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CHILDREN FLEE—TO STARVE AND DIE

Tragedy That Must Never Happen Here

By *MARY WELSH,*

*Sunday Dispatch Woman Reporter who was
one of the last to leave Paris*

WHAT price will your children pay for the love you have for them?

Because of this love—and the pleasure they give you—will they pay with their lives? Will they pay with an arm, or both legs, or with digestive and nervous systems so shattered that they must live for ever weaklings? Would you, through "love" and torpor, sentence them to starvation so that they might pick up a bone from the dust and gnaw at it like a dog?

I saw one child do that in France. It was one of a hundred reminders that love and brutality narrow down almost to the same thing in active warfare.

After 20 hours back home here on our green and gentle island, these sights I saw in France begin already to grow unreal. Looking out on the trees and romping dogs and children of a Chelsea square, I can't believe . . . I can't believe. . . . But in Paris my windows looked on a similar square.

THEY MUST GO AWAY

There is only one conclusion to be drawn. For parents too blind to see the tragedies, there must be compulsory evacuation of families.

If they will not save themselves, they must be saved. Let the objector's shout. Soon they will agree.

To disperse the children, to clear them out of the crowded areas immediately is not only humanity. The military experts have told you it is a strategic necessity.

No nation loves its children more, takes more pride in them, than the French. When the French go out to the cafés for an aperitif or a coffee, the children go along. Every park in Paris has stands for selling whirligigs on sticks, ponds for sailing toy boats, donkeys for giving rides. You can buy children's books wherever there are books to buy.

THE TRAGEDY

That was the tragedy of the French children, that they were loved—too much to be sent away to safety.

If orderly evacuation, planned and executed in advance of the retreating and advancing armies is panic, let us be panicky.

I will tell you only the things I saw and heard myself during the days and nights after May 10 when I worked at the Gare du Nord and the Gare Montparnasse in Paris.

TIDAL WAVE

That tidal wave of 5,000,000 human beings started rolling southward on that day. Two days later not a scrap of bread re-

mained along the long, hot roads and railways leading to Paris.

And at the Paris stations no aid was waiting, no plans for aid even.

At the Gare Montparnasse an English girl, Eileen Forbes, found a vacant hall, cabled to England for money, and with her sister and volunteers from among their friends, set up the same sort of establishment.

At both centres I helped ladle out coffee, bouillon, bread; washed blistered feet, searched for luggage, and nursed babies.

One midnight one of the volunteers whispered to me: "Something wrong with that woman; doesn't speak to me."

Hunched like a bundle of rags with a few dirty blankets under her arm, was a woman no more than 25 years old.

A nurse took her in charge, finally managed to give her soup and bread and to wash her face. We heard her story from another refugee who had come with her from her village on the Belgian border.

Struggling over a difficult pass, the young woman had handed her bundle of blankets to some outstretched, helping hand. A mile or two further on they were returned to her, and gradually she had become aware how light they felt. They had lost her baby, two weeks old.

NO DIFFERENT

I saw a little girl of about five, two yellow pigtails hanging down her back, climb off a train clinging to her mother's skirts, carrying a heavy bundle; but the mother had a baby to carry along with her own bundles. No different from the 5,000,000 other refugees, except that this little girl was crying.

An hour later when I saw her again in the Welcome Centre she was still crying, and then I knew this was a special tragedy, because this little girl made no sound, no grimace with her mouth. Just the tears, flooding evenly down her cheeks and her blue eyes bloodshot.

"She has done this for two days," her mother told me. "I can't stop her. It must be something wrong inside. Her little friend, the young daughter next door, was killed."

At least, those children, and the little boy with the head of bandages and only a nose sticking out, and a grimy teddy bear dangling from one hand, had their mothers. Thousands of others, many of them too young to remember their surnames or their home towns, were lost.

IN THE DUST . . .

Some mother has probably given up hope by now that she will ever find her little boy with the brown eyes and one front tooth missing. I saw him when I was a refugee myself the other day in Blois. He straggled down a street behind a group of women busily looking after their own children. Suddenly he stooped in the dust; picked up a bone left by some tired dog, gnawed it feverishly.

Two weeks ago in Paris it was a sunny Sunday, and tranquil. In the little park outside my windows Ernest and Jean took turns peddling. Jean's new tricycle under the trees.

He was wearing a new yellow knitted suit, and most of the afternoon I could hear them shouting, like the children here in Chelsea. I wonder what has happened to them?

