

Tears Flow at Vietnam Reunion

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BIEN HOA, South Vietnam, Feb. 14—The young South Vietnamese soldier, fresh from a Communist prison camp, shuffled tentatively toward the old woman. For a moment she hesitated. Then, crying and shrieking with joy, the woman recognized her son and clutched his arm.

A middle-aged man in a white dress shirt saw his boy in the crowd of former Communist prisoners, draped an arm across his shoulder and started wiping away the tears as they walked toward the shade.

One by one today, men and women found their sons, brothers and husbands who had been missing for months and years and tenderly led them to little groups of friends and relatives at this sprawling South Vietnamese military base 20 miles north of Saigon.

711 Soldiers Freed

Since Monday, 711 Government soldiers have been freed by the Communists and brought to a delapidated compound here that not long ago housed American infantrymen.

The first group of friends and relatives began to make their way into the base this morning. For most, the reunions began cautiously, almost apprehensively. Sometimes the first exchange was a gentle touch. Often, there were tears. Gradually the tears dissolved into glowing smiles.

By noon the crowd had thinned under the scorching sun and little groups sat spellbound as the former prisoners told how it was.

Inside a gutted barracks building, one soldier sat on the floor with an arm around his wife, talking with his father and two brothers. Nearby a teen-age soldier spoke in almost inaudible tones with his mother, and two wives breast-fed babies that their husbands had seen for the first time this morning.

Not everyone found joy this morning. One dazed soldier told of having seen his wife in the Communist-controlled town of Loc Ninh as he was being released yesterday. She had cried out that the Communists would not let her leave and he could not stop the process that was carrying him to Bien Hoa.

One man stopped soldiers to ask if they had heard of his younger brother. A soldier said the boy had been seen last

August in a Vietcong uniform and was believed to have been helping the Communists transport supplies.

"If he was carrying ammunition, then he would have been killed already," the man said. He slipped on his sunglasses and began to weep.

More Men Released

A Government spokesman said there had been no indication of when the Communists would release more of the South Vietnamese soldiers. The Government, however, freed 135 Communist prisoners at Loc Ninh today and reportedly turned over 175 others in Quang Tri Province in the northernmost part of South Vietnam.

The Government says the returning prisoners will probably spend about a month in the reception center here.

Doctors started examining the men today. Social workers tried to make the men comfort-

able and intelligence officers prepared to begin interrogations.

This morning, Lieut. Gen. Vinh Loc of the National Defense College welcomed the men on behalf of the Government and stood by while a junior officer led them in chanting, "Down with Communists. Long Live Vietnam."

Earlier each man was issued two fatigue uniforms, Vitamin pills, soap and a towel, two cans of condensed milk, two packs of cigarettes, a blanket, a mosquito net, boots, a sleeping mat and a little more than a dollar in piasters.

The men also received two magazines, one published by Buddhist chaplains, the other by the United States Information Service in Vietnamese. The leading article in the U.S.I.S. magazine, called Free World, was titled "The limits of the power of the American President."



The New York Times/Barbara Gluck Treaster

An elderly South Vietnamese mother greeting her son yesterday at Bien Hoa, 20 miles north of Saigon. The soldier had been a prisoner in a Communist camp.