

Last Big Refugee Group Arrives on Guam

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APRA HARBOR, Guam, Tuesday, May 13—Clutching straw mats, dented pots and half-naked children, more than 16,000 South Vietnamese refugees streamed off four merchant vessels today to begin new lives in a new land. Another ship with upward of 4,000 more refugees was due later.

Some of the refugees were ill. Many were barefoot. And most headed straight for squads of cooling, dockside showers.

"I was sad to leave, but I am happy to arrive," said one of the refugees, Duan Van Dao.

It was the largest single arrival of South Vietnamese refugees since the movement of people began from Saigon's Tan Son Nhut Airport last month. It brought to almost 100,000 the number of refugees who have landed on this tropical American territory 8,300 miles southwest of New York City.

The latest arrivals are the last substantial group to begin the long trans-Pacific trip to refugee processing camps in the continental United States. They swelled Guam's current population of refugees to more than 50,000, or one-third the total number of people on this 30-mile-long island.

'Saturation Point'

"We're at the saturation point," said Rear Adm. G. Stephen Morrison, the over-all commander here of what has become one of the largest movements of refugees in the country's history.

Since 1959 when Fidel Castro led a revolution in Cuba, 675,000 Cuban refugees have come to the United States. Over a six-month period in 1956-57 after a revolt in their country, between 35,000 and 40,000 Hungarian refugees came to the United States.

Admiral Morrison said that beginning today and for the foreseeable future only about 1,000 refugees a day would be flown from here to the United States mainland. This compares with totals of more than 5,000 on some previous days.

The sharp transportation cur-

tailment is the result of budgetary difficulties, according to the Interagency Indochina Task Force, which is overseeing the entire refugee effort from Washington.

Other Developments

However, refugee officials here said they were unaware of any special budget problems and that they had been told the airlift reduction was because of overcrowding at the three refugee camps at Camp Pendleton, Calif.; Fort Chaffee, Ark., and Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

As the newly arrived refugees sipped cool drinks under a broiling tropical sun, there

were these other related developments here:

Officials announced the death yesterday of a 3-year-old refugee girl. The cause was suspected diphtheria. It was the ninth death since the refugee operation began 20 days ago.

George Gordon-Lennox, a representative of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, arrived from Geneva to assist with the settlement of refugees in countries other than the United States. His duties will include helping any refugees here who say they want to return to South Vietnam.

The aircraft carrier Midway sailed from Guam after unloading 99 South Vietnamese warplanes repossessed by the United States after South Vietnamese pilots use them to flee from victorious Communist troops.

The merchant ships that have arrived here are the Green Port, the Green Wave, the Green Forest and the Sergeant Truman Kimbro. The Sergeant Andrew Miller was due later. All are under charter to the Maritime Sealift Command.

For their cargo of refugees, each had been specially equipped with additional fresh water facilities, tons of foods and some primitive toilets.

The refugees, who had reached the Philippines on airplanes, merchant ships or South Vietnamese naval vessels, boarded the ships at Subic Bay for the five-day, 1,500-mile voyage across the Philippine Sea. A United States Marine detachment rode each ship to maintain order.

The ships' cavernous holds were converted to crude steel dormitories with ladders connecting the two levels where

refugees slept on straw mats or just the metal plating.

"It was so hot in there," said Cung Pham Ngoc, who cannot remember the names of all the ships she has ridden since fleeing her home on Phu Quoc Island three weeks ago. Nine days ago, Mrs. Ngoc gave birth to a baby boy. Today, he slept through all the commotion.

For shade, the passengers on deck strung blankets on ropes. They passed the hours sleeping, waiting in long lines for food or water or simply sitting and staring at the bulkheads or the sea. Just before docking, mothers straightened children's clothing and combed their hair.

"The food was good," Nguyen Binh Duy said in disbelief. He had heard rumors that refugees would be starved and those surviving would be sprayed with DDT.

Instead, the refugees were helped down the gangplank by sailors stationed at every two steps. Small children, a number of them with measles and chicken pox, were passed down from man to man.

A Public Health Service doctor met every refugee, screening sick ones out for prompt treatment. "Get this baby to the hospital immediately," said Dr. David J. Schwartz of San Mateo, Calif. The infant, obviously in great pain, was severely sunburned. Other refugees were dehydrated and one had a ruptured appendix.

Children Wandering

Some tiny children were separated from parents and wandered about briefly in a world of unfamiliar knees. One little girl with a plastic purse and a wide-brimmed straw hat with a bow clutched a stranger's fingers so tightly that the circulation stopped.

But soon her mother came and the family strode off barefoot across the dock's hot pavement. Sailors with shopping carts from a local market helped carry baggage that included teapots, TV sets, torn cloth bags and suitcases.

Volunteers in search of possible sources of disease and infestation gently took possession of straw mats, water bottles and bags of rice. "You won't need this," one man explained, "there's plenty of food

here." The old woman looked skeptical.

Two chaplains, the Rev. Victor Ivers of Chicago and the Rev. Charles Eis from Boston, greeted the evacuees in Vietnamese "just to give them a little friendly smile," as Mr. Ivers put it.

Father Eis set a dozen children into hysterical giggles as he taught them how to shake hands and say, "hello." They thought it was all so funny that they shook hands and greeted each other and anyone else in sight on the docks.

For many refugees it was their second flight from the

Communists, counting the evacuation from North Vietnam in 1954. "I could not live with the Communists," said Lanh An Thi, who evacuated his family.

Like other former soldiers, he was immediately issued civilian clothes here as the crowds moved into a warehouse for initial immigration processing and further health checks. Buses from the Guam School District and local tour companies carried the evacuees to nearby Orote Point, which with almost 30,000 residents is the island's largest refugee camp.

On through the night under bright lights they poured off the ships. At the foot of the gangplank, Tran Nhat Duong stood patiently. In Saigon he was separated from his wife, his son and his daughter just as they were boarding an evacuation plane.

Mr. Duong looked at a stranger and said, "I keep saying maybe I see my wife here. I think I will. What do you think? Is there a chance? Maybe?"