

# Exodus of Vietnamese

## American Friends, Relatives Provide

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CLARK AIR BASE, the Philippines, April 21—The trickle has become a rivulet, and the rivulet is slowly building toward a flood.

A Vietnamese air force helicopter pilot—a darkly handsome young man with his wife, mother, brother and six other members of his family sitting in a row beside him—said he had to get out because the Communists would kill him. His sister works in the U.S. embassy, and she was instrumental in his departure.

A Vietnamese military intelligence officer, sitting with his wife and three children, told a similar story. He had a friend in the American military who put him on an airplane flight headed for Clark field and the hangar where he sat, now waiting for word of further transit to the United States.

A 38-year-old Vietnamese accountant handed over his wife and children to an American at Tansonnhut airport. They would pose as his "family" for the purpose of the trip to American soil. The accountant himself was shoved into a line under an assumed American name and somehow passed through.

An American named Jim Scrivellito, an aircraft technician from Reno, Nevada, saw a Vietnamese hand over a thick roll of greenbacks to an American at Tansonnhut with a fervent plea to "put me on the list to go." He is certain the request was granted.

Close to 600 people arrived here yesterday. More than 800 had arrived by 7 p.m. today, with several more flights on the way. Most of those on the more recent flights were Vietnamese, with only a smattering of Americans.

Vietnamese are trying to buy, borrow, beg or steal their way out of their collapsing country at almost any risk or price. American friends are helping all they can, believing that the lives of their friends and relatives are at stake.

R. E. LeMann, an employee of the U.S. firm of Lear-Siegler, was told by a Saigon attorney three weeks ago that an exit visa for his wife, Thuan, could be ob-

tained for \$80 in greenbacks. Last week the lawyer said the price had gone up to \$400, and 10 more days would be required. He was willing to pay but he couldn't wait, knowing what he did about the deteriorating security in Saigon.

"It's not that Americans don't want to get out, it's that some of us couldn't get out unless we wanted to leave our Vietnamese families. I could never do that. It was bad enough when we boarded a bus ahead of my wife at the airport in Saigon. I never want to see a look like that on her face again," LeMann said.

Since the first evacuation flights two weeks ago, several thousand Americans and Vietnamese have poured into and through this vast air base, the largest outside the United States. According to informed estimates, about 3,000 Americans and Vietnamese are here right now wait-

ing for flights to the United States.

This morning a tent city capable of housing persons (20 to a tent) began rising in the 90-degree heat on a grassy parade field. The tent area will be a supplement to the hot, crowded barracks where 70 to 80 men, women and children are crammed in bunk-to-bunk, sharing four toilets and two showers. The lucky ones go to a three-story barracks called "Freedom House," which is under 24-hour guard to prevent comings and goings and to keep the people away from the press.

Late Sunday night, an air force plane was held up two hours on the runway at Tansonnhut airport by Vietnamese military police and marines claiming that unauthorized persons were on board. The U.S. embassy finally intervened, according to witnesses, to arrange release of the plane.

## Growing Assistance

Although the U.S. Congress has not yet acted to provide special status for Vietnamese evacuees, American officials here expressed confidence tonight that none will be sent back to Saigon. With other nations reluctant to accept them, nearly all appear to be eager to begin new lives in the United States.

In aggravated cases, the processing at Clark Field may take as long as three weeks. Most of the refugees will be moving out, sooner, however, as sponsors are found, immigration papers are processed and charter flights take off for destinations across the Pacific.