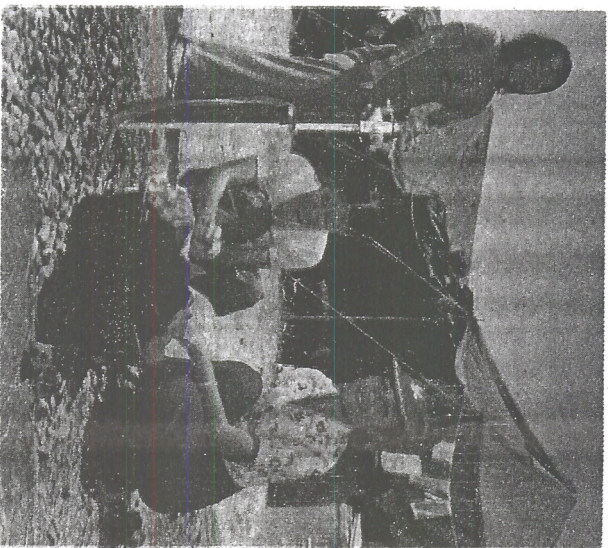
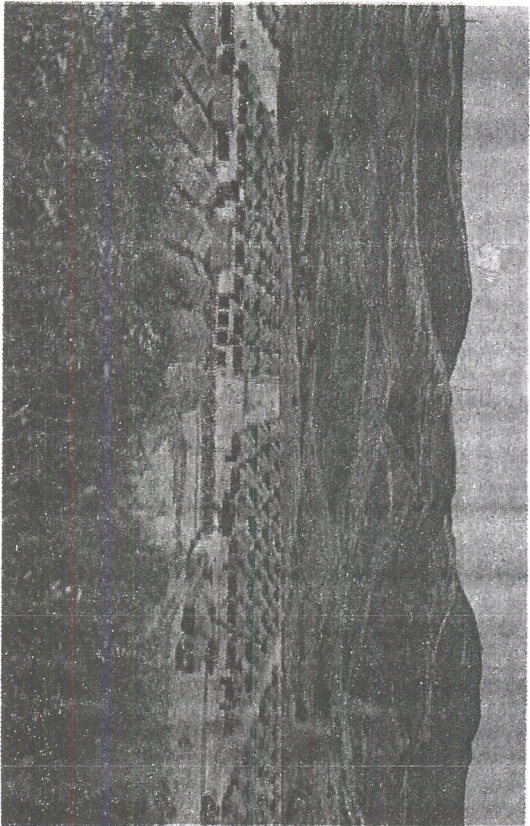


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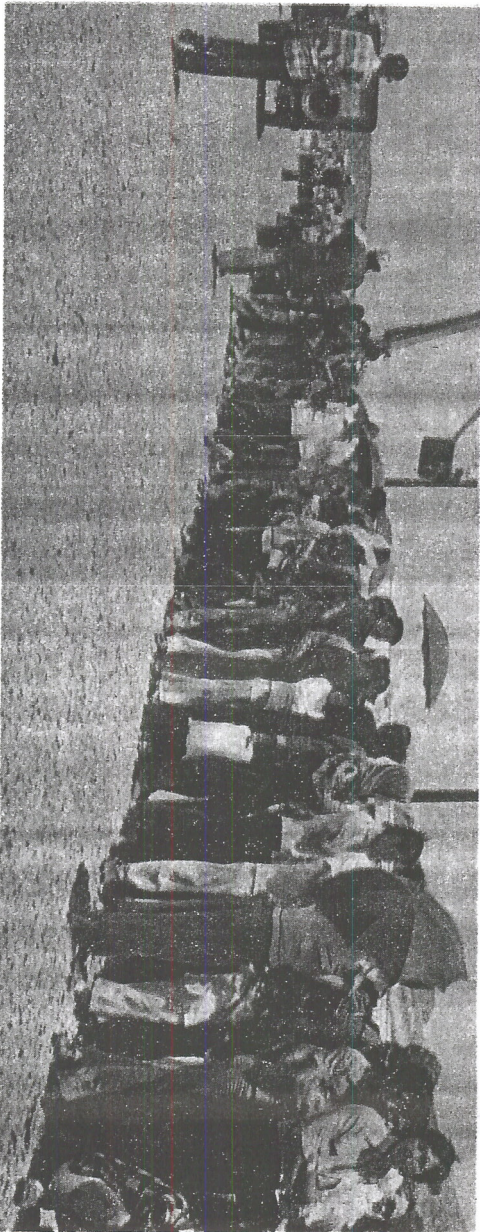
# parade

cover story:  
**Vignettes of  
Vietnamese Refugees**  
by Lloyd Shearer

WXPost









# Vignettes of Vietnamese Refugees

by Lloyd Shearer

CAMP PENDLETON, CALIF.

