the Communist takeover of Vietnam. In confidential reports, officials say the Hai Hong affair offers the most concrete confirmation yet that Vietnamese government officials are openly and actively assisting, particularly ethnic Chinese residents of Vietnam to leave the country under the guise of being refugees.

It's not surprising that the Vietnamese are quite willing to see the Chinese, in particular, leave. Tension between the Chinese community and the Communist Vietnamese government has been high and has broken into open feuding in recent months. But now officials outside of Vietnam are claiming there's increasing evidence that Vietnamese officials and perhaps the Hanoi government itself are being paid handsomely in gold and dollars for granting Chinese "permission" to flee the country.

Moreover, diplomatic sources say that mounting evidence shows that private Chinese entrepreneurs in Hong Kong and possibly in Singapore are profiting by arranging—again for a steep fee—for ships such as the Hai Hong to sail to Vietnam and take off Chinese refugees. The amount of money changing hands could have totaled as much as \$5 million on the voyage of the Hai Hong, various sources estimate.

OFFICIALS TROUBLED

The implications of these developments are troubling to a host of officials involved with the refugee situation in Asia. These include diplomats with the major nations accepting refugees from Vietnam—Australia, the U.S., France and Canada—as well as representatives of the United Nations high commissioner for refugees and aides of the governments of the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (the Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand). Western diplomats fear their governments are going to be asked to accept as refugees persons who are, in effect, quasi-legal emigrants because they are being allowed, for a fee, to leave Vietnam to seek a more comfortable life outside. Southeast Asian officials share their fear and worry about political backlash over their existing refugee programs.

United Nations officials are also concerned. Initially, said one diplomat, the UN was "in panic" about the whole affair. At one point, the UN seemed uncertain whether it would classify the Hai Hong's passengers as refugees. The UN operates under a 1951 convention that defines a refugee as an alien who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or unwilling, to return to it. United Nations officials in Malaysia eventually decided the Hai Hong's voyage could make others unwilling to take refugees and could jeopardize the program for refugee resettlements the UN has built up since the Communist takeover in Vietnam.

The story of the Hai Hong, which brought much of this to the surface, began to take shape on Oct. 2. It was on that date, as a variety of sources tell the story, that the aging coastal freighter was purchased by Hong Kong interests said to

¹ Reprint permission granted by the Wall Street Journal.

have connections in Singapore, where the purchase took place. The vessel was sold for \$115,000 by Guan Guan Shipping, a company with operations in both Malaysia and Singapore. Guan Guan had operated the Penang-registered vessel under the name The Golden Hill.

New owners of the vessel applied to the Panamanian consulate general at Singapore for a temporary, one-month Panamanian registration certificate for a one-way trip to Hong Kong to scrap the ship. However, the newly named Hai Hong, carrying a mixed Indonesian-Singapore crew, turned up on Oct. 31 in the remote Indonesian port of Tarempa on Siantan Island in the Riau Archipelago. The Indonesian captain radioed the office of the UN high commissioner for refugees that he had more than 2,000 Vietnamese refugees aboard. (It was a later count that put the number at 2,518.)

The captain said the Hai Hong had encountered engine trouble and while idle had been boarded by the refugees, who arrived, he said, in 12 to 15 small boats. Later, however, the Hai Hong's captain told a different story by radio to the UN officials. He said he was sheltering his vessel from Typhoon Rita in a group of islands, much further to the north than his previously mentioned location, when the refugees arrived.

Refugee authorities are skeptical of both versions. They say they can't understand why the captain would wait several days—until arriving in Indonesia—before sending a message alerting the UN that he had picked up refugees. They also contend that the second location mentioned by the captain is well off the usual path taken by refugees fleeing Vietnam. Later versions of the captain's story haven't convinced authorities either.

Spurred by a tip-off that the Hai Hong's real mission all along was to collect refugees off the Vietnamese port of Vung Tau, refugee authorities from several countries launched a major investigation. "We now believe the ship anchored off Vung Tau on Oct. 24 and the people were ferried out to the Hai Hong in small boats," says one source. The authorities believe the passengers might have paid an average of \$2,000 a head—in gold and U.S. dollars—for their passage. That would mean that the 2,518 passengers on the Hai Hong might have paid more than \$5 million for a short ride on a boat that cost \$115,000 weeks earlier.