8/30/74

War Children: Now Old Enough

By DAVID K. SHIPLER

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam—The mixed children left by American G.I.s are now growing up in South Vietnam. Wisps of blond can be seen bobbing and darting among the rivers of black-haired women and children in the street markets. Round the eyes peer out of thatched huts. Along dusty paths, some of the faces that beam at strangers are black, others are fair-skinned.

Contrary to some expectations, most of the mixed children have been accepted and cherished by their Vietnamese mothers and grandmothers, and many also by aunts and uncles and others in remote branches of their extended families here. Relatively few have been totally abandoned to orphanages, and only a small number are available for adoption. *I Question This*

The trouble comes outside the protective circle of the family, for when these youngsters step into the streets, enter the schools and seek new friendships, they are often met by teasing and ridicule from both adults and children. They grow to feel, as one mother put it, "sad about themselves."

Some are old enough now to talk about their parents, and what they say reveals the distress they feel about who they are and who they want to be.

"Are you Vietnamese or American?" the 12-year-old half-black girl is asked. By language, by country, by culture she could be only Vietnamese.

"American," she answers, and the brightness vanishes from her eyes.

"Do you want to be American or Vietnamese?"

"Vietnamese," she says, "because being American, they make jokes on me." Children call her "My Den," she explains—black American. In Vietnam, it is an epithet, containing the double stigma of being not only foreign but dark-skinned as well.

Her name is Tran Thi Thu Thuy, and she is 7 years old. Her mother, Tran Thi Thung, formerly a bar girl in the coastal resort of Da Nang, had three half-black children by three different G.I.s. The soldiers have all gone home, but she has "no regrets," she says, "because at the time I liked to have them."

Like to Have Money

"It was a happy life," Miss Thung recalled, "a house to live in, you live with an American, that American gave you money and bought you things. With all that money, it is you who made the decision to work that way or not. And if it happen to have a baby because you're not careful, that's your bad luck."

And the baby's bad luck too, it seems. Little Thuy's answers are common. No scientific survey has been done, but interviews with mixed youngsters—both those living with their families and those in orphanages—reveal a widespread pattern: they are "American," but they want to be Vietnamese.



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"Because my mother is Vietnamese," explained Thao, a 9-year-old mixed-white child.

"Because I speak Vietnamese," said Xuan, a 7-year-old girl whose father was black.

"Because my American father hates me," said My, a 7-year-old half-white girl named My.

American-Vietnamese children often display a painful ambivalence about their physical characteristics, both denying their own differences and gravitating to those who look the same.



Photographs for The New York Times by DEBORAH I. SHIPLER

Others have described the plight of the mixed children of Vietnam, but as the children become able to express their own feelings, that plight takes on new poignance. One light-skinned child said simply, "Nobody likes me."

A few weeks ago, "a Vietnamese photographer came upon an 11-year-old blond boy in Danang. He said he had shaved his head because children had teased him; when the hair grew back, he thought it would be another color.

At an adoption agency in Saigon, a half-black girl named Le told why Lucy was her best friend. "Lucy looks like me. Her eyes are like me, her nose is like me, her hair is like me, she is as black as me."

And Lucy said of Le, "I love her because she is always with me. She always holds my hand. She looks like me with her curly hair. Her skin is black, and mine is also black."

Then she added, "I don't like Thanh Thuy because she doesn't have curly hair."

Near the site of a former American Army base at Cu Chi, 20 miles northwest of Saigon, 4-year-old Lan Anh played happily on the concrete porch of her mother's house. She is fair-skinned with light brown curly hair and wide eyes. Her grandmother, an old woman with teeth stained black by

beetle nut, swooped her up and hugged her tightly. "Beautiful," the woman proclaimed. "Beautiful."

"Are you Vietnamese or American?" The question erased the little girl's smile. She hesitated and then shouted angrily:

"Vietnamese! No!" she pouted. Who is her best friend? "Nobody likes me," she replied.

Mothers do not always know how to handle the hostility and hurt that writhe inside these little children. Lan Anh's mother has a simple response when her daughter runs home after being teased. "I love her even more—what is can I do?"

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Le tries to get her two half-black foster daughters, ages 5 and 6, to go out and play and face the problems squarely.

"She has no friends," Mrs. Le said of the older girl, Le Thi Thanh. "After she finishes school she rushes home. She takes care of the baby, she always sticks around home because the other kids in the area tease her call her 'black American'. Once in a while they hit her.

"The farthest point she and her sister go is the porch. Many times I push them to go out in the evenings, to go see the priest or play, but they won't."

