

MAY 9 1975

# Non-Fighters For Freedom

A Commentary

By Nicholas von Hoffman

The State Department is appealing for Americans to step forward and be financial sponsors of the Vietnamese fugitives the executive branch of the government is packing in here. This is a wonderful opportunity for the parents of those of our soldiers who were turned on to heroin over there.

With any luck they may be able to sponsor their kids' pushers. This is also a chance for the Mafia to demonstrate its patriotism while at the same time recruiting some experienced personnel. The pimps, madams and hijackers of American food and material certainly should have the experience to fit into the underworld's operations in America.

Perhaps that description of the fugitives is overdrawn, although the television newsclips of them landing at Clark Air Force Base and immediately converting their gold hoards into dollars isn't reassuring. It is even less reassuring in the light of reports that we left hundreds of former Vietnamese employees of our embassy stranded in Ho Chi Minh City, nee Saigon, while thousands of these unvouched-for persons, who apparently bribed their way onto the airlift, are now becoming residents of a reluctant America. It may take the FBI years to determine how many are Red spies, but the more likely outcome is that, in one stroke, we have solved the new Communist government's vice and crime problem.

Assuming that the State Department and the White House aren't lying to us—and there are many who won't

See COMMENTARY, B2, Col. 4

COMMENTARY, From B1

make that assumption—it appears they have no idea who they're trucking over. Do you recall that in a matter of a couple of weeks the estimates of the number of arrivals have jumped from 50,000 to 80,000 to 120,000 and beyond. It is impossible, given these circumstances, for the government to know if it is admitting, babies excluded, worthy individuals, or the scum of Saigon's brothels, or the torturers from Gen. Thieu's political police.

"Give me . . . your huddled masses," etc. The light atop the Statue of Liberty is invoked by the President's press secretary as justification. We're told that we admitted thousands of Hungarian Freedom Fighters when their cause was extinguished by the Russian Army. Would that South Vietnam had been populated by Hungarians! By this time Hanoi would have been renamed Budapest East. What we're getting is a bunch of Freedom Non-Fighters who, as the television shots of acres of deserted tanks and artillery show, dropped their weapons and ran.

An orderly transfer of deserving Vietnamese was possible. Dr. Kissinger has had more than two years to arrange it. From the time it became clear that Congress was ending American participation in this war, it was incumbent upon him and both Mr. Nixon and Mr. Ford to negotiate a humane and sensibly planned evacuation.

That was never done. The executive branch would not accept the fact that its power to conduct foreign policy is absolutely limited by the Congress's decision to pay for it. They went ahead, presuming that they could continue to involve us and then come back to Congress and say, "Like it or not, we're in the soup now and you've got to provide the crackers."

Doubtless Dr. Kissinger and President Ford based their intransigence on sincerely felt policy reasons. (Kissinger was never as good as he was once painted but he isn't the total blackguard they're making him out now.) But with that said, there is still an element of anger and spite in this Vietnamese fugitive business. It's as though they're trying to get back at the antiwar sentiment, which frustrated them, by sticking America with this mob of what may turn out to be mostly Indo-chinese riff-raff.

What do we do now? Send them back? Not likely. You'll notice the new government in Saigon, while hollering that the fugitives made off with their airplanes and ships, isn't demanding the return of the passengers. Farm a substantial number out to those loyal allies we're told we have such unshakeable commitments to? No other country in the world will take more than a token number.

We're stuck with them; but just as the executive branch used Americans in Saigon as hostages to get that bunch out of there, the legislative branch can now use the Vietnamese fugitives to force President Ford to sign an amnesty bill granting complete legal oblivion to all our war resisters. Mr. Ford is demanding a large appropriation for his Vietnamese objects of mercy. That bill should carry an amnesty clause. And if, out of pride, he vetoes it, then let him do what he will with our 120,000 uninvited new, non-friends.

To talk about Lady Liberty's golden door, to grant home, hospitality and welfare checks to some of the very same people who were involved in putting electrodes on the testicles of their political opponents, while keeping in exile the young men who opposed such barbarism, is not, as they like to say at the White House, in accordance with our finest traditions.

© 1975, The Washington Post/King Features Syndicate

See NYT 10 May 75,

"Saigon Is Said . . . "

See WXP 10 May 75,

"Australians Shift . . . "