In 1956 the Voice of America and other U.S. quasi-intelligence agencies helped stimulate a revolt against Hungarian communism. The Soviets sent in troops while the Hungarians vainly pleaded for U.S. arms. Khrushchev's men brutally quelled the insurgency. Eventually the U.S. welcomed 40,000 Hungarian immigrants to these shores.

In 1960 and 1961 the CIA recruited and trained a group of Cuban exiles in Florida, Louisiana, Panama, and Guatemala to invade Cuba and defeat Cuban communism. The Castroites entrapped the invaders in the Bay of Pigs and defeated them. Today the U.S. is the home of some 600,000 Cuban immigrants.

In the 1970's the Americans, after training, financing, and supplying the South Vietnamese to beat North Vietnamese communism, pulled out their troops. Under Richard Nixon we instituted a Vietnamization program designed to make the South Vietnamese militarily self-sufficient. A few months ago the army of South Vietnam collapsed. Now approximately 130,000 Vietnamese refugees reside on American territory.

We pay for our inability to contain overseas communism in costly hospitality . . . justifiably so.

\* \* \*

They said the first refugees to reach Camp Pendleton, the California Marine base, three miles across Highway 5 from Richard Nixon's San Clemente residence, were not the hoi polloi but rather the cream of the moneyed Vietnamese—the lawyers, the doctors, the bankers, the professionals and their families. But the first refugee who approached a PARADE reporter along the B row of tents at Pendleton was a beautiful, heavily lipsticked young woman. "You get me out of this ----- camp, and I ---- you forever" she said in brothel English. "Together we make plenty money." When the reporter explained that all camp inmates had to submit first to a security and then to a sponsor check, the girl stilettoed him with a look of scorn. "You a goddam chicken," she spat out.

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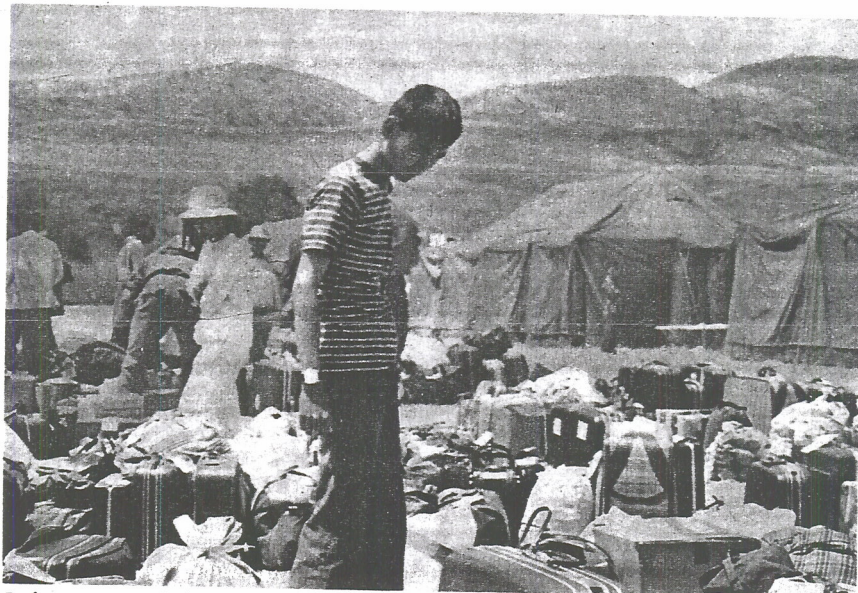
At Camp Pendleton, the refugees began to call their area "Little Saigon." The Marines there toiled endlessly, erected 1000 tents, laid down miles of water pipes and electric cables, hoisted hundreds of chemical toilets, worked 'round the clock, feeding and sheltering 18,000 refugees. They were good-natured, courteous, smiling, tolerant—a few accepted the nocturnal sexual services of former bar girls, but they were

*continued*





*Confused and worried, a Vietnamese woman questions Marine sergeant at Pendleton.*



*Refugees search for their hastily packed baggage outside temporary tent homes.*



## REFUGEES CONTINUED

all helpful, polite, and particularly playful with the children, who constitute an estimated 60 per cent of the refugees. In its first week of operation, Pendleton's bill for pipe, tents, bedding, water fixtures, and food exceeded \$5 million.

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**A** Vietnamese girl named Vinh, infant in arms, was crying. "They told me," she said, "we go to Bangkok, we going to Bangkok. This not Bangkok. We fly hours, hours. Where Bangkok? My husband in Bangkok." There were others like her. Panicky, fearful, they grabbed the first flight, the first ship to anywhere. Only anywhere wasn't where they wanted to be.

\* \* \*

**O**ne of the featured and most puzzling personalities at Pendleton was Nguyen Cao Ky, the former Air Vice Marshal, Premier and Vice President of South Vietnam (shown on our cover). After making sure his wife and four children would be secure in Washington, D.C., with his former public relations officer, Ky was one of the last to helicopter out of Saigon, but not before he made a rousing speech urging every red-blooded South Vietnamese to stay behind to defend his country.