Thanh was asked what she was, Vietnamese or American. "My Den," [black American, she answered. It was equivalent to a black child in the United States saying of himself, "I am a nigger."

Yet Vietnamese society can also be flexible and caring, even beyond the extended family. Like Mrs. Le, some families have taken in mixed children who are no relation.

Many mothers find their mixed children become signs of disgrace. People assume that the mothers were bar girls and prostitutes, although many were simply secretaries, shopkeepers or maids who happened to fall in love with Americans, lived with them and expected to marry them eventually.

Mothers often suffer economically from the rejection. Those who want work as live-in maids, for example, say they find Vietnamese families generally unwilling to

to Express Own Sadness

have mixed children on the premises. And the chances of marrying a Vietnamese man are slim.

"I never think of getting married to a Vietnamese because I know no Vietnamese man will take three black kids," Miss Thung said. For lack of money, she has placed her children in an orphanage in Saigon run by the Vietnamese-American Children's Fund, a private organization based in Houston.

Victor Srinivasan, who runs the fund's two homes here, has seen two main causes of abandonment: economic hardship and family pressure.

One mother wanted to keep her two half-white boys, he recalled, but she married a Vietnamese without telling him about the children. He ordered them out. "He wouldn't even allow her to come and see her children," Mr. Srinivasan said, "he wants her to completely forget them."

In a back alley of Saigon, Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hoa lives with her three mixed children in an open space between two crumbling brick buildings, a space draped with webs of shabby Army Ponchos and leaky plastic sheets. The father of the youngest, 2-year-old boy, is in Missouri, unemployed.

"I am quite ashamed to tell you," Miss Hoa said quietly, "but I'm a kind of beggar."

She keeps hoping that the man from Missouri will return or send money. It is a universal hope among these mothers. In almost every house, an old photo album can be produced with snapshots of a handsome American G.I. and a lovely Vietnamese girl looking brightly and lovingly at each other from a distant, happier time.

"Sometimes I think I'd like to get another man, go to the United States," Duong Thi Ngoc Minh said. She lived with an Air Force sergeant for several years and had two daughters, who now encounter frequent ridicule. "It's better to send them to the States. There is less discrimination in the States than in Vietnam."

But she could not stand to give the children up for adoption, she said. Many other mothers feel the same. American officials guess that there may be about 25,000 half-American children in South Vietnam. In the spring of 1973, they counted only 770 in orphanages.

An Emotional Debate

The virtue of adoption is debated emotionally here, with many Vietnamese resentful of the notion that their society cannot accommodate mixed children. Others concede the strength of the prejudice, however, and are convinced that the youngsters, especially those who are half-black, would be better off in the United States.

Some adoption officials believe that even with American society's own prejudices there is still more room for difference in the United States than in Vietnam.

Of all those interviewed, children slated to go to the States formed the only group to display certainty about their identity. A group of boys, the day before leaving Saigon said they were all "American" and

Longing for the Woman And Child Left Behind

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 22—Following is a recent exchange of letters between a former American serviceman and a Vietnamese woman, mother of his child. The letters are printed as they were written, with no attempt made to correct the spelling or the grammar.

Dear Lien,

I'm writing this letter to let you know that I thank you and the kids all the time. Honey, I want you to know that I still love you very much and to let you know that I got out of the army and I wrote to the President of South Vietnam to see if they will grant me citizenship in Vietnam. I am giving up everything in America. Honey, I don't blame you if you don't want me anymore. I don't blame you but I just want you to know that I love and miss you very much. Honey that is why I'm giving up everything if they grant my request. I promised to join their army that is how much I love you and the kids.

P.S. Honey, I got the picture you sent to me. The baby looks just like you so please forgive me and write and hope they grant my request. I love you.

Dear Bob, (false name)

Today I am writing this letter to you and let you know that in Vietnam now I and your child are living miserable. We don't have shelter and I am impossible to make money by selling some things because no customers. So I was looking for a job and now I am working as maid for some one. The small salary doesn't feed me and your child.

If you always think about me and your child, please send me some money for buying food. My dear, in any case and in any time, I'm always thinking about you and still love you. So that you must have some way to come to Vietnam in order to bring your child to the State, please my dear.

Now, because of poverty I can't keep your child with me. I requested assistance from the Vietnam American Children's Fund and your child is kept and sponsored by this organization—house, food, medicine, education.

