

# Vietnamese Refugees Seeking to Stay in a

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FORT CHAFFEE, Ark., Nov. 16—Nguyen Van Hut, a stocky, 40-year-old Vietnamese fisherman, looked discouraged as he sat awkwardly on the edge of an army cot and tried to explain his frustration after six months in the refugee camp here.

"I want to get out. I don't want to stay here," he said with some agitation through an interpreter. "I like working. I don't want to bother the United States Government any more."

Adding that he had run out of money to buy even such small luxuries as cigarettes, he went on:

"I would like any job. When I get out I can make some money, buy something, do what I want to do."

Since May 15, just 10 days after this base was reopened to house refugees fleeing Indochina, Mr. Hut, his wife, Tran Thi To, 39, and six sons, age 2 through 15, have lived in the crowded quarters behind one of the plywood partitions that were put up to divide the old, white two-story barracks like honeycombs and provide a minimum of privacy for the families.

A seventh son, Nguyen Van Cu, 22, left some time ago to work for a farmer in Longview, Tex.

## Typical of Many

In many ways the Huts are typical of at least a fairly large number of the slightly more than 12,000 refugees who remain in camp from among the approximately 133,000 who spent some time in them.

They know that officials of the President's Inter-Agency Task Force have insisted that the 3,000 or so refugees at Fort Indiantown Gap, Pa., will be processed to sponsors by the end of this month or shortly thereafter and that the 9,000 here will be out by Dec. 31. They also know that the refugee centers at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., and Camp Pendleton, Calif., were closed on schedule.

Faced with that, the Huts, like many of the others left behind, are becoming increasingly anxious about their future.

But for months, the reality of the closings seemed far away to them. The camps were Indochinese villages, strange perhaps, but ever more familiar. Friends were there and families.

And the language was there. Mr. Hut and his wife, again like a lot of others, speak no English despite the so-called "survival courses" that have been available for months.



The New York Times/John Partipilo

Nguyen Van Hut with his wife and four of their sons at the refugee camp at Fort Chaffee, Ark., where they have been for six months. Mr. Nguyen wants to find work.

Some officials contend that their camp profiles show there is little difference between the cross-section of refugees here now and those who were here earlier.

However, others maintain that for the most part of the highly educated or skilled persons with smaller families have left, leaving behind those with fewer skills and less English, larger families or extended families, and more reluctance to be separated from the Indochinese community here.

## No Desire to Return

Other identifiable groups, remaining here include about 470 persons who have asked to go to third countries but have not received permission and 117 Cambodians and 80 Vietnamese who want to repatriate if their countries allow them to. The task force has said that numbers of these two groups will be placed with sponsors if they do not gain acceptance abroad

by Dec. 31 and that they will be free to leave the United States if it is granted later.

Despite their months of languishing at the camp here, the Huts do not want to go back. They knew what they were doing when they fled in their fishing boat from Phuoc Tinh, near Vung Tau, to be picked up by a United States naval vessel.

"I didn't want to live with the Communists," Mr. Hut said through the interpreter. He went on to explain that he was a Roman Catholic who had fled from North Vietnam when the Communists took over in 1954 and that he and his family were afraid to go back now for fear of being killed.

Actually, the Huts are among 50 families who camp officials here say left the same village in North Vietnam in 1954 with their priest and settled in the Vung Tau area, only to flee together again last April.

All are reported to be still in camp and all insistent upon

staying together or at least in large extended-family groups.

That, according to voluntary agency officials working with them, is their major problem with placement.

Although Mr. Hut insists that he wants to leave the camp and "would like any job," Raymond Plotczyk of the Tolstoy Foundation, the voluntary agency that has been trying to place the family, said that the Vietnamese fisherman had neglected to mention one thing.

"He wants to remain with his extended family, which includes eight other families," Mr. Plotczyk explained.

## Effort That Failed

"Do you know any place that wants to take 89 people?" he asked. "They all come from Vung Tau or that area and they're all fishermen. They all claim to be related and they all want to stay together."

He said at one time he had thought he had the group placed in a "chicken-plucking

## Group Pose Resettlement Problem

operation in Arkansas." That fell through, he said, "when too many other people also registered for it." Now, he went on, he is studying an offer by two nonprofit groups to resettle up to 500 people in Kansas City, Mo.

"I'm not a big fan of mass resettlement projects," he added. "I tend to shy away from them, but this is the best one I've seen yet."

Noting that several of the large resettlement projects that were undertaken as Camp Pendleton was closed last month had broken down, Mr. Plotczyk and other agency officials insisted that they were being extremely cautious that

the same thing did not happen here.

The Tolstoy official said the foundation was sending about 60 people from Indiantown Gap to the Kansas City project and would then investigate it in a couple of weeks before sending any more from here.

"If you can't place them in an 89-member group, you can't do it," he added. "It's getting a little late to find places for groups like that."

"This has been one of the tougher problems, the groups that want to stick together," agreed George Goss, deputy senior civil administrator here for the task force. "I've never been too keen on mass sponsor-

ship. It's been difficult, but not impossible to dissuade them."

But like other officials here and in Washington, he was optimistic that the refugees would be resettled on schedule.

"We're quite sure we'll find as they did at Pendleton that the psychology of closing down will work to our advantage," he said. "We've tried to make this a comfortable place and in some ways it's perhaps been too comfortable. It's three squares a day, zero cost of living. It's been warm. But they now know every day that they're part of the shrinking majority—and it's getting colder."