Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugee Crisis

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Introduction and Causes of Crisis:

The Vietnamese and Cambodian refugee crisis spanned from 1969 to 1973. During the 1960's, America and Vietnam were participating in the Vietnam War, which, along with internal conflict, was responsible for the displacement of not only Vietnamese but also Cambodian people. Due to the violent conditions from the war, many Vietnamese fled the country. Many were referred to as "boat people" because they escaped by boat on a dangerous trip to refugee camps in neighboring countries like Thailand.

The Vietnam war also strongly had an effect on the lives of Cambodian citizens. Cambodia served as a transport route between North and South Vietnam. Cambodia remained neutral during the war; however, they were bombed heavily due to the presence of Vietcong Army bases. In 1975, a communist group called the Khmer Rouge that was led by Pol Pot took control of Cambodia and attempted to create an agrarian utopia. Cities were evacuated and destroyed. 1.5 million Cambodians (~20% of the country's population) was murdered by the Khmer Rouge. In 1979, the Vietnamese army invaded Cambodia, causing many to flee the country to refugee camps in Thailand. Over 100,000 refugees relocated in the United States.

1959: Vietnam War begins.

1965: The U.S. sends combats troops into South Vietnam.

1968: The North Vietnamese Army retreats into Laos and Cambodia.

1969: American B-52s launch secret bombing raids over Cambodia.

1970: Cambodia's pro-American General Lon Nol deposes Prince Sihanouk, who then aligns with the Communist Khmer Rouge. U.S. and South Vietnamese forces invade Cambodia.

1971: U.S. continues its air strikes in Laos and Cambodia.

1972: The Khmer Rouge's army grows to some 50,000 soldiers, many of whom joined to retaliate for the U.S. bombings.

1973: The Vietnamese and Americans sign the Paris Peace Agreement. The Vietnamese begin to withdraw their troops from Cambodia. The last remaining American troops withdraw from Vietnam. The U.S. stops its bombing campaign on Cambodia, in which nearly 540,000 tons of bombs were dropped.

1975: Fall of South Vietnam; reunification of North and South. The Khmer Rouge come to power in Cambodia. Approximately 34,000 Cambodians flee toward Thailand to escape the government-sponsored genocide, which results in the murder of nearly one quarter of the population.

1978: The Vietnamese invade Cambodia in response to border attacks, depose the Khmer Rouge and install a Vietnamese backed government. Hundreds of thousands of Cambodians escape into Thailand. Cambodian refugees begin to arrive in the U.S.

1979: Refugee camps open in Thailand to house some 160,000 Cambodian refugees.

1988: The Vietnamese begin gradual troop withdrawal from Cambodia.

1991: A formal ceasefire is adopted. The United Nations begins repatriating over 350,000 refugees from the camps in Thailand.

1994: U.S. Trade Embargo lifted against Vietnam.

Lived Experiences of Refugees:

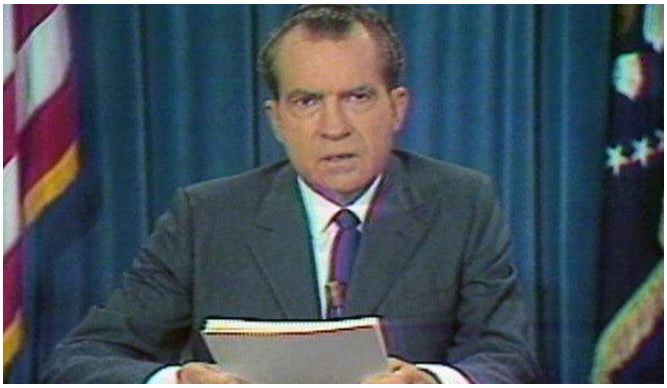
https://www.ted.com/talks/tan_le_my_immigration_story?language=en

https://www.ted.com/talks/sophal_ear_escaping_the_khmer_rouge

The Life We Were Given, Dana Sachs

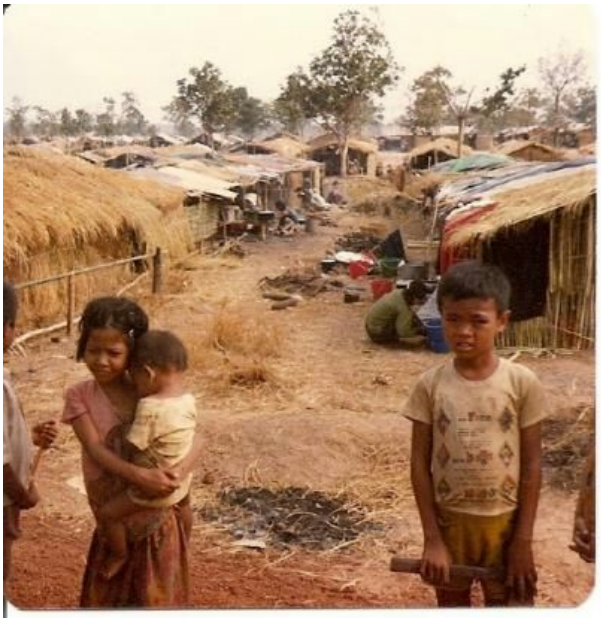
South Wind Changing, Jade Ngoc Quang Huynh

US Government Response to the Refugee Crisis:



On April 28th, 1970 President Nixon approved the Cambodian incursion, against the requests of Secretary of State William Rogers and Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird. This announcement is shown in the picture to the left.

The United States caused much of the displacement of villagers, from 1969-1973, in eastern Cambodia by saturation bombing all across the countryside with no regard for who exactly they were bombing. This haphazard bombing technique required the people being displaced to either join the Khmer Rouge or flee with no plan of where they were going. In total the U.S. dropped less bombs in the Second World War than it did on Cambodia. President Nixon had to be forced into stopping the bombing of Cambodia, but that did not stop the continual channelling of millions of dollars to military aid for the Lon Nol government. On April 30th, 1975 all of the U.S. troops evacuated South Vietnam, after two weeks earlier emptying the U.S. embassy in Phnom Penh.



There was much controversy over who actually received help when supplies were sent to refugee camps. In many instances the food that would get sent to the refugees would be taken by the guerilla armies that would set up camp inside the camp. The U.S. was the largest contributor to the relief operation, it's embassy setting up the Kampuchean Emergency Group (KEG) to oversee activities at the border. To many aid workers, which consisted of military and political people, monitoring the border KEG was seen as an extension of the U.S. foreign policy agenda in Southeast Asia.

Source:
http://forcedmigration.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/book/export/html/26
http://www.websitesrcg.com/border/camps/Khao-I-Dang.html
http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/situation-in-cambodia-worsens

Public Reaction/Discrimination:

In the United States both the Vietnamese and Cambodian populations were basically non-existent until the Vietnam War and the rise of the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia caused the mass migration of over 800,000 refugees to the US alone. Both groups definitely had very similar experiences when it came to fleeing their home countries in response to violent conflict, but their were definitely some differences in the ways the two groups assimilated and were regarded in society and the media.

Cambodians:

Although Cambodians faced discrimination within the United States, immigration allowed them to have much greater freedom to practice their own culture and keep alive the spirit of tradition from their collapsing homeland. Many Cambodians had trouble with maintaining their identity, especially children who were forced to come to school and felt like “Americanizing” was the best solution to fitting in. Some of the stereotypes that surrounded these newfound immigrants was that they were inherently lazy and passive, yet this was just due to their culture that avoids confrontation. Many Cambodians avoided getting involved in US politics and focused their efforts on rebuilding their homeland by sending volunteers whenever possible.

