

Washington Meeting on Children's Airlift Is

By RICHARD D. LYONS

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 7—An informal conference organized by a Congressman in the hope of speeding the airlift of South Vietnamese children was jarred soon after it began today by charges of elitism and racism.

A Vietnamese woman who said she had been involved in refugee aid accused many of the 250 people at the meeting of being on a "guilt trip" for supporting the airlift, and argued that the babies should be given American financed foster care in Vietnam instead.

Several blacks in the overwhelmingly white audience at the Cannon House Office building openly challenged the notion that half black, half Vietnamese children would be better off in the United States than in Indochina.

"Do you think they'll be allowed in the South Boston schools?" one black shouted.

Many Are Upset

Many people in the audience, made up mostly of young women, were visibly upset that their motivations and intentions were being questioned by the small but vocal minority. Statements were occasionally marked by tears, especially when the plight of the children was discussed.

The meeting was convened as it was announced in Saigon that there would be no more mass evacuations of children although some would continue to go to new homes in America. About 1,700 have left South Vietnam in the operation that began last week, most of them bound for the United States with others taken to Australia, Canada and Britain.

The airlift was said to have reached the scheduled quota approved by the Saigon Government. All children who have been evacuated were said to have been in the adoption process before the flights began.

The meeting, which brought together some Congressmen, officials of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and individuals interested in discussing aid to the South Vietnamese children, was also to have been attended by State Depart-

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ment officials. But they made it known 90 minutes before the meeting began that they had decided not to attend.

Representative Paul E. Tsongas, Democrat of Massachusetts, had called the meeting in an effort to muster backing for a Congressional appeal to President Ford to expand the airlift so that more children could be brought to this country.

Mr. Tsongas said if the appeal failed he would seek emergency legislation to allow more Vietnamese children entrance. The Congressman said that current plans call for the evacuation of only 2,000 of 18,000 children in foster care living

in areas controlled by the South Vietnamese Government.

Sol Isenstein, Assistant Commissioner of the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Service, told the participants that 933 children had already arrived in the United States, and that 176 more were due at Clark Air Base in the Philippines on the way here.

The subcommittee of immigration, citizenship and international law of the House Judiciary Committee is due to start hearings into the airlift of children tomorrow.

Sources on the committee said that a preliminary investigation suggested an almost total lack of planning by Federal and private agencies.

In addition to Mr. Tsongas, five Congressmen attended the meeting.

Representative William A. Steiger, Republican of Wisconsin, received scattered applause

when he said that "sending in a fleet of 747's to bring out the orphans is not the answer to the problem."

Mr. Steiger contended that the question of what to do with the children was only a part of the over-all problem of how to aid all the refugees in Indochina.

"Simply talking of bringing some out and doing nothing about those who are left behind is wrong," Mr. Steiger said. He added that it also smacked of "elitism" and that some Vietnamese viewed the airlift as a "slap in the face."

These included Nguyen Thi Ngoc Thoa of Da Nang, South Vietnam, who said she had been involved in aiding refugees first with the Agency for International Development, then with the Committee for Responsibility, which has brought wounded Vietnamese to this country for medical treatment.

Some of the persons in the audience seemed to have been shocked when she accused them of being on a "guilt trip."

"Why do you only talk about these children when there are more than a million others who need aid," she said. "You should consider all the children, not just the 18,000."

Care in Vietnam Favored

She also charged that some of the children who had arrived in the United States "were being taken away from their parents against their parents' wishes," and added that the children would be better off if they remained in Vietnam to be raised by foster parents.

Thomas Wardell of Boston, who appeared at the meeting with his 3-year-old adopted daughter, Catherine, a Montagnard child, told Miss Thoa "you've got a point" when she brought up the issue of guilt. But he denied that children

were being forcibly taken from their parents.

One black woman in the audience, who did not give her name, questioned the wisdom of half black, half Vietnamese children by white couples.

William C. Cribbs, an administrative aide to Representative Edward Mervinsky, Democrat of Iowa, challenged the wisdom of bringing children of mixed racial parentage to the United States. "There is no proof in America that even we have been accepted," said Mr. Cribbs, who is black.

Black Needs Cited

He cited racial problems in Boston as an example, adding that he believed a foster care program would be more beneficial to the children.

"We've got a large group of black kids in the United States now who need to be adopted," Mr. Cribbs said.

But Representative Isongas,

speaking for what appeared to be a majority of the audience, said he felt that because of the uncertain military situation in South Vietnam "it is better to get the children out now than engage in metaphysical and philosophical discussions."

Yet he too backed a broader approach to the Vietnam refugee problem, as did the Senate Democratic Policy Committee.

Senator Mike Mansfield of Montana, the majority leader, said the committee felt that Congress should approve humanitarian aid but only through such international agencies as the United Nations and the Red Cross. He was emphatic in stating that refugee relief funds should not be earmarked for either the South Vietnamese or Cambodian Governments.

Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Democrat of Minnesota, introduced a bill today that would funnel \$200-million in United

States financial aid to international groups, but not governments.

Opposition Charge Denied

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, April 7—Deputy Premier Phan Quang Dan today angrily denied opposition charges that the Saigon Government and the United States had arranged an exodus of children from South Vietnam to achieve a propaganda and political effect.

At a news conference here, Dr. Dan's voice rose to a scream, as he said:

"We did not create the orphans, and we are not making propaganda. The nations of the world have taken a spontaneous interest in accepting some of our orphans."

Earlier, a group of 14 politi-

cians opposing the Government of President Nguyen Van Thieu had distributed a photocopy of a letter written last Wednesday by Dr. Dan to Tran Thien Khiem, then the Premier.

The letter recommended that the Premier quickly authorize the emigration of 1,400 Vietnamese children to the United States. It said that such a mass shipment would "create deep emotions all over the world, especially in the United States, which would be most helpful to the Republic of Vietnam."

The letter added: "The American Ambassador said the collective shipment abroad of these orphans and the exodus of millions of war refugees from the Communist-controlled areas would help reverse the current of American public opinion to the advantage of the Republic of Vietnam."