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**Vietnam One Year Later:
A Major Transformation**

Vast Groups Shifted Dream Fades in U.S.

By FOX BUTTERFIELD

Special to The New York Times

HONG KONG, April 29 — A university professor has become a bicycle repairman after his school was closed. A lawyer has gone to work clearing scrub jungle in the countryside after his profession was abolished. The wife of a major in the former South Vietnamese Army lost her house and had to sell all her furniture after her husband was taken away for what was said to be a three-week re-education course last June. He is still not back and now she runs a portable soup stall to earn enough to live.

"Every day now is hard," she wrote recently to a relative in the United States. "I get up at 5 every morning to do productive labor, and I usually don't finish til almost midnight. There is so little future for us."

These are some of the changes pieced together from refugee reports, letters from

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By JAMES T. WOOTEN

Special to The New York Times

CULVER CITY, Calif.—On a sunny afternoon not long ago, a once-prosperous lawyer from Saigon sat in his tiny, darkened apartment here, sipping from a plastic cup and sadly pondering his days as an exile.

"I knew it would be hard," Duong Dong Minh sighed, "but

This is another in a series of articles following selected Vietnamese refugees through various stages of adjustment to life in the United States.

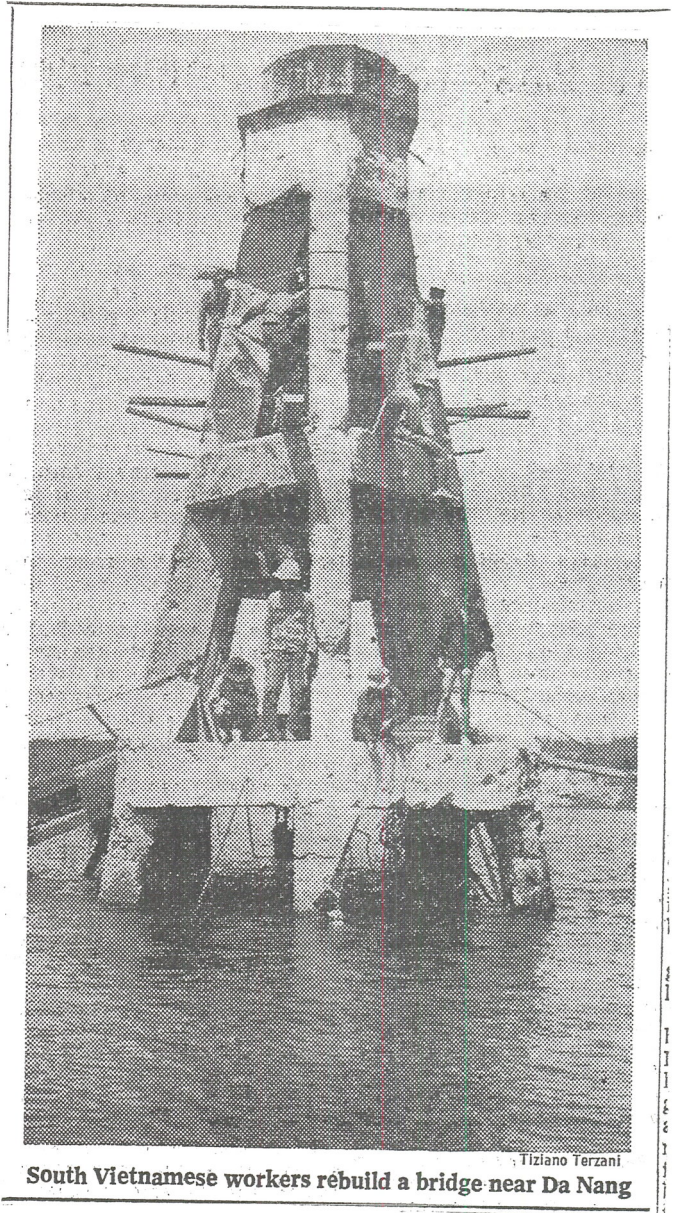
it is so much harder than I thought."

He spoke only for himself, of course, but his words also seemed appropriate to the 130,000 other Vietnamese who came on the run with him last spring—remnants of a ruinous war, scrambling in panic from their homeland, searching through frightened eyes for that old dream of a new life.

