

FRIDAY, AUG. 13. I was up at six in the morning, listened to the five-minute news broadcast of the Armed Forces Radio Service-Saigon with its usual lack of information, showered and hurried out for breakfast. I had to rouse the people in the ~~mountain~~ roof-garden hotel to get my toast and coffee, though they are supposed to open at 6 a.m. By seven o'clock I had walked to the Continental Palace Hotel to meet David Willey of the BBC and Keith Spinner, his cameraman. In their car, labeled "BBC TV News" we drove ~~thru~~ or rather crawled-and-speeded in between the cyclos, bicycles, motor-bikes, U. S. Army trucks and diminutive taxicabs to John Condon's villa at 47 Phan Than Gian in Dakao. In short order, we moved on to the heliport at the giant U.S. air force base of Saigon.

The rotors on the Huey were already turning as we climbed in. I grabbed a window seat so that I could take pictures from the helicopter, snapped my seat belt on and in less than three minutes we were air-borne. In front of me, crash-helmeted, were the pilots with at least 100 controls and dials on the panel. Behind me, a machine-gunner, his weapon at the ready, sat with open door, and back to back with him was another gunner. In no time ~~were~~ we were over rice paddies, flying south over the Mekong delta to My Tho, our first stop. The land stretched flat before us, broken by little used roads, the paddies shimmering with light though the sky was overcast, threatening rain. Everywhere, it seemed, the tributaries of the Mekong river snaked in wild lines, linked together by canals. The rectangular patches of land, in all shades of green, brown and even yellow, looked like a garish canvass at the Museum of Modern Art.

A half-hour after take-off we were over My Tho, a bright little town with a large ~~square~~ <sup>market</sup> square, solid stucco houses and thatched huts. Frank Wisner, assistant provincial representative for USOM, and other USOM people were waiting for us at the landing strip. We were introduced to Capt. Killebrew, a husky light-haired six-footer, with carbine over his shoulder, assigned to guard us on the trip. He and Frank and a young Vietnamese a half-foot shorter than myself climbed in with us. The latter was to be our interpreter. When he learned that I was a professor and a lawyer he made a special point of being with me, writing out for me on one of the index cards I have been assembling: "Vu-Hoang-Linh, Area Specialist USOM-Operations, Saigon. Faculty of Law." He explained to me that he hoped after completing his law studies to take graduate law work in the United States.

Fifteen minutes after our second take-off we were circling over the village of Cai Be, our destination. Round and round we went, and each time the helicopter banked, my stomach banked ~~in~~ with it. Someone explained that it had been decided that we should land on the soccer field, and we were waiting until security could get to the field. As we landed, some 50 Vietnamese children stood gaping behind the reception committee. Capt. Trinh, an athletic man, taller than the average Vietnamese, with sharp tough features, looking like an exact duplicate of a familiar Hollywood actor who often plays Chinese roles, a slight scar on his left cheek, was the first to greet us. ~~It was~~ He was introduced as the District Chief, the most powerful governmental figure in the area and commander of the troops. With him was a slightly built young man in civilian clothes who was introduced as Capt. Duc and who spoke English. He delivered a formal welcome to Cai Be, the refugee center for the district. With them was Capt. Lynch, a strapping six-footer, a handsome young fellow who exuded confidence and a sure knowledge of what he was doing. (Almost all our officers here seem to be six-footers who tower over their Vietnamese counterparts. This is so consistent that I think it is a matter of policy.)

We crossed a six-foot wide ditch of muddy water, using a foot-wide bridge of earth to get to the waiting Vietnamese jeep and a ramshackle car. A squad of Vietnamese sol-

diers, in full battle dress, with carbines readied, wearing two grenades each, accompanied us as we drove into the nearest hamlet. The dirt road was bordered with barbed wire, and here and there a strip of land was strung with lines of barbed wire spaced a foot apart and at a height of about a foot. Thatched houses lined the roads. Groves of coconut-laden palm trees and banana plants stretched away on both sides. This is the Vietnam one pictures -- the poverty of the people, the oppressive heat as the bright sun pours down, the sampans on the rivers, houses on stilts, tiny, congested, dirty, and bare-footed children everywhere. Within an hour, trim David Willey of the BBC was a wilted bedraggled Nordic.

Our first stop was Capt. Trinh's headquarters, where we were seated classroom-style for a briefing, my friend Linh interpreting, with Capt. Lynch interjecting and Frank (who speaks Vietnamese perfectly) lending a hand. The principal significance of Cai Be is its role as a refugee center. Since July 17, a matter now of about three weeks, there had been an influx of 2,527 families, with 1,862 children over three years of age, and 1,024 under 3. On August 10-11, 72 families had come in, consisting of 438 adults and 44 children. The figures were all neatly tabulated on a large acetate-covered chart in various grease-colored pencilings. (Everywhere here you have information ~~knidkaut~~ set up on charts and maps with acetate overlays.)

