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Viet Businessman Starts at

By Ron Shaffer

Washington Post Staff Writer

They were good times, life in Saigon for Tran Nhu Chuong. Two homes, a \$10,000 car, servants, family trips to the seaside, billiards at the exclusive Cercle Sportif, a successful business career, a salary that provided entry to the highest social circles in South Vietnam.

That life ended two weeks ago when Chuong, 35, and his family fled in turmoil and confusion from the Communist takeover. He is staying now with a sister and her American husband in Annandale.

He has \$150 and one suit, and is just one of thousands of Vietnamese refugees beginning life again, looking for a job.

"I have locked my former life in a drawer," Chuong said yesterday, as he made the rounds from employment office to referral serv-

ice in search of a management position.

"You miss so many things, relatives, the daily life. Now we have to worry about new problems. The life we had was so easy for us. I try to keep the whole thing out of my mind here."

In an interview yesterday, Chuong traced the rise of his career, the sudden decision to abandon everything he had earned, his escape, and his hopes for a new life.

Chuong was, by Vietnamese standards, a wealthy man. When the United States started pouring money into Vietnam in 1965, he became a businessman.

He was a young lawyer then who had just graduated from school. Fluent in French and English and deferred from military service because he is nearly blind in one eye, Chung learned how to deal with the Americans.

According to his resume,

he helped set up and manage for American investors Vietnamese companies that produced tin cans, fish meal, frozen food products, soft drinks and insecticides. When he left, he was the supervisor of port operations at Danang harbor for a Vietnamese-American firm.

He said his employers provided a car and driver. His salary allowed a private education for his teen-age son at the best French school in Saigon, an expensive imported Fiat and trips to movies and restaurants whenever his family pleased.

He became more and more a man of two worlds, he said, dancing and dining with Americans in Saigon, while becoming increasingly lax about traditional Vietnamese family observances, such as the anniversary of births and deaths of relatives and ancestors. He had a wardrobe of Western suits.

When advancing Commun-

ist troops overpowered government forces at Xuanloc, 40 miles northeast of Saigon in late April, he decided to leave.

By April 24, Chuong had completed the necessary paperwork to escape with his three children from a former marriage and join his sister, Thuc Spurlock, in Annandale.

Getting to the airport processing point required bribes of about \$1,000, he said, "Some families without the papers had to pay \$10,000 to \$15,000 to Vietnamese officials to get out," he said. In the rush to get out, he said, he had to leave behind his savings—tens of thousands of dollars—and his possessions. He took with him an overnight bag.

Inside were two sets of underwear, two shirts and two pairs of slacks. "I never thought Saigon would fall," Chuong said. "By the time

Bottom Again

I was ready to leave, no one could sell anything."

The evacuation plane took him to the Philippines, then Guam, from where he called his brother-in-law, James Spurlock, a lawyer in Anandale.

Spurlock flew to Guam and brought the family back. "I welcome these people as the first moral support we've ever had," Spurlock said, referring to subtle discrimination, he said he and his Vietnamese wife have received from friends and his family.

He has taken a month's leave, he said, to help Chuong and his family get resettled. Spurlock went with his brother-in-law on his job hunt yesterday.

"This man successfully organized and ran entire factories in Vietnam," Spurlock told receptionists at an executives referral service on 16th Street NW. "He is willing to work 18 hours a day."

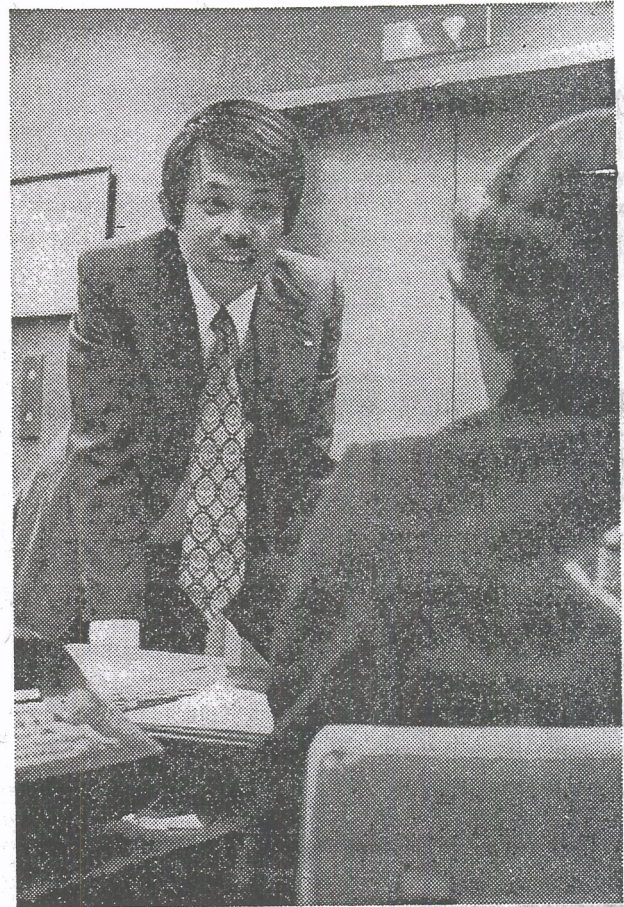
The receptionist said there would be a \$25 referral fee, asked for five copies of Chuong's resume, and told him to fill out some IBM cards.

Chuong marked on a list of desired salaries the "\$15,000 to \$20,000" bracket. "That's right, better to start high; you can always come down later," Spurlock said.

"We will publish your resume in a newsletter," the receptionist said. "Meanwhile, why don't you try the chamber of commerce for referrals?"

Visits to employment agencies brought suggested contacts in East Coast industries.

"I think once I get going I can be successful in management," Chuong said. Asked if he ever expects to have the comforts here he once had in Saigon, Chuong smiled. "I think things here will be better," he said.



By Bob Burchette—The Washington Post

Tran Nhu Chuong seeks job at agency for executives.