Vietnamese:

Vietnamese refugees also found themselves faced with discrimination upon arrival in the US. Because of how publicly America was against the Vietnam War, these refugees had a much harder time trying to remain casual members of society. The public was much more aware of the Vietnamese presence in the state because they were from “enemy territory”. Lots of movies, books, and other social media outlets stereotyped the Vietnamese refugees coming in, so they were more stigmatized than the Cambodians. Most of the U.S. population had no idea that we were bombing Cambodia as well. Like the Cambodians many Vietnamese were not involved with U.S. politics but for other reasons. The Cambodians were focusing on rebuilding their country while the Vietnamese refugees and US citizens were still hesitant to work together because of the war.

As you can see from this New York Times Article titled: *Communist Takeover Saigon: US Rescue Fleet is Picking Up Vietnamese Who Fled in Boats*, that the US government probably did not speak for the will of their people when they helped these Vietnam and Cambodian refugees who were trying to escape from war and communism. This is a newspaper article from 1975, and in this time their was really no inforced political distinction between refugees and immigrants. Most of the articles from this time kept referring to these people as immigrants, indicating that they had a choice in the matter. They were recognized by the UNHCR as refugees but people did not really care to learn the backstory of the people they saw as “foreign” or the “enemy”. Even today many people globally do not what the difference between an immigrant and a refugee is nor care to acknowledge how important it is to know the status of an individual. Although it appears the government was more amicable to these refugees, with initiatives to take these people in, their was still certainly still discrimination. The government forced these new refugees to scatter throughout the country in order to prevent enclaves and communities from forming with the idea that a small number of widely dispersed immigrants would not really affect the country negatively.

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The New York Times

LATE CITY EDITION

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Ford Delays Oil Fee Rise, But Will End Price Curbs

President Again Prods Congress to Act on Energy—Democrats Expected to Fight 2-Year Phase-Out of Controls

FARMERS' PRICES UP 4% IMPLYING RETAIL RISE SOON

Cattle and Hogs Are Among Main Items That Climbed in Month Ended April 15

COMMUNISTS TAKE OVER SAIGON; U.S. RESCUE FLEET IS PICKING UP VIETNAMESE WHO FLED IN BOATS

'HO CHI MINH CITY'

Communications Cut Soon After Raising of Victory Flag

Amtrak, at Age of 4, Still Problem-Ridden

Kissinger Says U.S. May Shelter 70,000 SAIGON REDS LOOK TO NONALIGNMENT

Legislature Votes E.D.C. $225 Million

$104,000 Damages And Former Job Won By College Teacher

Thieu Aide Discloses Promises Of Force by Nixon to Back Pact

A War History

Although the United States for generations has been considered the melting pot of the global community, a place where everyone has equal chance to succeed, every group of immigrants whether they are financial migrants or cultural/war refugees no matter how big or small has faced some level of discrimination. All these groups, some more than other have been able to assimilate over multiple generation to become the diverse country we are today. The Vietnam and Cambodian refugees that came here didn't experience anything much different than any other group that is the “first” of their kind to come to the United States for whatever reason.

Three Different Waves of the Refugee Crisis:

First Wave: ('75-'76, government sending people in Vietnam to reeducation camps)

Before 1975, few Vietnamese scattered away from their homeland. However, since 1975, over a million people have fled Southeast Asia in three major waves.

The first wave sprang out in 1975 in the closing days of the Vietnam War. By then, Communist troops had defeated the South Vietnamese and taken control in South Vietnam. In face of the fall of South Vietnam and the start of reeducation camps, most refugees were well-educated, high-skilled Vietnamese who had opposed the communists, worked for the South Vietnamese government or maintained close ties to Americans. Among them, 125,000 people resettled in the United States. They were first airlifted by the United States Government to bases in Philippines, Wake Island and Guam, and later transferred to refugee centers in California, Arkansas, Florida, and Pennsylvania for up to six months of education and cultural training to facilitate their assimilation into their new society.

At that time, even though only 36 percent of Americans in a national poll favored Vietnamese immigration, the U.S. President Gerald Ford signed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Act of 1975, which granted the refugees special status to enter the country and established a domestic resettlement program. However, the refugees were deliberately dispersed across the country so as to prevent “ghettoism” in few geographic areas. Despite this conscious immigration policy, most of these first-wave migrants eventually moved to California and Texas. Places like Orange County, CA, was soon to become “Little Saigon” populated by them and joined by the second-wave and third-wave Vietnamese refugee groups.

Sources:
Võ, Linda T. “Transforming an Ethnic Community: Little Saigon, Orange County.” *Asian America: Forming New Communities, Expanding Boundaries*. Ed. Huping Ling. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press, 2009. 87-103. Print.
http://www.ilw.com/articles/2006,0313-campi.shtm
http://crfimmigrationed.org/index.php/lessons-for-teachers/147-hl8

Second Wave: ('76-'77, ethnic Chinese in Vietnam being allowed to register for the draft)

Between 1978 and the mid-1980s, almost two million Vietnamese, predominantly Vietnam’s Chinese minority, were pressured to leave Vietnam in mass exodus. On the one hand, due to the long distrust of the native Vietnamese, these people were threatened with military conscription, forced unemployment or being sent to rural “new economic zones” as laborers. On the other hand, as China attacked Vietnam over a border dispute in 1979, Chinese families were further expulsed by the Vietnamese government. Although many of them had lived in

Vietnam for generations, they had no choice but to either leave their country with an “exit permit” of $3,000 or flee illegally. Because they all fled Vietnam by boat, they were soon to be known as the “boat people.”

Once at sea, the boat people spent months drifting before landing in “nations of first asylum,” including Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Hong Kong. Due to food and water shortage, diseases, boat sinkage, robberies, rapes and murders on boat, around 200,000 boat people had been dead before landing by the summer of 1979. Meanwhile, receiving from 2,000 to 50,000 refugees per month, the overwhelmed “nations of first asylum” resorted to expel the Vietnamese immigrants.

Some other Southeast Asian refugees found links to transit to America. During this period, about 500 refugees swarmed into the United States everyday. They were demanded of a U.S. sponsor, who was normally played out by relatives, private individuals, churches and service organizations. These sponsors volunteered to provide housing, food, clothing, transportation until the refugees were able to become economically independent. After a period of adjustment, due to language barriers, most of the refugees ended up in low-paying jobs and close-knit Vietnamese communities.

Sources:
http://www.ilw.com/articles/2006,0313-campi.shtm
http://crfimmigrationed.org/index.php/lessons-for-teachers/147-hl8

Third Wave: (The exodus of Cambodian refugees from Cambodia to the US resulted in a lot of drug trafficking/gang violence in the US during the 70s and 80s)
Due to conflict in Vietnam, American and South Vietnamese invaded Cambodia. Then a leftist group named Khmer Rouge came into power and attempted to strip the Cambodians of their old traditions by removing everything considered “old” (the elderly and family life) in order to create an industrialized state. The result was a state consisting of forced labor camps, poor living conditions, starvation, and bombing which killed an unknown number of Cambodians. Cambodians fled to the United States because the U.S. has programs which offered refugees American sponsors and programs to learn English and American culture. Also, in America Cambodians could freely preserve their traditions and were not physically affected by the war. Most fled to California where they lived in poor urban communities where they developed gangs since they felt detached from the white upper class Americans much like other minorities are the time. Gaining employment in America was difficult for Cambodian immigrants because most of them worked as farmers. Many Cambodians settled for low paying service and manual labor jobs. Not having a formal education as well as the language and cultural barrier hindered Cambodians from any upward mobility in the job market. Overall, Cambodians experienced difficulty assimilating in America due to cultural differences and health problems from the trauma they endured in Cambodia.