Using a pointer, Capt. Trinh discussed the refugee program. Some 454,590 piastres had already been expended for 1,168 families (6,345 adults and 348 children). As I calculate it, that would be about \$6,350. The big problem is housing. Already 43 ~~immense~~ foundations have been laid for 43 palm houses, and 11 more are under construction. USOM had shipped in 560 bags of wheat (30 kilos a bag) and distributed 500 men's and 500 women's shirts. I saw many children wearing T-shirts with the yellow and striped colors of Vietnam, also provided by USOM. Two hundred cans of cooking oil, an important item, had also been handed out.

As the briefing continued, we were served large glasses of Larue beer with chunks of ice in it. I asked how far these people had come. We were told that the movement had started in Hau My, 21 clicks (Army talk for kilometres) to the north. The people of Hau My were being heavily taxed by the Viet Cong which controls the area; they decided to migrate in a body to avoid the economic burden and to enjoy the physical security of government protection. As they moved south, other hamlets joined them. Now the VC were using Hau My as a training center, according to intelligence, which Capt. Lynch says, is quite good in this area. The journey had been difficult. Though Hau My is 21 ~~kilom~~ clicks ~~(approximately)~~ (about 15 air miles) away, there are no roads and the main method of transportation on the ground is by canal. Many had come by sampan. Hau My, incidentally, is at the edge of the Plain of Reeds which stretches northward.

According to Capt. Trinh, the government is able to pay each refugee 7 piastres a day (10 cents) for one month, after which a payment of 2,000 to 3,000 piastres is given, depending on family size, for the building of a house. More than 50 percent of the refugees have received medical examinations from the government health workers (two years of medical education); 1,200 cholera and a similar number of scarlet fever shots have been administered, and 2,516 persons received medicines.

The security situation seemed to be well in hand, though the VC were six kilometres away, with contingents to the north and east, and were particularly active south of Highway 4. Cai Be had been attacked last year and over-run, but the Viet Cong ~~had~~ as is often the practice moved out immediately. Two months ago, Capt. Trinh and Capt. John Sherman had gone out to a hamlet. Hearing that the VC had set up a road block ~~a short distance away, they had gone with some men to the scene. There Trinh was~~

a short distance away, they had gone with some men to the scene. There Trinh was wounded in the shoulder. Capt. Sherman was captured and had not been recovered. Sgt. Ball told me that the facts seemed to be that when the ambush started, Trinh had gone to one side of the road, and Sherman to the other. He thinks that Sherman could have gotten out but that probably the captain's interpreter had been wounded and Sherman decided to stay with the man. There is no assumption that Trinh abandoned his American counterpart. The only news that has been had of Sherman was in the form of a photograph found on a captured VC recently, showing Sherman with his arms tied but apparently in good health. There is no word about the interpreter. "Ordinarily, I would have been on that operation," said Sgt. Ball, a thin, red-nosed professional soldier, "but I just didn't happen to go. The way it turned out, that's one operation I was glad to miss. But who knows, may be if I had been along the captain would have gotten out."

The day before coming down to Cai Be, I met Wells Klein, local representative of the International Rescue Committee who had just come back from a field trip. He had entered just such a refugee settlement a short time after ~~it~~ it had been over-run by the VC in a general massacre of the refugees. (The VC are out to prove that the government cannot protect the people.) The place had been cleaned up, but he had taken some rather sad pictures which are now being developed and printed. Here at Cai Be, however, security seems quite good. The positions are sand-bagged. I went into one dank bunker, about five feet by five, dug into the ground, and roofed over with sandbags but did not stay ~~it~~ in it very long because the floor was in several inches of water. Capt. Lynch, who has been here two months as Capt. Sherman's replacement, says that the bunker could withstand four direct hits from a mortar. The military headquarters seems well protected by such fortifications, including rows of sandbags and pill-boxes made of concrete.

The six Americans who are here seem unperturbed, and comfortable in a crude kind of way. They generate their own electricity, are well supplied with cokes and Hawaiian punch, Playboy magazine, Time and Newsweek, and paperback books. Over each cot is a jungle hammock hung by wire, with mosquito netting. I used the latrine, which is a regular toilet, flushed by holding a hose over the bowl.

