

NYTimes
To Guam Refugees, Kool-Ade Is Great

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OROTE POINT, Guam, Wednesday, April 30 — "I think," said Huynh Thach Thanh, "perhaps your government spend too much money on us refugees. We never expect electricity and water and everything."

That remark by Mr. Thanh, one of 10,000 refugees staying in this island's largest—and most spartan—refugee camp, underlined a newly discovered culture gap of sorts here.

For while the Americans building and visiting the camp see steaming hot tents, dribbling showers and crude toilets, many of the South Vietnamese view the conditions in the light of years of war when more than 10 million of their countrymen became refugees and lived in far worse conditions.

The refugees, who now number about 30,000, have little need for money in any of the 10 camps, which range from tents to two-story cement block barracks to Quonset huts that once housed American airplane crews that bombed South Vietnam.

Soft Drinks Popular

Housing is free. Medical care is free. Food, served from three 24-hour mobile kitchens, is free. The strange-looking sausages sold in a bun by mobile snack bars are real items of curiosity. The cold soft drinks in a can are popular in the hot afternoon sun that sends many refugees scurrying for nearby Gab Gab Beach.

But even in just the five days of its existence, life

in the refugee camp has settled into something resembling a routine. "We get up before 6," said Nguyen Huu Kinh. "It gets light here earlier than Saigon."

Refugees file, cafeteria-style, past a serving table where sailors dish out eggs (hard-boiled or fried), sausage, bread, which is increasingly popular among the younger evacuees, and, of course, rice. "It is all so very good," said Mr. Kinh. "Sometimes we have four meals a day. We did not expect so much."

Lunch is served around noon and includes chicken or pork, bread, tea and, of course, rice. In some camps, large coolers of iced tea, water and Kool-Ade are kept full on hallway tables. Apparently, the Kool-Ade is the most popular; the floor in front of it is probably the stickiest spot this side of Honolulu.

Hot Soup at 10

At 6 P.M. is dinner, which is much like lunch. And around 10, containers of hot soup are available for those who are not watching the movie, trying to comprehend a televised bowling tournament or gathering around wall maps of the United States to look for familiar words.

"My daughter is studying here," said one man knowledgeably pointing near Death Valley. His friends nodded knowingly. And an onlooker said he had heard of the place.

Nguyen Thi Chieu, a pharmacy clerk until last week when she fled by herself with two suitcases, was surprised that everyone seemed friendly. "Why do Americans smile so much?" she asked.

Of course, not everyone on Guam is smiling. Some refugees are homesick. Some are consumed by thoughts of an unknown future in a vast land that is 53 times larger than South Vietnam. "Right now, I have no future," said Phan Van Nhan, who was squatting in the shade of a parachute stretched between two rooftops.

Some Balk Briefly

Yesterday, before United States immigration officials scrapped their time-consuming refugee screening process, two busloads of evacuees refused to unload at Orote Point. They were persuaded that new procedures were on the way, however. The people unloaded.

And this morning officials began using the simple 3 x 5 identification card forms that they hope will enable them soon to be sending from 3,000 to 5,000 refugees a day to the airport for transportation to better-equipped camps in the United States. There, the refugees' remaining alien registration paperwork can be completed along with a thorough health examination.

Near the processing tent today Mark Basford, a sailor from Grand Junction, Colo., was distributing air mattresses to arriving refugees. "Have you ever seen so many people in one place?" he asked with distaste. "I mean even at the Super Bowl."

Three feet away a South Vietnamese woman, Ngo Thi Thuy Hong, turned to a stranger. "I never imagine such a place as this," she said. She was smiling.