After loading, the Hai Hong turned south with the intention of landing its cargo in Indonesia, or possibly Australia, diplomatic sources surmise. However, when the UN apparently refused to classify the Hai Hong's passengers as refugees, the Indonesians expelled the ship from its waters—leaving the passengers to face the prospect of sailing indefinitely in search of a place to land.

According to sources following the refugee situation the Hai Hong affair is the second major case where collaboration has occurred among private entrepreneurs, Vietnamese officials and would-be "refugees." The first clear indication of a new departure in Vietnamese emigration strategies came with the arrival in Indonesia in September of a ship called The Southern Cross.

A 900-ton Honduras-registered uninsured freighter, The Southern Cross, had left Singapore in early September. It maintained radio silence and avoided Indonesian naval patrols. When it grounded itself on Sept. 21 in Indonesian waters, it was carrying 1,252 passengers, who officials now believe paid fares to board the ship. At the time, the captain said the Vietnamese had boarded his ship from four small boats, when The Southern Cross broke down and was stalled in the South China Sea. Indonesian officials allowed the passengers to land and transferred them to a holding center on Bintan Island near Singapore.

DISMAYING TALES

There, in interviews, the passengers and crew told tales that dismayed the UN and other officials and made them wish they'd never given the passengers refugee status. According to reports of such interviews circulating among some Western and Southeast Asian embassies in the region, informants from the ship said that the "refugees" paid thousands of dollars in gold each to Vietnamese officials in exchange for permission to leave the country.

Moreover, according to the reports, The Southern Cross waited outside Vietnamese waters off Vung Tau while hundreds of refugees were "ferried" out to the vessel in an organized convoy of smaller craft. At least one report suggests that The Southern Cross actually berthed at Vung Tau for a conference among the ship's officers and Vietnamese port authorities to decide procedures for loading the so-called refugees and agree on payments to be made. Other sources suggest there is evidence that Vietnamese political officers may escort the refugees to such vessels.

"We believe that the Vietnamese authorities individually and collectively are assisting those leaving for a fee," declares one Western diplomat. "Not only have they turned a blind eye, but they've positively assisted in getting people together and on their way."

These sources believe The Southern Cross was the first larger vessel explicitly chartered to come to Vietnam and pick up refugees. However, tales of profiteering in the refugee trade began to show up even earlier.

Evidence of a trend began to show in interviews with huge numbers of ethnic Chinese refugees flowing into Malaysia in recent months. In October alone more than 10,000 people and more than 80 refugee boats turned up in Malaysian waters (the previous monthly record was 4,500 people in July). Refugees interviewed told stories of paying in the range of 245 grams of gold a person to Vietnamese officials to obtain what amounted to official exit permits.

Sources said the implication of the refugee stories was that the exit levy wasn't simply random bribery, but an organized official collection.

Late last week, the Hai Hong, its passengers suffering and anxious, dropped anchor at the Malaysian port of Klang, not far west of Kuala Lumpur. Since then Malaysian officials have ordered the vessel to depart with its hapless cargo. Confronted with that prospect, UN officials in Malaysia agreed to classify the Hai Hong's passengers as refugees. This would allow them into UN-operated refugee camps in Malaysia for onward processing to various refugee accepting countries. So observers expect the Malaysians will let the Vietnamese off the boat. But refugee officials also fear there could be other Hai Hong's and Southern Crosses, possibly already at sea.

CULTURAL CLASH—MALAYSIA'S TREATMENT OF VIETNAM REFUGEES ROOTED IN ETHNIC HATE¹

(By Barry Newman)

MOSLEMS REJECT BOAT PEOPLE AS CHINESE "PIG EATERS," FEAR A COMMUNIST PLOT—THEY DO PAY WELL, HOWEVER

KUALA TRENGGANU, MALAYSIA.—Generally hostile welcoming committees of Malaysians have been meeting refugees from Vietnam as they land their frail boats on the side beaches of Malaysia's east coast.

At first the people of the kampongs—small, poor fishing villages that dot the coast—built huts on the sands to stand guard against the Vietnamese. Some made scarecrows, wrapped in sarongs and planted in the sand.

