

Problem of Vietnamese Minority Tops Ky's Agenda in Cambodia

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SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 5—The potentially explosive issue of how to resolve the fate of the Vietnamese minority of 400,000 in Cambodia is the most difficult problem on the agenda of Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky's current visit to Pnompenh.

Minister of State Phan Quang Dan, who is in charge of the problem on the Vietnamese side, said in an interview that it was the most serious issue of all and that future relations between the two countries depended on its solution.

In comparison with Dr. Dan's concern, the attitude of military sources is confident. They exude assurance on the main issue—that South Vietnamese troops will stay in Cambodia as long as they deem necessary.

They want the negotiations to result in an agreement to form a joint South Vietnamese-Cambodian - Thai command structure backed by American advisers to be in charge of military operations in Cambodia. The sources said that they envisaged no formal designation of a joint commander but expected the commands to be situated in South Vietnam. This factor and the fact that the bulk of the forces engaged in operations are South Vietnamese appear to these sources to give Saigon a dominant role.

Ky Meets With Officials

Mr. Ky met today with Government leaders, including Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur. Others at the meeting, sources said, included the South Vietnamese Foreign Minister, Tran Van Lam, and South Vietnamese military commanders. Earlier today, Mr. Ky had an audience with the Cambodian Chief of State, Cheng Heng.

In the talks in Pnompenh, where Mr. Ky arrived yesterday, and in the negotiations to follow, the South Vietnamese are demanding a halt in the flow of refugees into this country, which is no longer able to handle them. Instead, they are urging the Cambodians to resettle the Vietnamese in their country in security.

The exodus began after mass slayings of ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia were reported earlier this year.

Resettlement Proposed

The principal problem, according to Dr. Dan, are the 75,000 Vietnamese in Pnompenh now in detention camps awaiting repatriation.

"I say 'concentration camps,'" Dr. Dan said, "because I like to call things by their real name."

Dr. Dan said that he is aware that most of the people in these camps have been thrown out of their houses and jobs and have lost all their belongings. Therefore, he said, even if the Cambodians in their present mood of dependence on South Vietnam agreed to

release them, they would have no homes or jobs to return to.

South Vietnam will propose that they be resettled in the Cambodian border provinces of Svayrieng, Takeo and Kampot. Dr. Dang said there they would live in the security of the South Vietnamese units operating there and could earn their living in large part by working for and trading with those units.

Political observers noted that settling the border provinces by Vietnamese who have reason to hate Cambodia would present obvious political advantages to Saigon.

Dr. Dan said he told Foreign Minister Yem Sambaur during his official visit here last week that the main reason for the misfortunes of the Vietnamese in Cambodia was not the war but Cambodian national discrimination. He demanded a series of measures to protect the members of the minority and said he received agreement in principle.

Dangers in the Camps

Meanwhile, the monsoon rains are turning the overcrowded refugee camps in Vietnam and the detention camps in Cambodia into seas of mud and breeding grounds for epidemics and potential riots.

Dr. Dan said that Saigon was aware of the grave dangers, but he emphasized that South Vietnam could not absorb further large numbers of refugees beyond the 87,000 who have fled here recently.

To provide bare subsistence housing and food for 100,000 refugees, according to Dr. Dan, would require 16.9-million a year. He said no funds had been budgeted for this but the United States had agreed to contribute \$5.1-million out of aid funds already appropriated.

He said that the Vietnamese program of evacuating large numbers of repatriates by ship down the Mekong River was ended except for hardship cases. The 75,000 in the camps in Pnompenh are not aware of this and are still waiting for the ships.

Dr. Dan said the Cambodians must understand that it would not be in their interest to have large numbers of Vietnamese from Cambodia come to Vietnam. At a time when Cambodia badly needs South Vietnamese assistance, these refugees would have a negative effect on Saigon's attitude toward Pnompenh.