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Study by H.E.W. Finds Refugees From Asia Adjust to Life in U.S.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29 (AP)—Most of the 138,000 refugees from Indochina who fled to the United States after Communist-led victories in Southeast Asia are adjusting to their new country but many suffer from mental depression, a new report to Congress says.

The report of the Task Force on Refugees of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare said that in the nearly 18 months since the fall of Saigon and Phnom Penh, most of the refugees have made "vast strides toward assimilation into American life."

The percentage of refugees drawing welfare has stabilized for the first time, according to the report, which said that most refugees have found jobs and left the homes of their initial American sponsors.

While many serious problems in adjustment remain, according to the report, the refugees from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia "are progressing better than many expected in the early days of resettlement, and the overwhelming majority are moving toward economic self-sufficiency."

Mental Depression Observed

An increasing number of cases of mental depression among refugees has been observed, the study group said, calling this "a natural result of resettlement in a new country."

Treatment of the mental illness through conventional therapy, however, is extremely difficult because modern psychiatry is virtually unknown in Indochinese culture, and language and cultural barriers make it almost impossible for psychiatric workers to assist refugee patients, according to the report, which is dated Sept. 20 but which was only made available to reporters yesterday the report said.

The study group recommended that Congress approve legislation proposed by the Administration that would open the door for citizenship for the refugees by declaring them to be resident aliens. Similar legislation was enacted to assist refugees who fled Hungary and Cuba.

Unless the Indochinese are declared

resident aliens, the report said, it would take nearly 30 years before all the refugees could gain resident alien status, the first step toward citizenship, because the law provides that no more than 5,100 persons from all countries in a given year can be admitted to the United States in that classification.

A Generation Affected

Thus, the study group said, an entire generation of Indochina refugees would be virtually stateless while awaiting their turns for resident alien status.

The study group said a July-August survey found that 80 percent of the male refugees are working or looking for work, slightly higher than the general American male rate of 75.6 percent, and that 45 percent of the female refugees are in the labor force, about the same as the American rate for all women.

Both male and female refugees were experiencing a 13 percent unemployment rate, according to the report, which is higher than the 7.9 percent unemployment rate in August for the general population but still an improvement over the 21 percent jobless rate for refugees in a December-January survey.

The latest survey found that 20 percent of the refugee families had annual incomes of less than \$5,000, and another 35 percent had incomes of less than \$10,000.

Just under 30 percent of the refugees were receiving welfare payments during the last three months, which is about the same as last June, according to the report. That represented the first stabilization of refugee welfare cases since the program began, according to the report, after the figure had climbed from 12 percent in September 1975 to 24 percent in February 1976.

Vietnamese Railway Reviving

TOKYO, Sept. 29 (Reuters)—Only 127 miles of track remain to be laid to restore the 1,050-mile rail link between Hanoi and Saigon, the Vietnam News Agency reported yesterday.