Source: http://www.energyofanation.org/waves_of_cambodian_immigration.html
http://cdn1.pri.org/sites/default/files/story/images/AP7501091230.jpg

The role of NGOs:

What is an NGO?

A Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) is a non-profit, voluntary citizens' group that is organized on a local, national, or international level. However, NGOs usually operate on the international level. These organizations do not have a formal definition, because they can perform a multitude of services and functions. This can include aiding the spread of information to the public to encourage political involvement, advocating for certain policies and listening to citizens' concerns, usually with the goal of bringing them to the government's attention. NGOs can be organized around specific issues, or more general, overarching societal problems.

NGO involvement began in the time period of 1979 to 1982. This was after the Pol Pot regime had collapsed in 1979, so several NGOs started to provide help by forming emergency programs. Only a few Japanese NGOs began operating on the Thai-Cambodia border, while most of the other NGOs (both Japanese and other international NGOs) formed in Cambodia. In 1982, international aid spiked when the UN recognized the emergency situation in Cambodia. At this time, there were only 15 recorded NGOs working in Cambodia. The meeting between Prince Norodom Sihanouk and the Prime Minister, Hum Sen, in France in 1987 spurred international NGOs to increase aid more than ever before. The influx of aid and NGOs to Cambodia occurred in 1987 and 1988, but the final withdrawal of Vietnamese troops in 1989 was another turning point in many people's decision to become involved in the crisis. By the early 1990s, the highest number of NGOs became involved, aiding Cambodia in any way possible.

NGOs had many key roles in the Vietnamese and Cambodian Refugee Crisis. Here, I will give a list of the major contributions to the crisis, supported by an example. There were countless NGOs involved involved in this crisis, some of which include CARE, CRS, IRC, The Norwegian Redd Barna, Oxfam, and others.

NGOs played a substantial role in enhancing the moral of refugees, especially those in refugee camps. By the start of 1980, over 100,000 Cambodians were held in the Khao-I-Dang refugee camp. This was the main holding centre at that time. Many of these refugees were minors, unaccompanied by any family members or guardians. 37 NGOs worked in Khao-I-Dang, reflecting the global spread of NGO activity which was occurring at that time. One main role of NGOs in this camp studied unaccompanied minors who found refuge there. Though these children were alone, The Norwegian Redd Barna, along with others, found evidence that parents of many of the minors in the camp were alive. Redd Barna investigated over 2,000 files, and found that over half of the unaccompanied children were forced to be separated from their parents by circumstance, not by death, as many had assumed. This instilled hope in the camp that eventual reunification was a possibility. This work is just one example of the role of NGOs in

helping to enhance the moral of refugees, specifically the fragile youth stranded without their family's support.

Another role of NGOs in the crisis was their work to encourage donations of governmental aid to places in need. One great example of this was the humanitarian aid that Oxfam, along with a consortium of several other NGOs, persuaded the Heng Samrin government to deliver to refugee camps in Cambodia. This type of aid was important, because although it ranged from aid in food to various types of care, the objective of humanitarian aid was to save lives, alleviate suffering, and maintain human dignity. Additionally, by negotiating to channel the aid through the Phnom Penh government, Oxfam was able to avoid the Thai-Cambodian border, increasing the amount of aid the camps could receive. In addition to this aid, Oxfam and other NGOs continued to plead for more aid, and to increase the relief operation in Cambodia.

Another extremely important role of NGOs was to help Cambodia build back its country from the crisis. In the early 1990s, Japanese NGOs played a major role in Cambodia's reconstruction efforts by offering several forms of assistance. Japan supplied Cambodia with guidance for the government among other high-level initiatives. Other Japanese aid included assistance in education, vocational training, along with relief and refugee assistance. This was critical in encouraging the refugees to rebuild their lives in their native country. Additionally, the financial assistance provided by Japanese NGOs were very important in rebuilding Cambodia's infrastructure.

RELIEF CARGO GOING TO CAMBODIA SOON

Aid Officials Hope That Planeload From Bangkok This Week Will Be Start of a Steady Flow

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

http://forcedmigration.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/book/export/html/25

This image depicts a typical food ration that was given to Cambodian refugees every week. The weekly ration includes rice, beans and dried fish. These refugees who received this food were located on the Thai-Cambodian border. This picture was taken in July of 1983.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Border_Relief_Operation

Source:

Japan's Changing Role in Humanitarian Crises by Yukiko Nishikawa
https://books.google.com/books?id=T4cqBgAAQBAJ&pg=PA90&lpg=PA90&dq=the+role+of+NGOs+and+Charities+in+Vietnamese+and+Cambodian+Refugee+Crisis&source=bl&ots=UwJm1FKb4q&sig=oItPqc_9z7Hb4NcdrfWWIL367CU&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwj8mbXH1aXLAhUE2SYKHWYzABsQ6AEIMDAD#v=onepage&q=the%20role%20of%20NGOs%20and%20Charities%20in%20Vietnamese%20and%20Cambodian%20Refugee%20Crisis&f=false

Vassar's Reaction to the Refugee Crisis:

While searching for words such as "refugee" and "cambodia" and "Indochinese" in the Vassar Newspaper Archive put together by the Vassar Library, I came across many articles. Many were specifically about the war in Vietnam and student and faculty protests. It seemed like many class notes contained these words but unfortunately, the full text of those class notes in the Alumnae/i Quarterly are not available online. I did find a few articles written in *The Spectator* by two students, Jad Davenport and Don Mathis, who visited refugee camps along the Thai-Cambodian border and wrote about their experiences. Two of these articles are shown below. One article, by Beth L. Lueck '76 in The Alumnae/i Quarterly, describes her experience as an intern for a newspaper in Lancaster, PA involving interactions with Vietnamese refugees at a refugee camp there. It was published in September 1975 and is titled "on the annville beat." Nevertheless, the most interesting article I found was a letter to the editor in the June 1977 *Vassar Quarterly*. This letter to the editor, titled "A Refugee Replies," was written in response to an article about women in the vietnam war published in the previous issue. The full text is below.

A REFUGEE REPLIES

To the Editor:

It was a pleasure for me to read your article about "The Frontier Women of Vietnam" which was written by Mrs. Helen M. Muller and was published in your quarterly report, volume LXXIII/No. 1.

I believe without doubt that the Vietnamese women, and the Vietnamese in general, must be proud of their past (4,000 year history) and their recent victory (?). I am proud of my country, although I'm living in exile in the United States with the other 130,000 Vietnamese refugees since South Vietnam was "liberated" by our fellow Northerners.

Mrs. Muller was seeing only one side of the picture and completely forgot what was going on in the rest of the country, and about the women in the South (except 300,000 prostitutes, as she mentioned). What happened to the women who had husbands or sons, or both, detained in the areas called "reeducation camps," and many other families who were pushing out the so-called "new economic areas?" Did Mrs. Muller ever visit any of these "centers" (as she called them) and find out how they were being treated? Did Mrs. Muller know how the women in the South were living before the communists took over? Did she know that women in the South not only had to do the same work as the Northerners, but also suffered a lot of misery created by the communists' invasion?

The population of South Vietnam is not only 300,000 prostitutes and 500,000 drug addicts and discharged soldiers, as Mrs. Muller said, but more than twenty (20) million people. We were living freely with the assistance of the U.S. and we could have survived if the U.S. had not abandoned us instantly. We didn't need the communists' liberation—or shall we say invasion by the communists! It is only the Vietnamese people who have had living experiences with the communists in the North who can deeply understand the communists in Vietnam today. Mrs. Muller was fortunate in not having any members of her family involved in Vietnam's tragedy. She has been living in Switzerland and obtained her visa with the high recommendations of the high-ranking Vietnamese communist official who works in Geneva. I doubt her objectivity. Suppose that she didn't have any connections with the communists. Would she have seen the same beautiful scenes as she described in her article? I wish and pray that my sister's children, who are living in the North, enjoy these privileges.