You must remember that I don't have house but your child miss you very much and I'm always waiting for you to come with me. Some time I feel very desperate and I want to kill myself. But I think I die, you child will lost his parent's love for ever. In other ways, if I kill your child to free him from this miserable life, I'll be wrong because he is not responsible of our poverty. I love your child very much. My dear, I think to you when I see him. Many times, he is crying because he is hungry. I know that but I don't know how to do but crying too. I'm brief to depict my situation now to let you know. I expect that you are always healthy. I will write to you more in the next letter and I will send to you our child picture.

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Of all those interviewed, children slated to go to the States formed the only group to display certainty about their identity. A group of boys, the day before leaving Saigon, said they were all "American" and that's what they wanted to be "because they're big, Americans are big," one declared happily.

Elsewhere, mixed children who see an American on their street occasionally rush to him pleading to be hugged. But more frequently they cringe, afraid they will be taken away. Mothers often tease them, saying, "here's your father to take you to

they grant my request. I promised to join there army that is how much I love you and the kids.

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The teasing gets the desired result. Mai Ly, a 3-year-old blond girl, curls up into a ball and tries to disappear. Hung scampers to the rear of his adoptive parents' noodle shop and hides. Lan Anh clings to her mother's leg, calming for the moment the fears her mother harbors that some day the girl will want to leave.

The mother scolds neighborhood children who entice Lan Anh with tales of all the apples and grapes in the United States. "I told her there were no apples and grapes in America," her mother says, "because I was afraid she would start thinking she would like to go to America because she wants apples and grapes."

A grandmother in Danang remembers how tightly her family held on to her grandson, Queyn, now 8. His father, an American named Jim, came to see the boy for the last time before going home. The grandmother, Queyn's mother and her sister and brother sat with Jim around the family's dining table.

"He insisted that he wanted to take the boy with him," the grandmother recalls. "All of us disagreed, and we told him we wanted to keep the boy with us. And he wept. And we wept. And he left."

PLIGHT OF VIETNAM'S CHILDREN

July-Aug
1974

by DOUG HOSTITTER

Motivation is an important factor in child advocacy. The child advocate must be able to look beyond her own needs and be conscious of the needs of the child. In adoption, as well as other services to children, the primary consideration should be the welfare of the child.

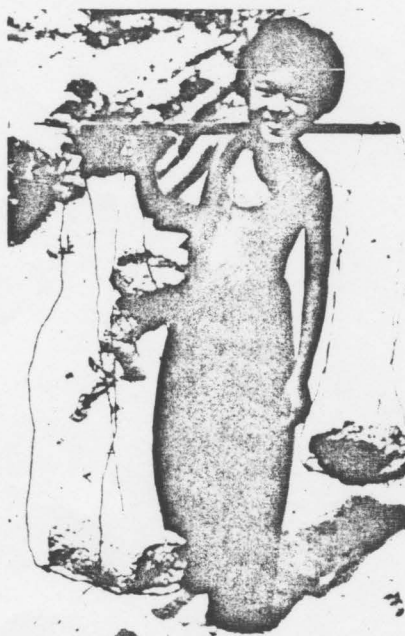
Doug Hostetter is providing us with information and a point of view which will help us to be more objective about an emotional subject—the plight of Vietnamese children.

—Ruth Gilbert, Secretary for Community Action, Women's Division

The family has always been the center of Vietnamese society. "Dao nam sinh trai, cuoi nam sinh gai" is a traditional greeting to a newly wed couple in Vietnam. It means, "May you have a son by the new year and a daughter by the end of the year." But that greeting originated from a happier era, the years before Vietnam's economy and traditional ways of living were destroyed by a cruel technological war.

There are approximately 19 million children in all of Vietnam. The experience of these children during the past 10 years has varied, depending upon where they lived. The mad logic of bombing patterns drove the children of North Vietnam out of the cities, into the mountains and small rural villages, while in the South it drove them from the rural areas into the cities. If they refused to leave the countryside,

Mr. Hostetter is Resource Coordinator for Asia, United Methodist Office for the United Nations.



they were forced to take hiding in mountain caves or underground bunkers.

Since the signing of the Paris Peace Accords over a year ago, much has changed for the children of North Vietnam. Children who were separated from their working parents in the industrial cities have returned from their long "vacation" with grandparents or other relatives in the countryside. Families have been reunited and children whose parents were killed during the intensive bombings have been taken in by other relatives.

In South Vietnam, however, the war grinds on—the bombing and shelling of the countryside continues. The United States

Senate subcommittee on refugees estimates there were six times as many refugees generated during the last year of "peace" as there were during the war year of 1971. Children in the countryside of the South still have to live in, or close to, underground shelters. The children in the city slums and refugee camps struggle against the dual enemies of disease and malnutrition. Fifty percent of the people in the general population are under 15 years of age, but in refugee camps the proportion is often over 70 percent.