Capt. Lynch showed me his maps with overlays, indicating the positions of the VC. "Here you have the hard-core VC," he said. "At this point you have ~~a~~ guerilla squadrons, each consisting of about 12 men, who are the advance units for the hard core platoons. The guerillas are local people who know the terrain. Without them, the hard core troops ~~can't~~ can't move. We concentrate on the guerrillas. If we can kill or capture 3 or 4 men in a guerrilla squadron, we break up the movement of the larger units or at least slow them down because it takes time for them to get guerilla replacements. Two ~~xxxx~~ days ago we captured four VC guerrillas and wounded two others, which was quite a break."

We went out to see the refugees. At the main center we watched the distribution of supplies and funds. A mobile loud speaker unit would call out names, and women would file in to get their rations and money. Young Vietnamese girls -- described as social workers -- handled the refugees. At the entrance to the building, several hundred women squatted, holding babies or just sitting and waiting for their names to be called.

We drove to the site of new construction, accompanied by troops. I started to move in among the houses, which were surrounded by a grove of banana trees, but I was called back. "Is it unsafe?" I asked Capt. Lynch. "Oh, no," he said, "you can't

see them, but there are soldiers concealed ~~in~~ among the trees. It's just that the BBC fellows don't want ~~any~~ you in their films."

Quite noticeable was the fact that the refugees consisted mostly of women, ~~and~~ children and very old men. The young men were in uniform. Unlike the Regular Army, the Popular Forces stay in their local communities, live with their families, and engage in local operations. Some of the refugees, it is relieved, have husbands with the VC -- men who have either joined voluntarily or been drafted -- who send their families to the government posts for safety. On the whole, though, in this area the people are pro-Government, one of the reasons for the excellent intelligence situation. "Without ~~that~~ cooperation," says Capt. Lynch, "we couldn't last long."

Most colorful sight was the river, about a half-mile ~~wide~~ at its widest. We drove across a wooden bridge with rotting timbers that rumbled under our wheels. Scores of sampans were tied up at the edge, almost all of them surprisingly equipped with tiny outboard motors. They were brought in by USOM and cost about \$25, being made available through a counterpart-fund deal with the Vietnamese government. The outboard motors have had a tremendous morale effect on the people, and have been helpful in speeding up transport and communications.

We walked through the market, followed by hordes of children, each eager to have a picture taken, scrambling to touch our hands, sometimes squeezing hard and pinching our fingers and palms. "Okay," they shouted. "Hello, how are you." Lynch is very popular with them. Periodically, he would stop, pick one up, and raise him high in the air -- some eight feet -- while the hundreds ~~of~~ youngsters following this Yankee piper roared with glee. Sometimes Lynch would raise his hands for quiet, and every voice would be silent. "How are you?" he would say. A chorus would echo his words. He would hold up one finger. "One." They echoed his count ~~up~~ to five. Then he would start the count in Vietnamese; after reaching five, as he continued ~~to~~ to hold up his fingers, they counted by themselves in Vietnamese. Periodically, he would stop to shake hands and chat with the vendors in the market stalls, an obviously popular figure.

We went by the Church, an amazingly large stone structure that would do honor to a French village. It had been built by a Frenchman. The priest, a Vietnamese, ~~with~~ with whom we shook hands, had been under VC threats for a long time. We saw the school buildings, the Vietnamese nuns who taught in them, and he described proudly in French the new classrooms he was building with USOM aid. Happily, the school covered three times the area of the church, and the children seemed proud of their notebooks and pencils and textbooks, which they clutched in tiny brown hands.

By the time we got back to the fortified area, we were worn out with sun and dust. Just outside the compound was a long rectangular pagoda, looking more like the exterior of a badly white-washed stable, except for the peeling red paint on the pagoda-style roof. "You are very fortunate," said Capt. Duc in fairly good English. "You have come on a good day. Today is the day of celebration for the good spirit who watches over this province - Phan Than Gian." By coincidence ~~the~~ the street in Saigon where John Condon lives is named after the same man. He was a mandarin who fought the French when they were colonializing, and when the Vietnamese were defeated he committed suicide. "You are invited to eat with the village elders in the pagoda," said Capt. Duc.

We entered the pagoda where tables had been laid out. At the front, were the once-ornate, now fading shrines. The building itself had been put up 65 years ago. The gilt and red paint was cracked, and much of the surface on the Confucian equivalent of altars (these were Confucians) was painted a lack-lustre grey that gave a  
see

feeling of antiquity to this section of the pagoda. At the other end of the building was an auditorium that was clearly contemporary, with planks and seats, and a stage in the ~~very~~ far area. Children sat on the planks, which obviously served as desks, watching us eat.