At the present time, there is only "one" Vietnam, but it is undeniable that North and South Vietnamese had been living as two separated nations for 30 years. At that time, the U.S. replaced the French, helping the South's people set up the national government and the defense of their freedom (?) in order to join the Free World instead of cooperation with the communists. The U.S. was the leader of the Free World and until now, I still want to believe so.

I was born in North Vietnam and my family decided to move South only after being told by my cousin (who was Anh Hung Dien Bien, decorated hero of Dien Bien Phu, the famous battle which led to the retreat of the French with the Geneva Agreement in 1954) "it was almost impossible for people to live with the communists unless you were willing to give up all your freedom." My cousin also said: "As for me, I did not have a choice because I was seriously involved with the communists. If I go to the South, I'm afraid that they won't accept me. They will see me as a spy."

My family included my mother, myself, two brothers, and a sister, but we left for the South without my sister, who was 13 years old. At that time, she was living with my grandmother in the rural area about 50 miles south of Ha Noi, and we could not get in touch with her due to the tight control by the communists. We felt so sorry to leave her and my grandmother behind, but we felt even more sorry if we should lose the freedom. That is why we decided to go. I hope you understand what a price we paid for the freedom.

While I was growing up in the South, I witnessed the farmers who had been killed by the communist tax collector because they could not afford the high-rated tax for their land. The schools were targets of rocketing and shelling, which killed several teachers and young children. There were the beheaded parents, whose son had joined the South's army, and many other things that only Vietnamese communists could do. The communists of Vietnam are very wise; they show you exactly what they want.

As you know, Saigon was "liberated" almost two years ago, but several South Vietnamese are still trying desperately to escape their "liberator," in the tiny fishing boats, to unknown destinations, leaving all their properties. How many of them drowned at the open sea? How many of them escaped? I just wonder why they risk their life, if not for freedom? As you well know, Stalin's daughter didn't mind giving up her title as the daughter of the famous communist world leader in order to live in exile in the United States as an ordinary citizen. I guess she is the best to understand the communists.

For many reasons, I doubt the objectivity of Mrs. Muller and suspect that she was flattered by the communists. With her educational background and her famous school, her article should be good propaganda for the communists in the high society of the United States—propaganda that is badly needed by the communists at this time. I also wonder how the U.N. Commission on Refugees handles the Vietnamese problems objectively when the communist official of North Vietnam works next to them at all times? What are they doing with the violations of human rights in Vietnam now? How many families have been reunited?

I hope that I wasn't wrong to choose the freedom twice. It was a choice that I thought a real one, although I had to sacrifice my loved ones, my properties, and, the most important, my nation to come here with bare hands to start a new life with my children. And I do hope that they remember the price their parents paid for their future and their freedom and that the communists will not be able to dupe them as easily as they did many other educated people. I really question Ho Chi Minh's statement, "Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty." If he meant it, why didn't he practice it?

Thank you for reading this letter.

Vu, Hoai Huong
Allendale, New Jersey

(Editor's Note: Vu, Hoai Huong abandoned her home and car rental business in Saigon in April 1975. With her husband and four sons, she lived in a refugee camp until August 1975. Now sponsored by a Baptist church, she and her family live in New Jersey, where she works as a secretary for the Guardian Angel Rectory.)

'WITCHCRAFT IN THE CHAPEL'

To the Editor:

I read Charles Gordon Post's letter in the winter *Quarterly*: his critique of the college calendar with its "disheartening" number of denominational religious services. Being the culprit, the campus witch doctor, out of whose tent these "priests, ministers and rabbis" go to "hover over" the students, the letter woke a few sleepy thoughts.

Mr. Post recalls "the wonderful spirit at Vassar that was dedicated to" the eighteenth-century epigram which stands as well as any at the head of the modern world: "the proper study of mankind is man." (sic) This he proposes as the remedy for a list of the human, all-too-human, evils that modernity has visited on us.

One of the things about this humankind that everybody notices, but few scholars have studied until recently with much methodological seriousness, is how religious it is. To

Continued on next page

Vu, Hoai Huong. "A Refugee Replies." *Vassar Quarterly* [Poughkeepsie] 1 June 1977: 4-5.

Vassar Newspaper Archive. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

In this article from the August 1987 *Spectator*, Jad Davenport '90, describes the experiences of refugees, aid workers, and himself at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center in Morong-Bataan.

The Forgotten Americans: Amerasian Children in Vietnam

by Jad Davenport

Under the mottled shade of a mango tree, Thuy Le squats with his friends, smiling nervously. It is departure day at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC) here in Morong-Bataan, and for seventeen-year old Thuy, today is the culmination of a six month orientation to American life. In a few hours, his family, along with close to a hundred other Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, and Khmer refugees, will board buses for a five hour ride to the Transit Center near Manila International Airport. Tomorrow morning, the rich green rice paddies and hills of Southeast Asia will fade in the wake of a U.S.-bound 747, and Thuy, his mother, younger brother and sister, will begin a new life in Richmond, California.

But in the mosaic of faces anxiously watching the buses emerge from a veil of red dust, there is something different about Thuy. Where oriental eyes and flat Asian noses are the norm, a startling contrast of eastern versus western features is clearly focused in his Italian/American face. He is a living reminder of the American presence in Vietnam, a presence that shadowed Indochina for more than a decade and a half. Thuy Le is an Amerasian child.

In the postwar streets of Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, they are known as Cong-Lai, "half children." These half children are not a new phenomenon unique to American involvement in Indochina, but simply a repeat of the thousands of Eurasian children left behind in 1954, following the evacuation of French forces.

That Vietnamese society is, at best, highly prejudiced, is an observation supported by their racist treatment of the million or so ethnic Chinese who have long occupied an important role in the North Vietnamese economy. When political tension between China and Vietnam broke into a sporadic border war in 1978, Hanoi rounded up 300,000 Vietnamese-Chinese, many of whom were born in Vietnam and spoke no Chinese, and formally expelled them.

The open dislike of the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam, however, pales in comparison to the outright hatred directed at the Amerasians. This is painfully reflected in yet another term often used to describe these half children, bui-doi. Translated loosely, it means the "dust of life."

Caseworker Lyn DeLeon, a Filipina psychologist with the Mental Health Services at PRPC, sees most of the Amerasians in special group counseling sessions. Much of her time is spent trying to erase the fear and suspicion built up in these children over years of surviving as street urchins in a country that views them as a humiliating legacy.

"Many of them were abandoned," says Lyn. "Sometimes they were given to a caretaker, a grandparent or other relative when they were born." An unfortunate number, perhaps as high as 60%, were simply left in the streets to fend for themselves. Lacking a formal education, they were sentenced to a life on the streets.

Abandoned first by their fathers, and later by mothers unable to cope with the shame attached to having an Amerasian child, they roam the streets, scavenging and stealing for survival. Fair haired and light-skinned, or negroid with short, kinky hair, they suffer beatings and ridicule at the hands of other abandoned children and war orphans. To combat this, many search out other Amerasians, and seek acceptance in their own gangs.

Thuy remains one of the lucky few who cheated a future of peddling cigarettes and candy, through an education. Saving what little money she was able to set aside from cleaning houses, his mother enrolled him in a private school where he studied right up until his family left Vietnam in early October of 1985. He was in his tenth year of schooling.