Any real solution to the problems of these children will have to be linked to the overall settlement of the war in Vietnam. As American Christians we have a responsibility to work in direct relief of the current suffering of these children while we work to finally extricate our government from the continuing war.

Because of the highly political nature of the war in Vietnam, it is important for groups and individuals who are concerned about Vietnamese children to assist them in all areas of Vietnam. In North Vietnam, most of the children are back with family or relatives, and the overwhelming need now is for schools and hospitals.

During the 10 years of bombing by American planes, almost every major hospital and school in North Vietnam was destroyed. There were 5,500 schools and several hundred hospitals and

medical clinics damaged or totally destroyed. The United States government pledged to help repair this damage when it signed the peace agreement over a year ago, but Congress has appropriated no money to help in this reconstruction. American churches and voluntary agencies which have been working for many years to meet the needs of the children in the Saigon-controlled areas of South Vietnam have been slow to respond to the enormous needs of the children living in the North.

The children of South Vietnam live in two general areas: the zones controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government (the PRG often called the Viet Cong) which includes most of the countryside; and the zone controlled by the Saigon govern-

ment, which includes all of the major cities.

Shortly after the signing of the Paris Accords last year, I traveled to Paris and spent several days discussing with Dr. Le van Loc, of the PRG, the needs of the children in the countryside of South Vietnam. Dr. Loc pointed out that the situation of the children in the PRG areas of South Vietnam was probably more desperate than the situation in any other part of Vietnam. Not only had virtually all of the homes, schools and hospitals been totally destroyed in that area, but the fighting was continuing (and still is today). Many children had lost their entire family.

Aside from the need to rebuild the schools and hospitals, something had to be done about

orphans. Dr. Loc pointed out that they had already discussed the problem and had decided definitely against building orphanages in their zone of control. The PRG Ministry of Social Welfare has encouraged relatives or neighbors to adopt these homeless children. The Ministry has also set up a fund to supplement the income of the families where the support of an additional child would be a burden.

Dr. Loc requested help both from the U.S. government and from the churches in reconstructing schools and hospitals and assisting the support fund for families adopting orphans. As with the North, the PRG zone of South Vietnam has not received any American governmental aid and only recently a few churches have begun to respond to the needs in this area.

The zone of South Vietnam which is controlled by the Saigon government is the area of Vietnam most familiar to the American people. The American government last year poured over \$2.5 billion into that area while churches and voluntary agencies spent millions of dollars more.

Despite this massive assistance, the situation of children in this area has only deteriorated. Millions of people from the countryside have been forced to flee into the city slums and refugee camps to escape the bombing (which is still continuing) in the rural sections. The city of Saigon had a population of less than half a million 20 years ago; now it has a bulging population of over 2 million. In May of 1973 there were still 128 officially designated refugee camps in Saigon-controlled territory containing 750,000 persons. American Agency for International Development (AID) spokesmen estimated that at least 880,000 children living in Saigon-controlled zones have lost one or both of their parents.

Despite these enormous needs, the U.S. government response has been pathetic. While 76 percent



of American governmental aid to Saigon was designated for military purposes, less than one percent was designated for the assistance of children. American churches and voluntary agencies by and large found themselves supporting the usual Western solution to the problem of parentless children—orphanages.

Vietnamese language, customs, religion, village structure, family structure and general philosophy are very different from their Western counterpart. Because of these immense differences in cultural values, it is very difficult for Western charitable institutions to assist the Vietnamese without destroying their culture.

Perhaps the cultural difference between Vietnam and the West which most affects children is the definition of the family. In the United States a child is an orphan when both parents are dead. However, in Vietnam, because of the extended family, a child is never an orphan as long as there is a living relative. Consequently, in Vietnam there are very few true orphans.

Before the war, there were no orphanages in Vietnam; parentless children were simply taken in by the closest relative or by a close neighbor. By 1966, there were 83 orphanages or children's homes in South Vietnam caring for 11,000 children. Seven years later the number of children institutionalized in orphanages had more than doubled, and that number is increasing every day.

In an earlier Asian war Americans also supported orphanages. It was estimated that by the end of the Korean War there were 100,000 children in South Korea who had lost both of their parents. Four years after the armistice about half of those children had been taken in by relatives, and 48,600 were sent to orphanages. However, 20 years after the last shot was fired and the last bomb fell, there were still over 62,000 "orphans" living in 555 orphanages.