Now, one year after their dramatic exodus, they have found, like Mr. Minh, that the dream does not come easy.

Some have adjusted with remarkable speed, a few have fared extraordinarily well—but

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Tiziano Terzani

South Vietnamese workers rebuild a bridge near Da Nang

SOUTH VIETNAM: ONE YEAR LATER

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Vietnamese and accounts of the few foreigners still in Saigon that have gradually but profoundly transformed Saigon in the year since Communist troops entered the city last April 30, bringing an end to three decades of war.

Changes of Violence

On the surface, these changes in South Vietnam have been far less drastic and brutal than those that followed the Communist takeover in Cambodia. There have been no mass executions, no reports of starvation and no forced exodus of entire city populations to the countryside.

But the alterations the Communists have brought have been sweeping and painful nonetheless, and have come much faster than many Vietnamese had expected. People of an entire social class of perhaps a million people—officers in the defeated South Vietnamese Army, the 250,000-member bureaucracy, the police and all those who worked for the Americans—have been dispossessed. They have been stripped of their jobs, their state housing, their savings and, if they were disabled or retired, their pensions.

For many the only choice is to go to the "new economic zones" that the Communists have set up in uncleared land in the countryside. But few were ever farmers.

Prolonged 'Re-education'

With only a few exceptions, the South Vietnamese Army officers, policemen and politicians who were taken off for "re-education" courses last summer have not returned, though they were told at the time to bring food and clothes for only a few weeks.

A Vietnamese who escaped to Hong Kong by fishing boat reported that the body of his brother, a former army captain, had been sent home in a coffin. The refugee believed his brother had been killed while clearing a mine field.

Another Vietnamese family received a letter from a son who said he might "graduate" from his course in "two or three more years."

At the same time, the econo-

my, which admittedly was artificially active because of vast American aid, has sharply deteriorated. By the Communists' own accounts, there are two million unemployed, prices of most items have tripled and corruption remains a way of life, as it was under the old Saigon leadership.

The old popular culture of books, poems, songs and movies has been banned as "decadent," while the educational system has been realigned to follow that of North Vietnam, complete with 300 tons of North Vietnamese textbooks that have been shipped to the South.

Hanoi Officials Dominant

Despite the Communists' earlier assertions that the National Liberation Front and the Provisional Revolutionary Government were part of an independent and indigenous South Vietnamese movement, control of South Vietnam over the last year has remained firmly in the hands of men who have recently been publicly identified by the Communists themselves as members of the Politburo or Central Committee of the Lao Dong, or Workers' Party in Hanoi.

The most prominent among these is Pham Hung, the fourth ranking member of the Politburo, who is now described as secretary of the party's "southern branch." He has been listed ahead of all the National Liberation Front leaders in official news reports, a usual sign of seniority.

Mr. Hung, who is 64 years old, is a native of the Mekong Delta. But, according to statements by the Communists, "tens of thousands" of officials and technicians have been sent from the North to the South in the last year to help run the country.

Moreover, though the war has been over for a year, United States intelligence sources say North Vietnam has not withdrawn any of its troops from the South, and keeps eight divisions in the Saigon area alone.

The election of a new National Assembly this week, with representatives from both North and South, takes the country a step further toward formal unification, which is expected in the next two or three months. But in fact, as the emergence of Mr. Hung makes clear, unification has been in effect since last April 30, and all the old distinctions between North Vietnamese troops and the Southern National Liberation Front have become largely

meaningless.

Process of Transition

The process of creating a new social order has been uneven, and South Vietnam remains a country in transition, somewhere between its now discredited past and its "revolutionary" future. The Communists, for example, have made little effort so far to carry out a major land-redistribution program in the countryside, perhaps mindful of the violent reaction that accompanied the process in North Vietnam.

When the Communists took over last spring, many South Vietnamese welcomed them, apparently out of a sense of relief that the war was over and surprise at how well the

North Vietnamese troops behaved. But judging from red of h cent reports, this perioar-money soon soured.