We were served by the elders, dressed in the <sup>black</sup> round yarmelkes and black long tunics, with tight collars that are familiar to us from Chinese movies. Dishes of white and red rice, barbecued pork, pieces of chicken (bone and all), a pasty kind of noodle in sheets, <sup>chunks of shrimp,</sup> and a sauce called "nucman" (my approximation of the pronunciation) were spread on the table. We all helped ourselves ~~with~~ from the common dishes with our chopsticks. Larue beer with ice in it was served. As we started to eat, I thought gratefully of the Donnagel and Vioform I had brought with me, and then began to enjoy the meal, glad that I had learned to use chopsticks. The ~~main~~ main courses ended with a thick soup which was quite good, but Frank said to me, "Once when I was having such a meal, my host said, ~~xxxxx~~ 'Take more pieces of dog.'" At one point, bread was brought to the table - typical French bread. We finished with tea and ~~the~~ sweat crispy biscuits, long and folded, that tasted like fortune cookies.

We said goodbye and thank you to our hosts with much bowing, shaking hands with each of the ceremonially black-garbed figures, and returned to the compound. My companions were ready for siesta, and they stretched out on the Army cots. John Condon fell asleep in an armchair. I was tired, too, but was so ~~xxxxx~~ keyed up that I could not think of sleeping. I talked with Killebrew and Lynch. Both are college graduates and would like to take their master's degree in business or public administration. Killebrew ~~xxx~~ who is due to return to the States wants to take his degree while in the Army, which is possible, but he was told that he would have to go to Bangkok to take the Princeton (ETS) exam for graduate admission. ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ He can't get there. I suggested that he might be able to work out a deal under which he might be admitted ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ conditionally, his grades to be effective after he has passed the exam -- I had such a student once. Lynch, who graduated from St. ~~xxxx~~ Peter's College in New Brunswick, took his B. S. in chemistry but now wants administration because it would further his Army career. "If I wanted to be a chemist," he said, "I would go back to civilian life."

Word came that our chopper was back. I drove to the soccer field in Capt. Trinh's rattletrap jeep and arrived just as the chopper was setting down. John was hauling with him a heavy earthenware dish he had bought in the market, a 30-kilo sack of rice that he was taking back to Saigon for Frank <sup>in a</sup> he would be driving up in a few days. As the chopper rose to several thousand feet, Frank pointed over to the left and shouted in my ear, "You can see Cambodia over there."

I was back in my hotel, dusty and wet with sweat, at about a quarter to five. There was a note to call Al Strachan. Wells Klein, who is in a neighboring room in the hotel, and I were to have dinner ~~xxxxxxxx~~ at his huge apartment. I showered and changed my clothes. As we entered the French cage-like elevator, a beautiful, garishly made-up Vietnamese girl, wearing Western clothes, got in with us, holding a large gift package. "I go to second floor," she said. Wells pushed the button. The elevator rose slowly, long enough for a conversation. "I go to birthday party. You live in this house?" she asked invitingly. When she got out, I said: "That's not the only gift she's bringing our compatriot." As we rose to the fourth floor where Al lives, Wells said; "I guess she wanted to make another stop before going home."

After dinner, served by a tiny Vietnamese woman whose bare feet showed nail polish, we sat on the tremendous balcony. Then began the nightly noises of Saigon: the boom of artillery outside the city, planes overhead. Suddenly, Al said: "Look

at that; it's something new." To the south, a plane was flying, ~~every few seconds~~ emitting a bright flash that lasted a few seconds. "It must be a new kind of flare," he conjectured, but it did not seem to last long enough to allow for any observation.

Later, on my return to the hotel, I was too tired to sleep, and stood looking out of my window. Again I saw the plane with the flashing light. Again there was the sound of artillery. Then a flare went up, hanging in the sky, and illuminating what must have been a large area. I thought to watch it and see how long the flare in the sky would burn, but after almost ten minutes I gave up, took my third shower of the day, and went to bed.

530,000

ADDITIONAL NOTES: Official figures ~~suggest that~~ report that there are now 530,000 refugees in South Vietnam. . . . According to Capt. Lynch: A successful tactic seems to be to bomb a VC village; after the raid, as the VC come out to care for the wounded, an artillery bombardment is let loose. The effect is to break morale, and a number of VC returnees come back to government posts. . . . Student volunteers have come to Cai Be to help build the homes for the refugees. They number some 250, and come from all over the province. They are trained first at the Bien Tri training center. . . . Despite the monsoon, this has been a dry season, with important implications for the war. The fact that there has been comparatively little rain has interfered with VC strategy which was counting on the weather hampering our air activity. The economic consequences are interesting: Cai Be needs men to help with refugee construction, but because of the drought the men will have to stay in the rice paddies, possibly two months longer, after which they would be available for work. The rice crop is bound to be poor. If we can bring in a lot of rice, this will help morale; the people in the VC areas, however, will suffer hardship. This could be quite an advantage for us.

Bien Tri(?)