At least 300 Vietnamese drowned when their boats sank in the surf. Although villagers on a few occasions helped refugees to shore out of pity, they more often threw stones at the Vietnamese trying to land.

To protect the refugees and preserve internal political peace, the Malaysian government recently has been rounding up the Vietnamese it can't chase away and ferrying them to a cramped camp on Pulau Bidong, an island 10 miles off-shore. On the island where contact with the kampongs is impossible, 28,000 people are waiting for some other country to take them in.

But perhaps because of the hostility of the kampongs, the number of arriving refugees has eased so far this year, and more Vietnamese are heading for Hong Kong instead.

DISLIKE OF CHINESE

Every government in this region has its own set of reasons for keeping the boatloads of Vietnamese at bay. Most of Malaysia's reasons can be found in these kampongs. The people of the east coast are conservative. Moslem Malays. They dislike Chinese, whom they call "pig eaters," and most of the Vietnamese are of Chinese origin (as are 35% of Malaysia's 12.5 million people).

Actually, the kampong dwellers aren't especially hospitable to anything that washes up on the shores, including the giant leatherback turtles that come here every year to spawn. The villagers snatch the eggs for food and ride the turtles back into the surf, just for fun.

The Japanese landed not far from here when they took Malaya in World War II. A few people remember that, and more than few are convinced that the refugees are scouts for the next onslaught. "There was even someone," says Malaysia's home affairs minister, Ghazalie Shafie, "who said that the boat people were sent out to test our defenses." Vietnam's rout of Cambodia in early January made the logic of the locals difficult to contest.

¹ Reprint permission granted by the Wall Street Journal.

On the beaches today, refugee wrecks list crazily on the sand—stripped, cracked and bleaching in the sun. Children play among them. Young men venture aboard. "This boat, a hundred people," says an 18-year-old fisherman sitting on a splint-ered gunwale. "That one, two hundred. All Chinese. All Communist."

REFUGEE TOTAL: 50,000

Last May, there were 7,000 Vietnamese in Malaysia. Over the last three months of 1978, 34,000 arrived. Now, on Pulau Bidong and in other camps, there are 50,000 all told. It takes 12 minutes for an American team to interview one refugee family, weeding out for closer investigation criminals, drug traffickers and anybody having a record with U.S. authorities. In a long day, 100 refugees are "processed." In a month, perhaps 3,500 find their way to the U.S. and a few other countries.

"The situation has reached a disconcerting level," Prime Minister Hussein Onn said in mid-January, and he announced that Malaysia would cease to accept the "illegal immigrants" from Vietnam. That hasn't happened; boats are still landing. But in January's monsoon, the number of arriving refugees slackened to 4,700. In February, the number dropped substantially, to just 2,000.

The exodus from Vietnam has taken a new turn: Large ships instead of small boats are carrying refugees to Hong Kong. Two have already arrived there, and diplomats say as many as five are still at sea.

FEW NEW ARRIVALS

The message from the kampongs has perhaps finally gotten through. Vietnam battling with China, apparently has had second thoughts about antagonizing the non-Communist countries of Southeast Asia. The refugees themselves, it seems, prefer long waits on big ships to dangerous landings, hostile receptions and incarcerations on Pulau Bidong. With rare exceptions, the Malaysian halfway house is at least temporarily closed to new comers.

It should be of comfort to the 50,000 refugees already here that the crowding won't get worse. For the Malaysian government, the drop in arrivals allows the smooth implementation of its refugee policy—namely to get rid of them, and fast. Home Minister Ghazalie thinks most should be shipped to the U.S. "Who could appreciate the problems of the boat people better," he asks, "than the descendants of the Mayflower?"

Indeed, about 4,000 Vietnamese refugees are entering the U.S. each month, mostly from Malaysia and Hong Kong, and the U.S. State Department is trying to raise that to 7,000 a month. All told, in the last six months of 1978, some 12,500 entered the U.S., and an additional 17,500 have been authorized to enter by April 30. In addition, some 12,500 Cambodian and Laotian refugees are expected to enter by the end of April. The Carter administration is working on legislation to establish a refugee quota of about 50,000 persons a year.

Malaysia, for its part, wants an international processing center set up somewhere to relieve it of Vietnamese everybody rejects. It won't let a single one settle here. Malaysia is adamant about that, to the relief of the kampong dwellers of the east coast.