A critical change came when the Communists introduced their own new currency last fall, exchanging it for old South Vietnamese piasters at a rate of 500 old piasters to one new dong, a rate many Vietnamese found highly unfair.

Since people were allowed to exchange a total of only 200,000 old piasters, they could obtain a maximum of 400 new dong. And with the black-market rate for the dong now at more than 10 to a dollar, everyone's savings were reduced to \$40 at most.

At the same time, North Vietnamese soldiers and officials reportedly went on a "shopping spree," as one Vietnamese put it in a letter, taking advantage of the people's need for money to buy up everything from French perfume to Japanese transistor radios and American cars. Many of these have since appeared for sale in black markets in Hanoi. According to one report, the Communists even packed up the former United States Army Third Field Hospital in Saigon and moved it to the North.

Salaries Reduced

Adding to the economic difficulties, some Vietnamese report, was the Communists' imposition of a salary cut for those teachers, civil servants and businessmen who were allowed to keep their jobs.

A teacher in the Mekong delta city of Can tho, for example, wrote to his brother in the United States that his

pay was cut in half and he made only 30 dongs a month, or \$2 to \$3. This is said to be about average for many Vietnamese.

But the price of a bowl of pho the popular Vietnamese noodl soup, has tripled to one and a half dong, and a pair of trousers is now said to cost as much as 80 dong because the fabric has to be imported.

Perhaps in part because of these economic hardships, there have been periodic reports of continued resistance by small groups in some parts of Vietnam.

Most reports of incidents, none of which can be verified, come from areas with a history of opposition to the Communists — from the Montagnard, or nonethnic Vietnamese region around Ban Me Thuot in the Central Highlands, from some Roman Catholics in Saigon and from the Hoa Hao, a Buddhist sect in the Mekong Delta.

But American intelligence an outside supply of arms and other help, this resistance constitutes little more than an annoyance to the Communists.

One of South Vietnam' most popular poets, Vu Hoang Chuong, recently managed to smuggle a poem out of the country to a friend.

The 65-year-old poet, who used to compose love verse for generations of young Vietnamese, is no longer allowed to publish in Saigon. The new poem reads, in part:

*On the banks of the river, the
grass is overgrown.
Friends are coming no more.
This estranged land is slowly sink-
ing into darkness,
And my soul is drowned under
waves of sadness.*

The Old Dream of a New Li

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for the rest of the Vietnamese, which is most of the Vietnamese, it has been a very difficult time.

Although completely accurate unemployment statistics are not available, a Government survey and other inquiries around the country show that more than 8,300 Vietnamese are unemployed and looking for work, and that nearly 8,000 Vietnamese are no longer looking for a job. Many others who have found work are either underemployed or earning only subsistence wages.

Many Difficulties

Government aid and private largesse have been bountiful, but bureaucratic tangles and political maneuvering seem often to have added to the already sizable burdens of Vietnamese families.

While other refugees have the thousands of Cubans, Hungarians, Czechs, Ugandans and Soviet Jews, for instance—that is of little comfort to the Vietnamese.

"In fact, it is like telling a wounded man that others have fallen in battle before him," Nguyen Ngoc Linh, a former Minister of Information in South Vietnam, said recently in Washington. "It does not stop the pain."

As executive director of the National Center for Vietnamese Resettlement, Mr. Linh has become a veritable catalogue of his countrymen's problems in the United States, from language, diet, climate and culture to prejudice, mistreatment and outright abuse.

Now, his organization, privately funded, says it has begun to detect signs of severe emotional and psychological stress among some of the Vietnamese: insomniac children, terrified by their nightmares; lonely elders, staring silently into space; bickering couples, edging toward estrangement. And, it says, there have been reports of wife-beating, attempted suicides and nervous breakdowns.

"But finding jobs is the biggest hurdle," said Drew Sawin, a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency in Vietnam, who is now on the staff of the center. "If we could ever lick that, I think the rest of it would fall into place, as it has for almost every other group of immigrants."

Mr. Minh, the lawyer from Saigon who now lives in this suburb of Los Angeles, concurs. "Once we get jobs, we feel better," he said. "When we get better jobs, we will feel even better."



