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Refugees Lead Cloistered Life

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CAMP PENDLETON, Calif.—The thousands of South Vietnamese refugees quartered in the instant city created for them here are living an unreal existence that is not preparing them for the shock of entry into American society, a group of psychologists has found.

"They don't have any grip on reality," said Dr. Minh Tung, a psychiatrist and former minister of health of South Vietnam, himself a refugee, who has established a mental health clinic here.

"They are protected, sheltered, they don't have to worry about war, about food, or money," he said.

"In many ways it's like life in a Vietnamese village here. They have yet to face a change in culture."

Tung's views were supported by two U.S. psychologists who toured the refugee settlement.

Dr. Hedda Bolgar, dean of the Los An-

geles Wright Institute, a psychological research center and graduate school, expressed concern that the refugees are being "nurtured" in "a very protected setting" and not being prepared for "the American scene."

"So far they have met very sympathetic people who all agree that the Vietcong is terrible and South Vietnam was fine until maybe their leaders did a few bad things," she said. "The actual American scene is not all that sympathetic, not all that unified. In a sense they are encouraged to feel that they are heroes and martyrs and that everybody is going to treat them the way the Marines treat them."

A view of camp life here confirms the sense of a cloistered, specialized system. The 15,000 refugees may not leave the base, but an enormous effort has been made by the Marines and volunteer groups to cater to their needs within the camp.

See PENDLETON, A4, Col. 3

PENDLETON, From A1

Tent living lacks privacy and is somewhat uncomfortable, but that is ameliorated by the availability of free food, clothing, medicine recreation and schooling. There are volleyball and basketball courts, outdoor movie "amphitheaters" and variety shows (a clown troupe, a mime, and a Beau Bridges variety show were available on board area for scrubbing one typical day). In addition, camp sites have a small library, a dispensary, a wash-clothes and a community television set. Mobile banks and PX are available.

The atmosphere is that of a somnolent, peaceful village in the sun, where no one works.

There has been little or no violence and few reports of overt depression among the residents, the majority of whom are younger than high-school age. "I expected some kind of anger, outbursts of rage and violence, but the adults are not showing signs of stress, and for the children this is still an adventure," said Tung.

Beneath the surface, however, it does not take long to

uncover sadness, apprehension, even anger. The psychol-

Luong Ngoc Mai, a former director of a cement business in Saigon, worried about supporting his wife, three children, mother-in-law and a niece. In Saigon his family lived well on \$140 a month. Here, he realizes that amount would not even pay the rent. "I am truly afraid," he confided.

The apprehension is increased by reports filtering into camp, some rumor, some fact. One factual situation is the decrease in sponsorship offers. Officials involved in locating sponsors say it is especially difficult to find sponsors for large or extended families. Some Vietnamese have arrived with 20 to 25 relatives and do not want to split up.

Some refugees, usually those with close relatives back home, have expressed a desire to return to South Vietnam. A total of 72 formal requests has been made here, and a total of 1,000 from all camps, including Guam.

One of those who has applied to return is Ngyuyen Than Danh, a 31-year-old aircraft mechanic who jumped aboard

a plane by impulse in the closing days of the war of the war and found himself, against his will, in Thailand. His wife and children are in Saigon.

"I cannot live here without my family," he said disconsolately. "My body is here, but my family is my spirit and my spirit is there."

By and large, however, the impression is that most refugees are postponing confronting the hard questions.

"They all worry," said Tung, "but it is still far away. It is like being a patient in a hospital for chronic disease—you worry about the food, the candy, getting visitors. You want to forget what is going on beyond those walls."

Another psychologist who made the tour, Dr. Constance Katzenstein, also of the Wright Institute, called the U.S. attitude "a misplaced humanism."

"We're being sweet to these nice, middle-class people. It's a

traditional American gesture, but at the same time it's a kind of paternalism. We're infantilizing them dreadfully. What service have we done these people? We've alienated them from their culture, jerked them out in a

'humanistic' fashion. They're going to meet a lot of hostility."

Dr. Katzenstein suggested that the truly humanitarian thing to do would be to facilitate the refugees' return to Vietnam. Dr. Bolgar urged that a system of reality training be

established at the camps to prepare refugees for the future.

Tung was concerned that the traditional Vietnamese extended family not be broken up "as seems to be American policy so far."