At Pendleton, Ky occupied a bed in tent A3. Here he was greeted by retired U.S. Air Force Col. Jack Bailey, who kept telling him, "Just spoke to Bob Hope last night. Bob wants you and me to appear on his next show." Ky seemed a bit taken back by the invitation but said he would be glad to appear with Bob Hope. He knew Bob Hope was a true patriot.

I asked Ky if he thought the Communists would fuel a bloodbath in South Vietnam. "Oh, yes," he explained. "But not to begin. They will do it slowly, quietly. They are going to execute a lot of people, particularly our airmen who

inflicted upon them very heavy casualties. Then they will kill one million or so; another 100,000 or 200,000 they can use—these people will be placed in concentration camps for brainwashing. But they will surely kill millions."

Did he feel that the Americans had let his people down?

"No, it was not your fault that we lost the war. You helped us all you could, perhaps you helped us too much. We lost the war because of Nguyen Van Thieu [who had ousted Ky from power]. Thieu provided us corruption instead of leadership. Remember the defeat of our country must be attributed to Thieu. He is the most evil man in the world.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "I am here among my people. I am broke. Maybe someone will give me a job driving a taxi, maybe I can be a farmer in San Antonio. I have been to San Antonio. I like San Antonio. Where is Thieu? On Taiwan with his wife and his money."



*The irrepressible high spirits of childhood shine through adverse circumstance.*



I walked out of the hot tent with Ky beside me. We posed for photos. The Air Force colonel drove him off to lunch. A Vietnamese banker edged up beside me. "Only a fool," he said softly, "would believe that man. He wants to become leader of the Vietnamese in exile."

\* \* \*

**S**ign on bulletin board: "Nguyen Thi Tu—Tent 43A—must find Dennis E. McGowan—phone # 502-969-2733, passport B-1359087; Soc. Sec. # 349-42-4415; He born Chicago, 12-19-47. Father: George McGowan, 10100 Coralwood Drive, Louisville, Ky. Here with child."

\* \* \*

**A** Vietnamese physician who was trained at the University of Oklahoma, was living in Tent 43E with his family. He was an internist, he explained, and the university would sponsor him. In a week or so he expected to be doctoring in Oklahoma City or somewhere in the state.

Camp Pendleton was very nice, except it was too cold at night. But the Marines had been very thoughtful, three blankets for everyone, and even spare field jackets for others.

Many of the Vietnamese who had fled Saigon, he explained, had been caught up in the contagion of panic. Many were the children of army men. They had been told that if the Communists caught them, they would be executed immediately. So they fled along with all the others who had worked or supported the Americans.

"Suppose," the doctor was asked, "there is no bloodbath in South Vietnam. Do you think most of these people would prefer to return to South Vietnam?"

"Yes," he asserted quickly. "I think

most of them would. After all, so many are children; so many are separated from their families; so many have to get accustomed to a new culture, a new way of life here. It is very difficult for people of a different race, a different background, a different climate. We are a very close people. And if after all these years of war, there is finally peace at home it is a shame for Vietnamese not to know it.

"You see," he added, "we are not really a very political people. A little land, a little rice, a little peace. That is the most people wish for."

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**T**he Cambodians at Pendleton do not like the Vietnamese and vice versa. The Cambodians, however, even though defeated by their own countrymen, the Khmer Rouge, are quietly proud that it was Cambodians who stood up to the Americans in the Mayaguez affair. The Cambodians and Vietnamese refugees are both convinced that the white man will never again rule supreme in Southeast Asia.

\* \* \*

**T**he refugees at Pendleton do not expect to be treated equally. They defer to Vietnamese who have money or had power and position at home. Few refugees were surprised to learn that Trang Si Tan, Nguyen Van Giaum, Truong Bay, and other generals and police officials from home had quietly and quickly been allowed to leave camp under special conditions. "The same old story," one refugee said cynically.

\* \* \*

**T**he reason they refused to fight the Communists, several Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) soldiers explained, was because of President Thieu. According to their account, "We had many excellent infantry divisions who would have defended our country to the end. It was General Thieu who was indecisive. He ran around like a headless chicken. He didn't know what to do. When our men were defeated at Ban Me Thout in March, President Thieu issued different orders every hour. First we were to stand and fight, then we were to fall back and fight, then we were to retreat only to attack again. In the end our officers decided to save their own skins.

"Once that happened panic took over. It became every man for himself. We abandoned our equipment and our soldiers. The objective was to escape to the coast. There was much shameful looting. There was no discipline by the men, because there was no discipline by the officers. The fault of the ARVN was that it was rotten on top, starting with Thieu. We had an army motivated by piasters, not patriotism . . . remember you are not to use our names."