The New York Times

Lieut. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, ex-chief of staff of the South Vietnamese Army, is waiter at Yorktown at a Yorktown, Va., restaurant.

With the help of his sponsors, several nearby Lutheran churches, Mr. Minh, a 62-year-old native of Hanoi, wrote more than 225 résumés and job applications last fall. He got not a single reply and finally went to work as a \$300-a-month bookkeeper for Lutheran Social Services in Los Angeles.

"He works very hard," said the Rev. John Russell, pastor of the Village Church of Westwood, and one of Mr. Minh's sponsors. "But the work itself is far below his skills, his background and his experience."

Mr. Minh is not alone. In fact, according to Mr. Sawin and Mr. Linh, underemployment is widespread among the refugees, and nowhere is it more striking than among former military officers.

A three-star general in the South Vietnamese Army is now working as a flagman for a construction company making repairs to a Washington-Baltimore highway.

Another general, Dong Van Khuyen, who was the last chief of staff of the Vietnamese Army, got a job as a waiter in a seafood restaurant in Yorktown, Va.

Nguyen Van Cuuc, who com-

... West ... And in ... town outside of Tampa, ... former admiral is sacking groceries in a supermarket.

But the problem of underemployment is just as great for skilled civilians, people like Mr. Minh, who was not only a practicing attorney but a respected civil servant as well.

High-Level Backgrounds

According to statistics from the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare, nearly a third of the 30,000 Vietnamese breadwinners here have professional, technical or managerial backgrounds.

"But because of the recession, with its already tight job market, matching them to compatible jobs or even remotely similar jobs is practically impossible," said Larry McDonough, of the department's Task Force on Indochinese Refugees.

The job situation is complicated by the fact that the refugees come to this country under a Congressional immigrant parole. Under its terms there is no guarantee that they will be permitted to become citizens or resident aliens. Because of the conditions, they cannot qualify for most government jobs, including military enlistment.

Mr. Minh and his family are a prime example of employment problems.

His son, Hao Danh, was a dentist in Saigon with a busy practice. Now, he is unemployed and feverishly studying English so that he can return to school and once again practice dentistry. His daughter, Chi Kim, was a data processor for I.B.M. in Vietnam and is now working as a keypuncher for a local company. Another daughter, Tuyen Kim, was an English teacher in an elementary school and is now a clerk in a department store.

A third daughter, Ngoc Diep Thi, was a science teacher and now works in the cafeteria of a Beverly Hills public school, and her husband, Bach Vinh Toan, was a doctor and is now a laboratory technician in a Los Angeles hospital.

'We Are Lucky'

"Still, I think we are lucky," Mr. Minh said.

"We are healthy and we are working very hard and maybe some day we will even enjoy our work."

Others are not so fortunate. According to a study conducted for the Federal Government, more than 5,000 Vietnamese men and 3,300 women are unemployed—that is, looking for work.

Moreover, these same statistics show that nearly 8,000 Vietnamese men are no longer

... says further that about one-fourth of the refugees are receiving cash assistance in one form or another from the Federal Government.

Mr. Linh does not regard that study as reliable. It was based on a telephone sampling of about 1,500 families.

"The figures for unemployment and welfare are extremely low. I know they are," he said. "And the first tipoff is that everybody they included in the study had a telephone. That isn't a very reliable way to track these people and find out what's happening on a larger scale."

But that is the only way the Federal Government attempts to keep track of them, and there are some critics who see this as part of a studied indifference toward the refugees by the Government.

"I think they wanted maybe to make us as quickly invisible as possible," said Dr. Toan, Mr. Minh's son-in-law. "That is quite understandable, you know. I think we represent a reminder of what the Government would like to forget."

Assistance Continues

Still, more than a half billion tax dollars have been spent or allocated for the refugees' resettlement, and the Department of Health, Education and Welfare still has a force of 80 people working on refugee problems.

Periodic newsletters, in French, English and Vietnamese, are published. A free hotline for legal advice has been established with the cooperation of the American Bar Association, and there is still a great deal of coordination with the volunteer agencies that assisted in the resettlement.

Still, in its apparent haste to close the tent-city centers that were the refugees' first homes in this country, the Federal Government may have unnecessarily created additional problems for the Vietnamese.

