

Ky Is 'Starting All Over Again' Here



By Charles Del Vecchio—The Washington Post

Former air force chief, premier and vice president of South Vietnam, Nguyen Cao Ky sits in his suburban home.

By J. Y. Smith

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Nguyen Cao Ky, who was the premier of South Vietnam, its vice president and the commander of its air force, is, at 45, a refugee with an uncertain future.

He is living now in a spacious brick ranch house in

suburban Washington. Its only furnishings are wall-to-wall carpeting, a small table and four chairs in the living room, a television set, a radio, three model airplanes, and mattresses on the floor for sleeping.

The move to America has imposed a change on Ky's life-style.

He himself is virtually penniless, he said. His wife and six children and some other relatives left South Vietnam a month ago yesterday and arrived in the Washington area via Guam and Travis Air Force Base, Calif. Madame Ky had with her about \$30,000, Ky said.

With this, they have

bought a small American car—"It gets good gas mileage"—and pay the \$400-a-month rent on their four-bedroom house.

In all, there are 13 members of the Ky household here, including the wife and child of an officer friend.

See KY, A12, Col. 1

KY, From A1

Madame Ky drives to Washington every day for six hours of English lessons.

"She is the captain of the ship," Ky said. "She is the head of the household, she is the one who drives the car. I cannot even drive because I do not have a license. I think perhaps in the next two or three days I will take the test.

"It is a new experience for me, to have to have papers in my pockets—money, a driver's license—in Vietnam I needed none of those things."

Ky gestured at the kitchen. "At least we can have Vietnamese food," he said. "It's cheap and we like it."

He introduced a visitor to his mother-in-law, who was sitting on a mattress in a bedroom with another elderly woman. They were both sewing.

"We Vietnamese have large families," Ky said. "It is one of the problems with the refugees: How does one

person support such a large family?"

For himself, he said, he has received tentative offers from some publishers for a book. Beyond that, Ky would like to be of some service to the other 150,000 refugees from his homeland.

"I have told my wife I am like the others: I have to start all over again." Of course, he added, it will be easier for him than for most of the others.

"I am fully familiar with American society," he said. "But still there is a terrific adjustment for all of us to make to American life.

Ky said he thought it would take at least three years for most of the refugees to become settled.

Ideally, he said, this transition should be spent in co-operative agricultural enterprises that would provide the refugees with food, jobs, an income, a chance to learn the language and an opportunity to find their way in a culture far different from their own.

"I understand the social and political problems we

and you have," he said in reference to the criticism some Americans have expressed of the refugees' presence here. "I am fully aware that there are 8 million unemployed in the United States. But if we resettle in the countryside, this shows that we are not going to take any jobs from the American people."

In the long run, he said, the Vietnamese must "be integrated in American society. But not now. Give them three years, four years."

Right now, Ky said, it would be "impossible, impossible" for most of the refugees to "find a decent job" in the United States.

"Most of them are not even capable of being servants," he said. "If they go to work in a restaurant, there is machinery there. How can they use it? They've never seen anything like it.

"We are peasants, basically. Plus the language problem. What are they going to do?"

Ky said he had received a letter from actor John Wayne recently in which Wayne said he knew of 17,000 acres in Arizona that might be suitable for the kind of farming Ky has in mind. He said he planned to discuss this with Wayne when he returns to California in the next few weeks.

But apart from general plans for a book and hopes for agriculture for his countrymen, Ky said he had no specific idea what he will do in the future.

And so it is natural that his mind turns to the past and the freshness of the defeat. Since 1971, when he left the vice presidency of his country, he has been a private citizen. He has lived in a large villa near Tan-sonnhut Air Base outside Saigon, which was his by right of being a former premier. And for the past two years he has farmed in the Central Highlands near Banmethuot.

But there was a time when Ky cut as fine a figure as anyone in South Vietnam. When he was in power he wore a black flight suit, black baseball cap and pur-

ple scarf. He is still trim and he still speaks with a voice used to command.

"I had no youth," he said as he sat in one of the four chairs in the living room. "I have had a life of war and killing. No one likes to kill and no one likes to be killed."

Sunlight filtered through the leaves and made changing patterns on the carpeting. Ky said the view reminded him of Dalat, the old resort town in the Central Highlands.

He knew, he said, that the policies of former President Nguyen Van Thieu, his political enemy of recent years, would lead to defeat, and the thought of it galls him.

"For 20 years we fought, accepted sacrifices," he said. "Then, suddenly, in a period of 20 days, it was gone. That would be a good title for my book, 'Twenty Years, Twenty Days.'"

It was just a month ago today that Ky boarded an American helicopter in Saigon and left his country. The following day, the Communists completed the takeover of the capital.

He arrived in this country about three weeks ago. Until Friday, when he came to the Washington area to see his family, he had been staying with other refugees at the U.S. Marine Corps' Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"The other refugees would come to my tent at night, asking for advice. They are really worried about the future.

"One woman who was there with her two children said she wanted to go back to Vietnam because her husband was there. One day an American came and said he wanted to marry Vietnamese, so we introduced them. But he turned her down, and so she wanted to go back."

"I am not worried about the rich refugees, or the professionals," Ky said. "I am worried about the other 60 per cent. They are military, and all they've known for 20 years is war and killing. Unless they get help, how can they make a living here?"



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Former South Vietnam Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky, his children. In back are Van, 13, and Tri, 18, right. In front, from left, are Dian, 12; Dayin, 10, Tuan, 14. In front, from left, are Dian, 12; Dayin, 10, Tuan, 14. In front, from left, are Dian, 12; Dayin, 10, Tuan, 14.