

NYTimes

Letters to the Editor

APR 11 1975

Vietnam's Refugees: Two Views on U.S. Aid

To the Editor:

President Ford's humanitarian announcement of American aid to expedite the evacuation of 2,000 Vietnamese children in process of adoption in this country was welcome. American adoption agencies have made sound and dedicated efforts to find homes for Vietnamese children fathered by Americans, or for children whose parents are known to be dead. We are apprehensive that the President's initiative may trigger an ill-advised chain of events. A "total effort" to bring many thousands of Vietnamese children here is already being demanded by many. This would not be in the best interest of the Vietnamese children nor should it relieve our national conscience.

The Vietnamese have a strong sense of family obligation and have shown themselves willing and capable of caring for their own children. Our responsibility is to enable them, in their time of tragedy, to do so.

The President's genuine concern to do "much, much more" will be best demonstrated by his initiating legislation to authorize at least \$1 billion for these children. This aid could be sent through international relief organizations or directly to whatever government is finally formed in Vietnam. It could be used, in part, for a relocation program.

Past experience with children made homeless in time of civil war shows the success of such efforts. During the Nigerian civil war, over 50,000 "war

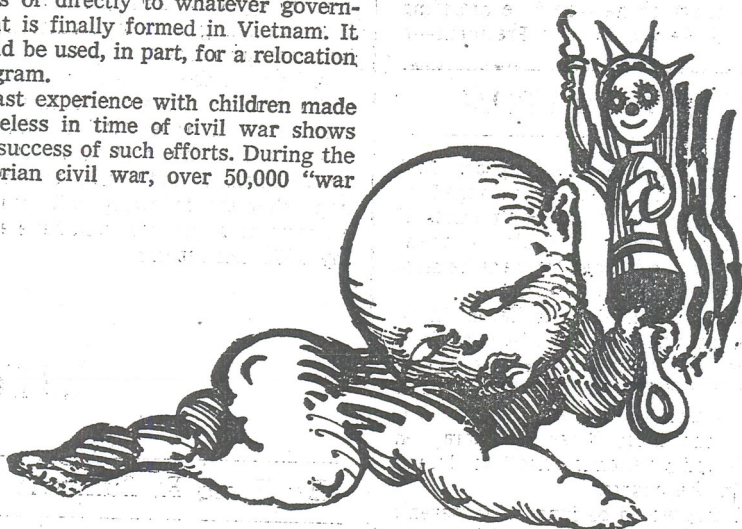
orphans" were separated from their families. More than ten European countries and the United States sent adoption agency personnel to Nigeria and offered to place these children for adoption with families in other countries. Both Biafrans and Nigerians rejected this concept. Through the work of the International Union for Child Welfare of Geneva, with the help of international aid, all but 27 of these children were rejoined with their immediate and extended families—all inside Nigeria. Wouldn't it be better for the Vietnamese children to be cared for in their own culture?

The 400 agencies of the Child Welfare League of America will do their best to help the children being brought to the United States. But we urge massive American support for help to all Vietnamese children and families in their homeland. This may be our last opportunity to help insure peace for the coming generations in that tragic country.

JOSEPH H. REID

New York, April 4, 1975

The writer is executive director of the Child Welfare League of America and deputy president of International Union for Child Welfare.



Ken Rindler

To the Editor:

I agree with the April 1 editorial on Vietnam, that we must put humanitarian considerations above those of politics, diplomacy, or military consequences. In addition to doing everything possible to prevent further bloodshed and privation in Vietnam, we should also consider steps beyond the immediate evacuation of refugees to safer areas. These safer havens in a matter of days or weeks may continue to develop into new areas of chaos and horror.

It is difficult to determine how many people in South Vietnam believe that life under a Communist regime would be intolerable. Whatever the number, I believe the Free World nations, particularly the United States, owe sanctuary to any Vietnamese who might seek haven outside of their country. A relatively small number of these will be the corrupted and the corruptors. But many of those who have profited from the war have probably already made arrangements to buy their way out.

I am thinking of the many Vietnamese who, in a sense, have been fighting our war, the war of the Free World against totalitarianism. These are people who have neither the means nor the influence to leave the country. Many, nurtured by Western ideals, have been not only anti-Communist, but critics of the anti-democratic practices of the various regimes in the South. Many are northerners who migrated south in 1954 in fear of political, economic, or religious persecution.

It is possible that those who might seek haven in the United States might in the long run be assets rather than burdens, contributing their talents and industriousness in somewhat the manner of many Cuban refugees. But whatever the cost, and whoever wishes to leave Vietnam, we must salvage the victims of the debacle to which we have contributed so much.

DAVID COOPER

New York, April 1, 1975