Between 40,000 and 50,000 of them were transferred to sponsors in private homes, outside the protection and control of the volunteer agencies. That simply has not worked out.

Limited financial resources have stretched individual sponsors' budgets to the breaking point and the tensions of two families living under the same roof have generally been unbearable.

"Oh, it was great fun for a while," a Red Cross worker in Houston said earlier this month, "but the welcome soon wore out, and the best thing for them has been to get them into separate quarters. That doesn't solve all the problems, but it's a beginning."

It was near Houston that the Federal Government, in a fa-

efforts of one group of fishermen to produce American capitalism.

The Texas city has become, because of its climate, one of the most popular gathering points for refugees in the country, and a small group of them there, decided to go into business, making nuoc mam, a fermented fish sauce.

Because of the rather unappetizing—by Western standards, at least—methods for preparing the pungent sauce, the United States Food and Drug Administration ordered the group to stop making it. Nuoc mam, incidentally, is prepared in precisely the same way in the Philippines and regularly reported to and sold in the United States.

While outright abuse has been rare, Houston was also the scene of one of the most striking cases. Kim Lien, a 23-year-old Vietnamese woman with a small daughter, was first moved to Little Rock, where she worked as a maid to the sister of her sponsor.

Then, when her sponsor moved to the Houston area, the refugee and her child went with him. He soon disappeared and she began to do menial chores in a tavern owned by a woman who encouraged her to become a prostitute and persuaded her that if she did not give up custody of her child, she would be deported.

Desperate, she moved in with a man in a suburban house trailer and became pregnant. By mid-February, Catholic Community Services had learned of the situation, obtained the return of her child, and moved her into a home sympathetic to her plight.

"Fortunately, that sort of thing is infrequent," Mr. Sawin said. "By and large, the American people have been generous and kind, almost to a fault. Some of the refugees have grown so dependent on their sponsors and other Americans that they are doing nothing to help themselves."

Strong Work Ethic

But, for the most part, the Vietnamese seem to have a strong work ethic and, regardless of their economic situation, most of them have not given up.

One family, with 17 members, found sponsorship in North Dakota but soon discovered that the winters there were simply beyond their ability to adjust.

So the father explained their discomfort to their sponsors and arrangements were made for them to move—back here to Southern California, now almost a mecca for many of the Vietnamese.

Mr. H. said of the Vietnamese migration, "The Sunbelt syndrome, I believe it's called." The influx of thousands of other Asians in California has also been an attraction here.

Texas has drawn more than 9,000 of the refugees and about 5,000 have resettled in Florida. The District of Columbia area now has approximately 7,000, including Nguyen Cao Ky, the former Premier and Vice President of South Vietnam.

His book, "Twenty Years and Twenty Days," has just been published and he is about to move out of a rented home in Fairfax, Va., into one he has just purchased in nearby Vienna.

"I hope Mr. Ky is doing well," Mr. Minh said, as he reached the dregs in his tea cup. "But frankly, I cannot be overly concerned with his welfare. I must take care of my own family now and that requires my full attention."

So, each day, while his wrinkled, aging wife—twice as old as the refugee like him—sits home and the rest of his family goes about the business of adjustment.

Every morning, he rides a bus into downtown Los Angeles where he sits all day over columns of figures and balance sheets. His son spends 10 to 12 hours each day, diligently poring over English grammar texts, and three nights a week in an English class at a nearby public school.

His son-in-law spends his time in the hospital laboratory or studying American medical textbooks and planning for his enrollment in a Government-sponsored course for Vietnamese doctors this fall.

All the daughters work every day, every day, and then they study English with their father and brother at night. The two grand children go to school and, as Mr. Minh puts it with both pride and chagrin, "they are forgetting about their yesterdays."

And less than half a block from their tiny quarters, the old burned-out lot of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film studios rises against the Southern California sky. There, the charred remains to make believe Western towns, European villages and American street scenes sit stolidly visible to the Minhs and the Toans and they look for all the world to be the shredded, bombed-out hulks of war.

"No," Mr. Minh said, "I do not think about that. I do not look at that place. I am trying to forget."