To understand this phenomenon one has to understand both the institutions of orphanages and the reasoning of many of the urban poor in Asia. Orphanages have become a prosperous business in both South Korea and South Vietnam. The majority of these orphanages are supported by monies collected from American Christians. We have responded generously to the appeals for help, out of a mixture of feelings of frustration, guilt and a true desire to do something positive. The road between Saigon and the large former American base at Bien Hoa is an excellent example of American desire to help—there are now more orphanages than gas stations on that 20 mile stretch of road.

The other half of the equation is the response of the urban poor

in Asia. In the cities of both South Korea and South Vietnam, urban slums have become a major problem. Millions of people live in desperate poverty. Parents living in these conditions often do not understand that young and growing children need love and personal attention even more than good food and shelter. These parents look at the children living in orphanages and see that these "orphans" are better fed and clothed than their own children, so for the "good of the child" they abandon the child to an orphanage. This may help to account for the fact that last year there were 6,148 children abandoned in South Korea—20 years after the end of that war.

There are ample studies show-



PLIGHT OF VIETNAM'S CHILDREN

ing that an orphanage is not a good substitute for the family. *New York Times* reporter Tom Fox in a November 2, 1973 article for the *National Catholic Reporter* cites several studies of Saigon orphanages which reveal that 90 percent of the babies brought to these orphanages died before the age of 16, most of them within the first year or two. The problem was lack of love and personal attention.

The other form of assistance for Vietnamese children which has been advocated by many Americans has been intercountry adoption. To many Americans this seems like the solution to both an American and a Vietnamese problem. In the U. S., there is currently a "shortage" of adoptable babies (i.e. young, healthy, attractive children) while there are thousands of Vietnamese babies who are in real need. There are a number of problems with adoption as a method of helping Vietnamese children. First of all, there are millions of Vietnamese children who are suffering as a result of the war—intercountry adoption could help only several thousand children at the most, but does nothing for the rest. Secondly, the governments of North Vietnam and the PRG have refused to allow children from their areas of control to be adopted by families in other countries. The Saigon government has also discouraged intercountry adoption, and has made the process difficult.

There are good reasons why almost every Vietnamese is against intercountry adoption. First, there have been several million Vietnamese who have died as a result of the war. It is the children who are the future hope, the next generation of Vietnamese. Secondly, there is the factor of Vietnamese national pride. For the Vietnamese to see their children taken and raised in

another country is to suggest that they are incapable of taking care of them, or that there are others who could do it better. Finally, there is the fear among many Vietnamese that when peace actually comes and relatives try to relocate their families they will discover the children have been sent to another country.

However, there is a group of Vietnamese children that will not be able to live a normal life in Vietnam. These are the only children whose problems could best be solved outside of Vietnam. These are the children with serious medical problems for which there are not yet adequate facilities for treatment in Vietnam. These children will be unable to live a normal life without the advantages of sophisticated modern medical treatment.

Another smaller group which fits into this category of children who may need help outside of Vietnam, is the offspring of American servicemen in Vietnam. These children face an identity problem and often a discrimination problem as well. The children of black or Hispanic fathers seem to face the worst discrimination. These children, left at an orphanage by their natural mothers, could profit from an American home. U. S. government statistics show only 770 children of mixed parentage in all orphanages in South Vietnam, and only 276 of them appear to have had black fathers.¹

The assumption of most Americans is that this is the category of children who are selected by adoption agencies. However, U. S. AID official Donald Goodwin, in a June 1973 address to the American Council of Voluntary Agencies, estimated that between 80 and 90 percent of the Vietnamese adopted in this country the previous year were pure blooded Vietnamese with no major medical problems. Further-

more, the dark-skinned racially mixed children have been primarily adopted by European rather than American families. Vietnamese government officials have guided the dark-skinned children to European families, feeling that these children would grow up with less discrimination against them in European society.

In the past several years there has been an increasing demand among Americans for intercountry adoption of Vietnamese children. This has caused a number of very serious problems. In addition to blinding us to the needs of the vast majority of Vietnamese children, it also resulted in some cases in the sale of Vietnamese children by their mothers to Americans.

In many major cities there has developed a black market for babies. Prices range anywhere from \$10 in some Saigon maternity hospitals to \$800 for American (children with Asian mothers and American fathers) children in Bangkok. With the black market "purchase" of a child, the "customer" does not have to worry about getting written legal consent from the closest relatives of the child, and does not have to worry about a declaration of religious faith. Most orphanages in South Vietnam only allow their children to be adopted into homes of the same religion as the administration of the orphanage.