That the women who bore these children were usually barmaids doubling as prostitutes, is a common misconception, explains Don Ronk, a one-time war correspondent fluent in Vietnamese. "It's more often the case worked in GI establishments, on the bases and in the restaurants, and struck up a relationship. In many cases there were common-in-law papers. Some were legally married." Don, a counselor in camp for the past four years, works closely with the 500 or so Amerasians currently in PRPC.

"Quite often," there were opportunities for long-term relationships. Some of the military and civilians were there for several years. Some of them knew their kid until he was two or three."

It was out of a similar situation that Thuy was born. The year was 1969, the height of the Vietnam War. The Tet Offensive was barely a year old. His mother was a housekeeper in Saigon. His father, Frank Mandato, was an American architect, then working for Asia Engineering, Mars, Inc.

Several mornings before his departure day, Thuy brought out an old polaroid snapshot of his father posing in front of a downtown office building in Saigon. It was laminated in a thin film of fingerprints.

"Do you remember your father?" asked Don.

Thuy smiled and nodded. Then he giggled and replied, "I remember he had a big stomach."

His father left Vietnam in the early seventies and they have not heard from him since. "I think maybe he live in New York," offers Thuy.

Even in these seemingly long term relationships, the man's outlook differed greatly from that of the woman. "In general it was a thing of convenience. The man had a woman to live with, she got pregnant, and had a baby. In many cases they didn't even know, they were gone before she had it." The outside world heard little of the 'bui doi' in the years following the collapse of South Vietnam. Most of the refugees who composed the massive flood of boat people fleeing to the high seas in the late seventies and early eighties were ethnic Chinese or Vietnamese who had ties to the defeated South Vietnamese or American Army. All shared the common denominator of possessing enough money to buy a chance at freedom, something few Amerasians could afford.

After the Vietnamese realized the implausibility of successfully patrolling the thousands of miles of jungle coastline and river estuaries, they decided instead to profit from the refugees. Anyone wishing to secure a place on board a fleeing vessel paid a tax varying anywhere from four to twelve taels of gold. In addition, the departing individual or family was forced to relinquish all property and assets to the local cadre, later to be divided among the town or province officials. The Vietnamese Navy then towed the barely seaworthy vessels packed with refugees to international waters and abandoned them. In 1978 alone, the Vietnamese Government garnered $115 million dollars from this program.

Though few Amerasians managed to escape by sea, the exodus did eventually benefit them in a much less direct manner. The refugees and the perils they faced soon drew international attention. By 1980, it was estimated that half of the boat people who set out from Vietnam died en route. Many of the boats are little more than floating coffins and frequently swamp or simply fall apart on the high seas.

The most lethal threat, however, comes from Thai fishermen who have for centuries supplemented their meager incomes by piracy. Preying on the slow moving, defenseless refugee boats, the pirates take every last valuable, sometimes wrenching teeth with gold fillings from the mouthes of their victims. Men are beaten and killed. Women and girls are raped and then thrown overboard to drown or be eaten by following sharks. One camp worker told of a disabled boat intercepted last year by the Filipino Navy that was known to have left Vietnam with 80 refugees. A search of the seemingly deserted craft turned up only a severly traumatized eight-year old boy hiding below the deck. Dehydrated and suffering from exposure, he still refuses to talk about the fate of the other 79 refugees.

Shocked by the atrocities and feeling the increasing burden of refugees, other Southeast Asian countries pressured Hanoi into attending the UN sponsored Geneva Conference on Refugees in July of 1979. There, they laid the groundwork to establish the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) in 1982. One of the auspices of the ODP is to allow Amerasians and their immediate families to leave Vietnam by air. Almost overnight the world became aware of these 'forgotten Americans.' A far easier and safer alternative than risking the pirate-infested Gulf of Thailand, the program attracted thousands.

According to Lyn, this was not without

Continued on page 15

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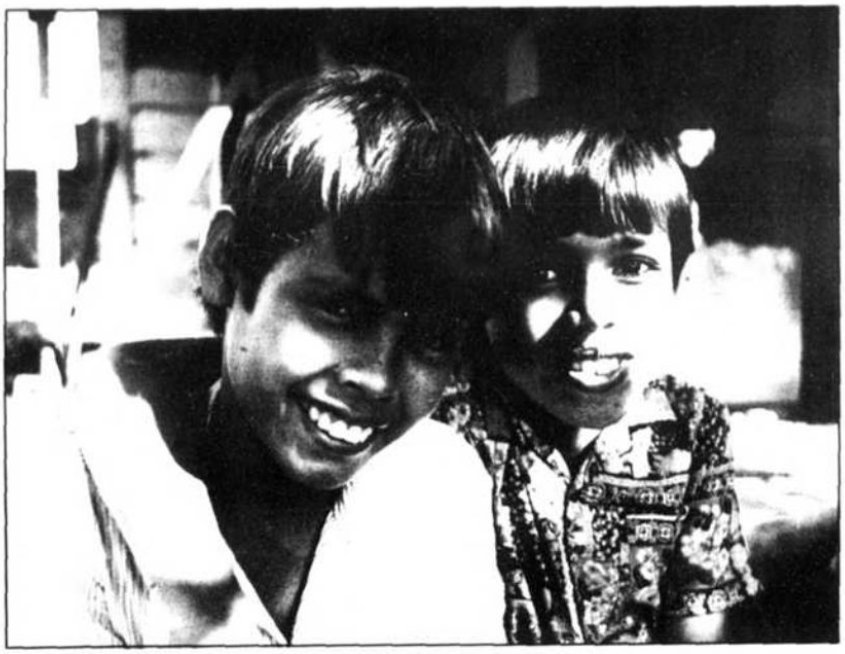
The Forgotten Americans — cont.



problems. "I think that when the mothers heard of the program, they saw a chance to get out of Vietnam and resettle in America. So they started making contact with their children again. You can imagine the problems that would arise from that. They have never before been together, and all of a sudden the child is told, 'we are going to America.' " Most resent this.

Don, who has dealt with many of these reconstructed families, assesses the situation. "Almost invariably when you find a troubled kid, one who's making a mess out of school in camp, and having trouble with the other kids, it's one who hasn't ever lived with his mother. She, in turn, has no skills in parenting, and they clash from day one. This is particularly true if the kid lived in a street situation where he lived a basically anarchical life, and is suddenly thrust into the control of a woman said to be his mother."

Sometimes these relationships are not as clear cut as they appear. In a land where freedom has a price, so do the Amerasians. Cases of child buying in Saigon, Da Nang, and Hue, are not unknown. "Sometimes we have to deal with very delicate problems. Sometimes the woman accompanying the child is not the real mother. She bought the child in order to leave the country without complications," explains Lyn DeLeon.

Often this goes unnoticed. The only time instances of child buying surface is when abuse or mistreatment is involved. "If the child speaks up and tells us that, 'she is not really my mother...she is treating me badly,' we look into that, we investigate. If we are able to establish that the woman is indeed not the natural mother, then we report it to the American Embassy. The mothers are then either internationalized or kept here for some time, but the child is accepted to the U.S. and placed in foster care.

Used and manipulated, many Amerasians strike back at their mothers. Lyn is often witness to a power struggle between the women and their rebellious children. "They run around and get into fights until they are thrown in camp jail. This can delay a family's departure for six months. They do this to get back at the mother for taking them out of Vietnam, to show the mother that, 'look, I am the principal applicant, I am the one in power. Do as I say, I am your ticket to America.' That's how they deal with their mothers if they have a very negative relationship with them."

