

Some Call Babylift 'Shameful'

By H. D. S. Greenway

Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, April 14—The mass removal of Vietnamese orphans from Vietnam is not a major issue in Saigon. But many non-Communist Vietnamese agree with the Vietcong—who have condemned the airlift as a "criminal act" akin to kidnaping—that the removal of their children to America is wrong.

To many Saigonese, the published pictures of President Ford carrying a Vietnamese baby down the ramp of an airplane in California symbolizes everything the Vietnamese feel is shallow and hypocritical in the American character.

"Whether taking our orphans away is a good thing or not depends a great deal on your purpose," a Saigon University professor of psychology said. "Is it just politics. To many of us it is a shameful thing and we are very ashamed."

U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin is widely believed to have advocated the evacuation of orphans on the ground that it would help create a shift in American public opinion in favor of the Saigon regime. This is resented by many Vietnamese—even by those who would welcome such a shift in American public opinion.

Others, many of whom

have had long association with Americans, concede that the outpouring of sympathy on the part of the American people toward the children was genuine. But they question this emotion.

A friend of eight years standing said recently, "your GI's are famous for being nice to children and for giving them gum. I wonder if it was a matter of conscience because they killed the parents? Why should you think these children would be better off as Americans than as Vietnamese?"

The Saigonese know that the whole issue has been exploited by, as one Vietnamese put it, "show-offs." The photograph of Playboy bunnies taking the babies off the Playboy plane has not been widely seen here, but the few Vietnamese who have seen it have commented negatively on it. The whole idea of Playboy Magazine, is to the more traditionally minded Vietnamese, a symbol of American cultural decadence.

The Americans are not the only ones that come up for criticism. The London newspaper The Daily Mail recently chartered a Boeing to fly from London to get in on the orphan act. Their correspondent here was wired 48 hours ahead of time and told to round up all the orphans he could lay his hands on. He managed to get 100

on board. One Vietnamese reporter called it "a grotesque stunt."

There are other objections. Do Quyen, an actress, said in an interview: "They are Vietnamese citizens. They must be brought up by us. I don't mind if there is some guilt among the American people toward us. But why don't they give us the means to bring up the children ourselves, instead of taking them away?"

Bui Van Vinh, no more than 70 years old, said, "I agree with those who denounce the evacuation of children. You should remember there is racial discrimination in the United States."

Not all Saigonese agree. The psychology professor admitted that Vietnam is, in fact, very color-conscious and that the children of black American fathers would have a very rough time growing up in traditional Vietnamese society.

Ironically, others were of the opinion that when the Communists came they would be more fair and would not allow mixed-race orphans to grow up at a disadvantage. These persons did not wish to live under communism themselves, but they said the orphans would probably be better off under communism than under the present system of government.

Others feel that America is trying to duck its responsibilities by adopting orphans. "Why don't they do something more tangible—like helping us survive as a free country?" asked Nguyen Thi Bui, an air stewardess.

Still, other South Vietnamese see nothing wrong with the orphans' going to America. "I've no objection to the evacuation at all, said Le Van Khoa, a television director of children's programs. "Here in Vietnam,

we cannot bring them up properly, so let them go if they have a family to live with. Those who object do so because of their pride in the nation, but we should be a little more practical in this matter."

Tran HUU Quyen, vice president of a labor union, said: "Personally, I have no objection to the evacuation of those orphans. As you know, our standard of living is so low that we would not feed or educate them adequately if they stayed here in Vietnam."

"Would it be good for them to be hit by bombs and bullets?" asked Tan Thanh, a student. "Let them go and have a decent life abroad."

With so many Saigonese worrying about their own futures these days, they can be excused if the issue of these orphans is not uppermost in their minds.

"Don't bother me with your stupid questions when I am trying to get my own family out of the country," one father told me.

Nguyen Thi Nga, another student, said; "How happy they are. I wish I was going with them."

China Criticizes U.S.

On Vietnam Refugees

By John Burns

Toronto Globe and Mail

PEKING, April 14—China stepped up its criticism of U.S. efforts to assist Vietnam refugees Saturday with a commentator's article in the People's Daily, censuring the United States for calling them "refugees from communism."

The article, the first direct Chinese comment on Vietnamese refugees, said the use of that term was a lie designed to help the Saigon government continue the war. Previously the Chinese have echoed North Vietnamese criticisms.