The east coast is sequestered from the rest of the country by several hundred miles of swamp and mountainous jungle. The state of Trengganu has 430,000 people, most of them poor. Most live along the coast, in wooden houses built on stilts under tall palms. They raise a little rice, and they fish.

Islamic revivalism is in vogue here. Girls wear long turquoise and white habits to school, and some women appear on the streets draped from head to foot in black. Religious police patrol the beaches at night, searching for unmarried couples. Offenders can be arrested, but they are often roughed up on the spot. The two nightclubs in town are raided regularly. A Moslem in Trengganu finds blowing off steam a considerable challenge.

A NATION OF SMOKERS

"All the men have is smoking," says an outsider who lives here. "They smoke when they ride motorcycles. They smoke with one hand and eat with another. The women have mass hysteria. Fifty schoolgirls will lie down on a gym floor and go wild, laughing and rolling around. We also get a fair bit of running amok. People here are emotional. If you run over a chicken, don't stop."

The reception given the Vietnamese was in character. There were rumors (many picked up by the press) of weapons being found in wrecked boats, along with

fortunes in gold and jewelry. Money to support the Vietnamese, it was generally assumed, was being taken out of Malaysia's welfare budget. (The money actually comes from the United Nations.) And everything from higher food prices to a shortage of match sticks was resentfully laid to the refugees on Pulau Bidong.

The government moved to resolve things by expelling the refugees instead of the rumors. Its attitudes and those of the kampongs turned out to be much the same.

THE CHINESE ANGLE

If the Vietnamese had happened to be Moslems instead of "Chinese," they might have been treated differently by the Malay-dominated leadership. There are 92,000 Moslem refugees from the Philippines in the Malaysian state of Sabah in northern Borneo, and little fuss has been made about them in Malaysia or anywhere else.

Home Minister Ghazalie discounts the notion that the Vietnamese are all Communists as a "misunderstanding." Yet the government recently defended its decade-long "emergency" by warning that "there are still hidden dangers lurking around within our midst." In mid-November, Deputy Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed was quoted as saying of the refugees, "It may be quite possible that they may enter into guerrilla activities. More are coming on this route. We have to watch out."

Some people in the town of Kuala Trengganu aren't worried. A few dozen Malay volunteers work with the Red Crescent Society to ship supplies to Pulau Bidong. United Nations money pours in, and merchants (mostly Chinese) cash in. The Pantai Motel, which fortuitously opened a new wing last June, has been packed with journalists and foreign immigration officers. The motel bought one of the refugee boats and pulled it onto its front lawn to convert it into a bar.

ANXIETY IN THE EAST

But a few miles down the coast, where bars would be an abomination, the refugees continue to be a source of anxiety.

In a kampong on the beach late one afternoon, a teen-age girl, Rubiah, sits on the front steps of her house, watching the surf. A water buffalo is rolling into a wallow nearby. The girl invites a friend and his visitor inside for sweet tea and crab crackers. The conversation works around to the Vietnamese.

"One boat landed right here," she says. "Two women came first. They wanted a little water. Then they all came, and they wanted everything. We went for the police. The government of Vietnam is sending these people, and in our hearts we don't want them."

Ali, her father, comes in and lights a cigaret. He is a hard-muscled fisherman who has just lost his job.

"THEY PAY WELL, BUT * * *"

"Once I picked up some Vietnamese at sea," he says. "I took them to Bidong. They pay well, but they could start something. They may have guns. We already have Communists in our jungle. They could join them. No, I don't like these refugees. They are a social problem."

It is getting on toward dusk, and from the house of a prominent landlord in the kampong come the sounds of a televised Koran reading. The landlord is a *hajji*—a Moslem who has made a pilgrimage to Mecca. (A shiny velour mat with scenes of Mecca hangs above his settee.) He explains, briefly, what it is that troubles his kampong about the people landing on its shores.

"It doesn't matter that they are rich, or even that they are Chinese," he says. "What distresses us is that they are foreign, maybe foreign agents." He takes a thoughtful puff on his cigaret. "It isn't really that they are coming from Vietnam," he says finally. "It's just that they are coming."

The *hajji* excuses himself and retires to an inner room for evening prayers.

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