Such conflicts can erupt into child abuse. Lyn has a deep concern for the black Amerasians who tend to be victims of the worst discrimination. "Already there is this prejudice against the black," she says, "but against the black Amerasians, they are neither black nor Vietnamese. They are called 'metice,' something like an in-between. I did have one case about a year ago, where the mother was actually beating the child up, a black Amerasian, a seventeen-year old girl. The mother favored her other two Amerasian sons who were good looking, white, and didn't answer her back. The black child was the eldest, maybe starting to assert herself like any adolescent, and the fact that she was black compounded things. When she made mistakes in her cooking, or didn't come home on time, her mother beat her. She even cut up the girl's dresses so she couldn't go out with her friends. All because she just couldn't stand the looks of her. She was disgusted with her own child."

When the girl finally reported what was happening to her and asked for help, the mother told Lyn, "It's all right, take her away from me. I have two other Amerasian children." She knew as long as she had at least one Amerasian child she could still qualify for resettlement in the U.S. Lyn tried to patch things up, but the mother refused. In the end, the girl was sent ahead to a black foster family.

"There was a lot of disappointment here on the part of the child, because she didn't want to be separated. She was very scared about going to the U.S. It was touching when she left, because both brothers went to see her off, but her mother refused until the very last moment." She is happy now with her new family, says Lyn. "She communicated with us once, twice, and after that nothing."

At seventeen, Thuy faces a different struggle. He is just one of an estimated 15,000 Amerasian children who exists as links between two worlds. All of them lack an identity they can examine and claim for their own. Like most, Thuy wants someday to find his father.

For now, he buries his thoughts as everyone crowds around the buses, waiting nervously to hear their family number. Thuy's is 254. Friends press forward for a last kiss and embrace. But Thuy is stoic. In blue jeans and a plaid shirt with his number pinned to it, he smiles briefly with a hint of embarrassment for the other refugees. Many are weeping. He told his girlfriend not to come see him off. "I didn't want to see her cry," he admits.

An hour later as the Victory Line buses rumble down the dusty highway to Manila, Thuy leans out the open window in the stinging heat. He stares beyond the green blur of rice paddies and bamboo thickets. His gaze falls on the turquoise waters of the South China Sea. Vietnam lies two hours distant by air. He pulls his head back in and glances down at his younger brother, sleeping crooked in the corner of the seat.

"This looks like Vietnam," he says wearily, looking out the glassless window. The enormity of the day overwhelms him and he smiles sadly, "but it isn't."

Davenport, Had. "The Forgotten Americans: Amerasian Children in Vietnam." *The Spectator* [Poughkeepsie] 1 Aug. 1987: 6+. *HRVH Historical Newspapers*. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.

In this article from the April 1988 issue of Vassar's *The Spectator,* a student, Don Mathis, describes his visit to the Indochinese refugee camp with the author of the previous article, on the Thai-Cambodian border as part of an independent study project.

The Spectator Goes to Southeast Asia: Amongst Booby Traps,

By Don Mathis
(Spectator Associate Editor)
Photos by Jad Davenport
(Spectator Photo Editor)

Christmas break, this year. Southeast Asia. The war-torn Cambodian border. I, a rather unsophisticated Vassarite from a small town in the boon docks of South Jersey, decided to venture forth on a journey to that far off place. On a trip that, little did I realize when the decision was made to go, would permanently influence my life and attitudes. Looking back now, I can hardly believe I did it.

Yet I went, together with another Vassar student, Jad Davenport '90. Late last spring he conceptualized an independent study project to investigate the life of Indochinese refugees, victims of years of war, domination, and genocide, held now in camps along the Thai-Cambodian border. He proposed the idea to me then, while looking for a travelling companion he felt would have the discipline of character not to let him down in a potentially hostile zone. I jumped at the opportunity.

Preparation began almost immediately, with Jad searching for the necessary contacts to make the trip possible. The beginning of the '87-'88 year saw the launch of a major effort to tackle the enormous amounts of bureaucracy involved. And though it was difficult, we succeeded. Final approval arrived just several days prior to our scheduled departure. In no time later it was December 9th, and Jad and I were boarding a JAL 747 bound for Narita International Airport in Tokyo. The journey had commenced.

Several months after my return, Marc Thiessen, Editor-in-Chief of the Spectator, asked me to write on my experiences. I accepted, and gave this project a good deal of thought, referring often to a journal I had kept overseas for ideas. Finally, I decided the best way to capture just how I reacted to this world so alien to my own was to actually transcribe my journal entries here. I can think of no better way to relate the day to day impact of the journey Jad and I took. What follows is a selection of several of these entries. I think these come close to summing up the experience fairly well — FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1987. SOMEWHERE OVER ALASKA, AT 35,000 FEET.

Well, we took off today from JFK, at 12:38 pm. And so begins this, the greatest adventure of my life to date. It is now about, I guess we still have 10 more hours to go. Damn long flight. Not as bad as it could be, though: Jad and I checked into Executive Class to see if they would seat us there, and they did even though our tickets are budget! A lucky break.

This one is the biggest yet. Southeast Asia. I can hardly believe it. How it all came about is difficult to track down exactly. I remember sitting in the Cafe at Vassar, drinking coffee, when Jad came in and announced it: "Thailand next Christmas" I believe he said. I thought he was truly insane once he convinced me he wasn't joking, but I was excited as hell anyway. I decided to consider it on the spot. *I sit on the plane now, on my way to Japan, seven months later.*

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1987. MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES.

My excitement for the project is rising. It's so amazing that were actually here! Of course, I still have no idea what to expect. Which causes me some fear, I guess, but also brings something to mind: it has been my experience that most people, when presented with a situation they cannot envision, will try to avoid it. I am glad that, while many things unknown to me do cause fear, I never run from them (at least, I haven't yet). And I *think that that's important.*

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1987. A REFUGEE CAMP ON THE BATAAN PENINSULA, ON THE ISLAND OF LUZON, THE PHILIPPINES.

Much has happened since my last entry. These past several days have been incredible. Absolutely incredible. In fact, I sit right now as I write this at the table of the high monk of the Buddhist temple here. How's that for incredible?

I have been through a lot at PRPC (Philippines Refugee Processing Center). By necessity, I have had to spend much of my time here without Jad. He has been off doing work on his own, which comes easy for him as he has been here before. But for me, well, I did not bargain on this. I was scared shitless at first, not very sure about how to conduct myself. I doubted even whether or not I was emotionally equipped to handle it. I mean, being by myself in a refugee camp filled with 10,000 Indochinese: the thought made my knees shake. Not for fear for my safety, certainly, instead due to the immensity and intensity that such an experience would be.

Well, it turned out of course that I am equipped "to deal." But I had my doubts at first. I mean, it is such a challenge to even walk from one end of the camp to the other. It seems you greet at least 500 people each pass. Almost every refugee you see wants to try her or his English on you. They talk, they tell their stories. It is emotionally draining, intense. The children especially (and there are so many) dominate your attention, talk at you, hold you, will even stop you dead in your tracks due to their sheer numbers; it's as if they are trying to grab on to some piece of the land that will be their new home. I have been, for these people, an emissary of my nation. How I act, what I tell them, will make a lasting impression. It is a great responsibility. And I love it. I love them. These are a great race (races, actually) of people. And the children — they smile so wide, they are so full of energy — they simply melt me.

The longest these people will be here is six months and then it's off to the U.S., where they will begin a new life free from oppression and war. The camp overflows with hope, and love. And it is directed towards me every time I walk up and down through it. In every hello I hear 10,000 hellos. In every smile I see 10,00 smiles.

It won't be this way in Thailand, I know. The refugees in the camps there, some having been held for nearly 10 years with no discernable end in sight, know little hope in their lives.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 18, 1987. THE PRPC.

It is the next morning, and for the second day in a row I have awoken in a Buddhist temple. This is one aspect of the trip totally unforseen.