Currently there are 25,000 children living in orphanages in South Vietnam. The traditional solution of relatives taking in parentless children has somewhat broken down today because of the mass relocation of families caused by the military destruction of the countryside. The U. S. policy of "forced urbanization" (the creation of refugees) also aided the dislocation. This has caused many families to lose track of their relatives in other villages or other sections of the country. A second factor in this breakdown has been the critical economic situation of most Viet-

¹ Refugee Subcommittee of Senate Judiciary Committee, *A Study Mission Report*, U.S. Government Printing Office, January 27, 1974

namese families, making it impossible for them to support any new family members under an already strained family budget.

It is in the areas of family support and the location of relatives of "orphans" which Western churches can best help Vietnamese children. Vietnam Christian Service (VNCS) already has programs of this nature operating in conjunction with three hospitals in Saigon. Vietnamese social workers are hired by VNCS to work in conjunction with hospital midwives to discuss the future

plans and needs of the prospective mothers. The social workers help the women to understand the needs of children and the benefits of a family and some of the liabilities of orphanages. They encourage the women not to abandon their children to orphanages. If the women are unable to support the additional child, the social worker is able to offer job counselling or financial aid from VNCS to enable the women to keep their children.

Programs like this, which allow the children to mature naturally

in their home or that of a relative, should be supported by Americans concerned about the plight of Vietnamese children. The real solution to the problems of Vietnamese children will, of course, only come when peace once again returns to their land. As we continue in our struggle for that peace, let us be sure that our efforts to help Vietnamese children are directed toward the needs of the children in all areas of Vietnam, and that these efforts strengthen Vietnamese family and societal ties. ■

Weep A Tear For Dak Pek

Gerald Boyer

Dateline: Saigon, Vietnam, Thursday, May 16, 1974. American newspaper headlines (page 10A, St. Petersburg Times) read like this: SOUTH VIET TOWN FALLS; CASUALTIES PUT AT 3,570. The article reported, "North Vietnamese forces spearheaded by assault tanks Thursday captured a South Vietnamese district capital deep in Communist-held territory. All of the 3,000 civilian residents of Dak Pek and its 570 defenders were reported killed, wounded or missing."

That headline stirred me emotionally and I felt a great surge of compassion, as I remembered the village of Dak Pek. On March 11, 1973, at about 3:30 p.m., I landed on the top of a high hill in Dak Pek in a South Vietnamese helicopter. As I climbed out of the "chopper" I looked out across the valleys surrounding that hill to the little segments of the village, located on the crests of neighboring hills. The people had dug holes into which they crept to sleep as the enemy periodically shelled the area. For many months they had lived on roots, grass and leaves . . . anything from which they could get a bit of nourishment.

These were mountain people . . . a remnant of the 10,000 people who had originally lived there. They are simple, illiterate, hungry, sick, emaciated people who could pose no threat to anyone and who wanted only some surcease from the war. It would appear that many have now found it for, at the time of my visit, some 90% of these people had become Christians.

I now find myself praying for those who still live, as they are either in captivity or scattered among the enemy-infested mountains which surround their village. It is almost too much to hope that many of those sick and weakened people have escaped.

I remember how they crowded around the Australian doctor who flew in with us for what help he could render

in the limited time we were there. I remember the war-battered child whose senses were gone . . . the handsome young pastor, A-Yen, who ministered to the people . . . the children swimming in the river and still managing, as only children can, to laugh though death lurked in the hills around them.

Now comes the news of the Dak Pek disaster: "All of the 3,000 civilian residents of Dak Pek . . . were reportedly killed, wounded or missing." Stan Smith, UWM's Field Chairman, writes from Danang, ". . . Evangelist A-Yen is missing." Our orphanage at Quang Ngai was hit by a rocket, with two boys wounded and Pastor Luau's son was killed.

Stan writes, "Ten miles west of Tam Ky (where we have a large church and several hundred children in an orphanage and a school) a base was recently lost . . . and just last Friday (May 17, 1974) the train was blown up for the first time in the immediate area of Crescent Beach." Stanley's next sentence is pregnant with meaning. "No word is heard over the radio of disapproval from the rest of the world either!"

Our Green Berets will remember Dak Pek for they protected the people of this village for years . . . our missionaries will remember the people for they were fellow members of the Christian community. However, inasmuch as memories are short, the headline on page 10 probably escaped most Americans.