I came here for the first time the day before yesterday. Jad had met the high monk that morning, and said I should stop by the temple for evening service. I consented, figuring it would be neat to watch. I had never been to a Buddhist temple before. When I showed up that night, I was surprised to see that Jad, who was already there, was not just playing the journalist and observing the ceremony, but was actually participating in it. I figured oh well, what the hell, and joined myself. I sat down, crossed my legs indian-style, and began absorbing the scene around me.

Committing my surroundings to memory, I sat while the chanting continued. Slowly, I began losing my eye for examination and became more absorbed with the ceremony itself. It was wild, I had trouble believing I was sitting in on a Buddhist service. It felt okay, too, not as if I was involved in some commercialized, weird American version of mysticism. That seems all too false to me, whereas this had a tone of sincerity about it. It is the real religion of these people, not some phony-moonie bullshit.

Following the chant-prayer, it was meditation time. The high monk went about instructing the worshippers how to do it. When he came to me, he addressed me in a not-quite-so-fluent English (I discovered later that he spoke four different languages). "Sit like the Buddha sit," he told me. "Right leg over left" (Ouch! My groin! I cannot sit real cross-legged style, not for shit). He continued, "Right palm over left, rest both on your lap. Back straight, eyes closed. Breath in, breath out. Deeply, deeply. You must feel the breath; if you breath in, you must know that you breath in, and if you breath out, you must know that you breath out. Think not of the past. And Think not of the future. Think of nothing, only the present. Exist here in the present, and concentrate."

Following the meditation, which came difficultly at first, but has since become easier, we all talked informally. The Vietnamese, Laotian and Cambodian people in attendance, as usual, were intrigued with us, especially Jad — at 6' 5" tall, he towered above them. The high monk's name was Kim Thanh (say "Keem-Kahn"). He is Khmer Khrom, part of the Khmer (the major populace of Cambodia) tribe settled in South Vietnam. He had escaped across Cambodia to Thailand, an 'over-lander' as opposed to a 'boat-person.' "The Vietnamese are very bad," he told us, "they chase the monks from the cities and close our temples." He, as well as the other monks here, left Indochina for religious and personal freedom; to escape persecution, and human-rights violations. One refugee said, in near perfect

Snipers and Mines: An Inside Look at the Thai-Cambodian Border

English, "I heard our people put down the Americans and their democracy. That was until the North (Vietnamese) came in and they had to live with communism." For these people, political ideology is simple and dictated by a harsher reality than I'll ever know: they belive in whatever form of government that will allow peaceful survival with dignity and freedom of choice.

DECEMBER 26, 1987. ARANYAPRATHET, PRACHIN BURI PROVINCE, THAILAND. FIVE KILOMETERS FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER.

...After settling in, we went down to the main intersection of town, and caught a taxi (sort of a motorized 'Ben Hur'-style chariot) towards the Cambodian border. It is the day after Christmas, and we just arrived from the capital of the district this morning. It was getting to be about dusk when we rode out of town towards the border.

When we hailed the taxi, we had no idea how close to the border one could get. No one in town we had yet met, including our taxi driver, spoke any English, so we had no help there. Jad used a map to indicate that we wanted to go to Nong Ian, a village which appeared to be right on the border itself. After some hesitation, he agreed. Thai taxi drivers are amazing. If you paid one enough, he would take you to Moscow.

Anyway, we were driven up to the village, and through it. We drove slowly past an old customs house, no longer needed. It was in a state of abandoned disrepair. Up ahead, I could make out a military encampment of some sort. We pulled to a stop 200 meters away, with the driver seeming nervous. I paid him off anyway, while Jad hopped out and approached several guards in fatigues. They were armed with automatic weapons, of course, but... I couldn't tell if they were American made M-16's or Soviet AK-47's. I experienced a long moment of fearful anxiety that this may not be a Thai military post after all, and that the fatigues worn by the soldiers might instead be the uniforms of the Vietnamese regular army. Which would have not been good for two young Americans. The taxi rushed off then, Jad continued to advance further, and I knew that if my fear proved valid, we were finished.

But then the border guard smiled, and replied in kind to Jad's hearty greeting yelled in Thai. Silly fears...

DECEMBER 30, 1987. SITE 8 REFUGEE CAMP, 1 KILOMETER FROM CAMBODIA.

Things have gone well now for several days. We are presently in a camp where the people are living in the shadow of war. This is a Khmer Rouge' camp, internally controlled by remnants of the Pol Por regime responsible for the deaths of over 3 million Cambodians. Today, they fight to free Cambodia of the Vietnamese occupation in order to liberate the people. Or so they say. Most Cambodians, as well as many Western political analysts, see them trying to reestablish their power. Few seem to believe that Pol Pot is really dead.

The basic needs of the 50,000 or so people here are met, but just barely. As this is a 'temporary' establishment, the sewers are trenches on the side of the road, and the roads just packed red dirt. Water trucks continuously roam them, kicking up choking red dust, while they replenish an often foul water supply. The Thai authorities, afraid of permanent settlement, forbid trade and markets. As a result, the people, unable to leave legally, must face days filled with idleness. Unless, that is, they chose to fight for the Khmer Rouge resistance.

Many refugees do leave the camp, however: the soldiers of the resistance, who engage the Vietnamese on the far side of a hill that divides the two nations of Cambodia and Thailand. A serious consequence of these activities is that the camp is unsafe. It is shelled often, resulting in loss of life. An average of between 9 to 20 refugees, mostly children, die per shelling. It is the Vietnamese who are responsible for what the United Nations terms "isolated border incidents." They are trying to stop the attacks of the Khmer Rouge.

Earlier this afternoon, Jad and I watched a patrol leaving camp, only to hear a firefight about an hour later, followed by repeated raking of what must have been the Khmer position by Vietnamese artillery.

It reminds me to mention one boy here with whom I talked today. Named So vann, he was 17. When he was younger, he fought for the Khmer Rouge, against his choice, even though the Pol Pot regime was responsible for his father's death. During his short period with the resistance forces, which rely upon the impressionable, and considered expendable youth, he killed three Vietnamese soldiers before being wounded twice. All before his 15th birthday.

JANUARY 2, 1988. SITE TWO BORDER CAMP.

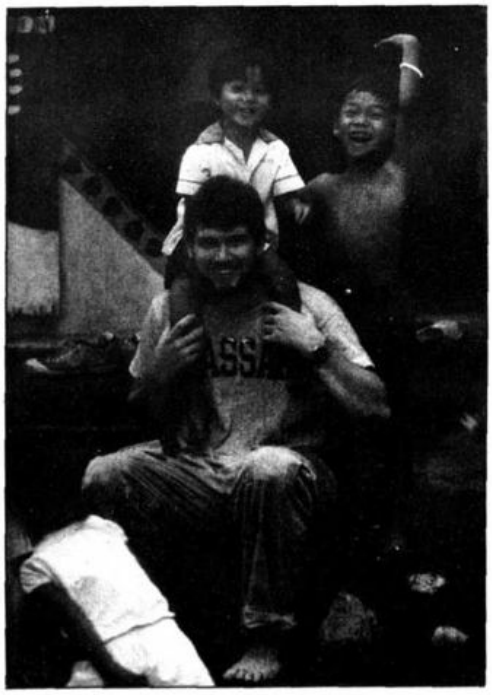
Beaucoup to write about today. On the 31st, Jad and I, utilizing our press credentials, managed to get ourselves on a combat patrol with Thai troops along the border frontier. It was a mission out to a forward listening post. It was basically uneventful, although there was a 30 second volley of fire somewhere near when the patrol left the encampment, however it was not in our immediate vicinity. It was interesting to accompany the soldiers through this highly volatile and disputed territory, and I have to admit, I was scared. As I said, though, we ran into no booby traps, mines nor snipers, although none of these possibilities were unlikely.

Of even greater interest today was one Vietnamese refugee I talked with here in Site 2, a former South Vietnamese Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) officer. The CIO worked hand in hand with our CIA in coordinating the Vietnamese war. He had some fascinating things to say. Having been in a prison camp in Hanoi for 12 years after the fall of Saigon, he had no great love of America: he was there because the U.S. army didn't helicopter him out as they had promised they would in '75. At first he wouldn't even talk with Jad or I. However, after time, he told us his story. Much of what he said was specific to particular events in the war, and I'm sure is considered classified by the U.S. However, I'm sure that didn't make much difference to him. Perhaps one of the more interesting things he said concerned the final U.S. pullout. He looked me straight in the eye, and shook his head gravely when I mentioned the role of American public opinion in stopping the war. He said, in perfect English, "While that played some part, the real reason the Americans left was because of the U.S. pact with China. It was no longer necessary for the United States, from the view of foreign policy, to maintain a toehold in Southeast Asia, if China was not to be an enemy. So they just left us." Certainly a revelation of some sort.

I have re-evaluated, as a result of this experience on the border, many of my opinions concerning the Vietnam War. In brief, I have seen the results of the Vietnamese communist regime first hand. They were absolutely not, nor are they now a "heroes army." I believe now that the U.S. should have been there. This is not to say that we didn't handle it all wrong, because we did. We were also there for the wrong reasons. Yet the right ones did exist. We should have been there. These people needed our help. We let them down. And what they have now really stinks.
(End of entries)

Southeast Asia today is still in a precarious position, with the turmoil following the French withdraw from Indochina still very much present. In many ways, the Vietnam war the U.S. fought in still continues. What is for sure is that the current status quo will not last. Soon (though not for certain) the Vietnamese, bowing to pressure from the Soviet Union, will withdraw from Cambodia, ending a ten year occupation. What happens then is anyone's guess, though no one expects a peaceful settlement in any case. The Cambodians, the Vietnamese, and the Lao suffer to this day from the unrest that has infected their nations for over 40 years. The men, women and children I encountered in the refugee camps stand as testimony to the Indochinese plight, as they search for some kind of meaningful existence.

My trip to Southeast Asia and among these people was adventurous; but it was also much more. I have learned a little bit of what suffering really is, and I have learned even more importantly that it can be altered, alleviated. The refugees I was with, though many lead a life impossibly difficult compared with anything I know, manage to make it and even smile every now and then despite their situation. They are proof of the human spirit. And they have given me a great deal by their example.

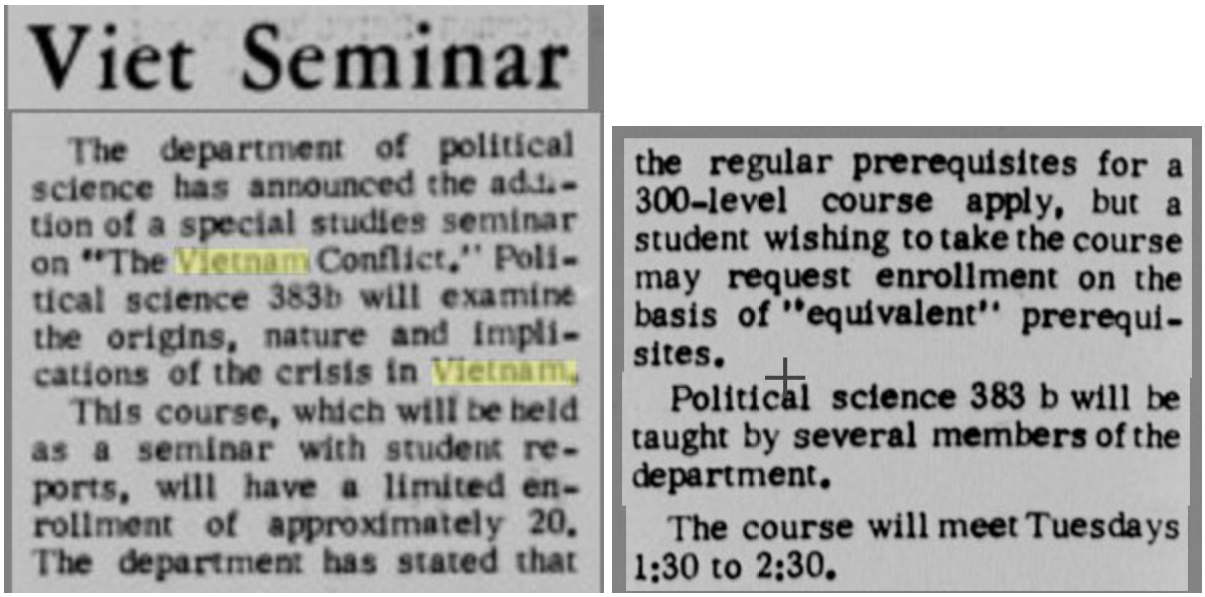


Mathis, Don. "The Spectator Goes to Southeast Asia: Amongst Booby Traps." *The Spectator* [Poughkeepsie] 1 Apr. 1988: 16-17. *Vassar Newspaper Archives*. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.

An article in the Miscellany News from 10 May 1967 titled “Opposition to Escalate In Viet Nam Summer” describes a summer program where “Workers will identify and bring together those persons in the

community who are disaffected from the war; they will undertake a program of education including readings, seminars, films and speakers, to increase public knowledge about the war and to develop individual ability to speak in opposition to it." It talks about how this program is already present at many other organizations and institutions in America.

"Opposition to Escalate In Viet Nam Summer." *Miscellany News* [Poughkeepsie] 10 May 1967: 9. *Vassar Newspaper Archive*. Web. 5 Mar. 2016.



Viet Seminar

The department of political science has announced the addition of a special studies seminar on "The Vietnam Conflict." Political science 383b will examine the origins, nature and implications of the crisis in Vietnam.

This course, which will be held as a seminar with student reports, will have a limited enrollment of approximately 20. The department has stated that the regular prerequisites for a 300-level course apply, but a student wishing to take the course may request enrollment on the basis of "equivalent" prerequisites.

Political science 383 b will be taught by several members of the department.

The course will meet Tuesdays 1:30 to 2:30.

From the December 13, 1967 issue of *The Miscellany News*.

Along with this seminar, an article from the April 27, 1966 *Miscellany News* titled "Faculty to Decide On Topics For Viet Teach-in Participation" by CHARLOTTE KIRK, describes a "teach-in" where a series of professors and outside speakers come and speak as part of a panel about the conflict in Vietnam from a variety of angles.

Additional Sources:

http://www.upa.pdx.edu/IMS/currentprojects/TAHv3/Vietnam.html
This is an amazing source that clearly lays out the US reaction and involvement in the Vietnam along with the anti-war movement. It does not talk too much about the refugee crisis in particular but does give some great background information concerning the more general US response to the war. It includes many links and bibliography.

Cambodia:

http://forcedmigration.ccnmtl.columbia.edu/book/export/html/26
This source is focused on the "Food, Politics and Humanitarian Response" aspects of the Cambodian crisis. It gives a brief background of the conflict in Cambodia and then dives into the "Politics of Humanitarian Relief," the "border" refugee camps, and the Thai response to the crisis of refugees.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/sharon-wu/press-coverage-of-the-cam_b_1469187.html
This article gives a brief background to the Cambodian conflict that led to the refugee crisis and describes how the press reported on the crisis.