The My Lai massacre, which had relatively few casualties, rated black headlines on page 1 and outraged multitudes of people. The Dak Pek disaster, with a casualty list of nearly 4,000 people, rated 4 column inches on page 10, received only a casual mention on newscasts and apparently outraged no one. Where now are those voices which cried out so loudly against the horror of My Lai? Have we blocked out our concerns for the suffering in Vietnam? Is there no one who will weep with me for Dak Pek?

Bullet scarred church building at Dak Pek, as it looked March 11, 1973.



Young man in the center of the picture is Evangelist A-Yen, missing since May 16, 1974.



Missionary Opportunities →

This speaks for itself!

Thursday night the Altoona paper said Ho-^{me} had been shelled by the Communists - 9 dead - 15 wounded. Rose De Loria is in Ho-^{me}. I do not know how close to the up-^{per} range the shelling took place.

VN - General

Hero of Youth in Vietnam Assails War

By GLORIA EMERSON

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Oct. 5—Trinh Cong Son, a guitarist and composer whose antiwar songs have made him a heroic figure to many young Vietnamese, expects the war to stretch on and on.

"It is for nothing and it is idiotic," he said in French during a recent visit here.

"The integrity of the Vietnamese has been destroyed by this war. It must stop."

The frail-looking 31-year-old composer, who has written 150 songs or more since 1958, lives in Hue with his mother, two brothers and five sisters. His health is poor, he does not give concerts any more and he moves about with caution because the Government considers him a draft-dodger.

After the Lunar New Year offensive in 1968, which almost destroyed Hue, Mr. Son said he felt that the worst was over and that because it had been so horrible, the future would be, if not perfect, at least more hopeful.

'The Hope Grows Fainter'

"With time the hope grows fainter," he said. "Immediate peace of any kind is so much, much better than this war, which every minute, every hour, kills more of us."

His contempt for politicians is considerable.

"Even the most intelligent of them are imbeciles," he said. "I call them inspired murderers."

His first antiwar songs, some 30 written in 1965, began to bring him fame three years ago, he related. He says he is also popular with students in Japan.

The songs, which are not known in the West, were banned by the Ministry of Information in 1968, he said, but the ban was "quietly and unofficially eased."

"Right after the ban, the Communists maintained that was in their ranks and that my songs had been written for their cause," he said. "Perhaps the Government here feared that I



The New York Times (by Bernard Weinraub)

Trinh Cong Son in a drawing by Ha Cam Tam, and on tour

would join the Communists if the ban was rigidly enforced."

He has refused three invitations by the South Vietnamese Army political warfare department to confer. He also said that in 1968 the national police asked him to write an explanation of each of his most popular antiwar songs so that the radio and television audience would be enlightened. "I said that explaining songs is not my job," he added.

Despite his popularity—which seems to be above that of any military or political figure—the composer says he is too poor to buy a good stereo so he does not have any records or tapes. Five books of his music and lyrics have been published, with sales estimated at 50,000 to 80,000. Tapes and cassettes are widely sold, but he does not get royalties.

Loss, Betrayal, Death

Some of his newest songs have a strong social theme.

"I am only an artist," he said. "I only speak of what I dream—but I do not know how to achieve the dream. This social revolution I speak of is just a way of saying something—it sounds so big. Call it a revolution with bare hands."

In the little coffee shops that come to life at night, where tapes of his songs are played, and in the nightclubs of Saigon,

which are packed on Saturday nights, it is his earlier songs—speaking of loss, of betrayal, of death—that are the favorites.

In the Queen Bee in downtown Saigon, 23-year-old Khanh Ly, who for several years has sung only Trinh Cong Son's songs, traveling with him throughout South Vietnam, sings:

I have a lover who died in the Ashau battle.

I have a lover who died, lying clumsily in a valley.

Who died beneath a bridge, feeling bitter, with no shirt on.

I have a lover who died in the Bagia.

I have a lover who just died last night, a sudden death.

With nothing to say, nurturing no hatred.

Lying dead as in a dream.

It is "Love Song of a Mad-women," written three years ago. In the Queen Bee no one claps; it is not a song to applaud.

Mail Dates for Vietnam Set

WASHINGTON, Oct. 5 (UPI)—Christmas packages weighing more than five pounds and going to Vietnam by surface mail should be mailed between Oct. 12 and Nov. 7, the Defense Department said today. Those weighing less than 5 pounds and carrying regular postage should be mailed between Oct. 19 and Nov. 21, it said. Regular air mail should be posted between Nov. 30 and Dec. 12.

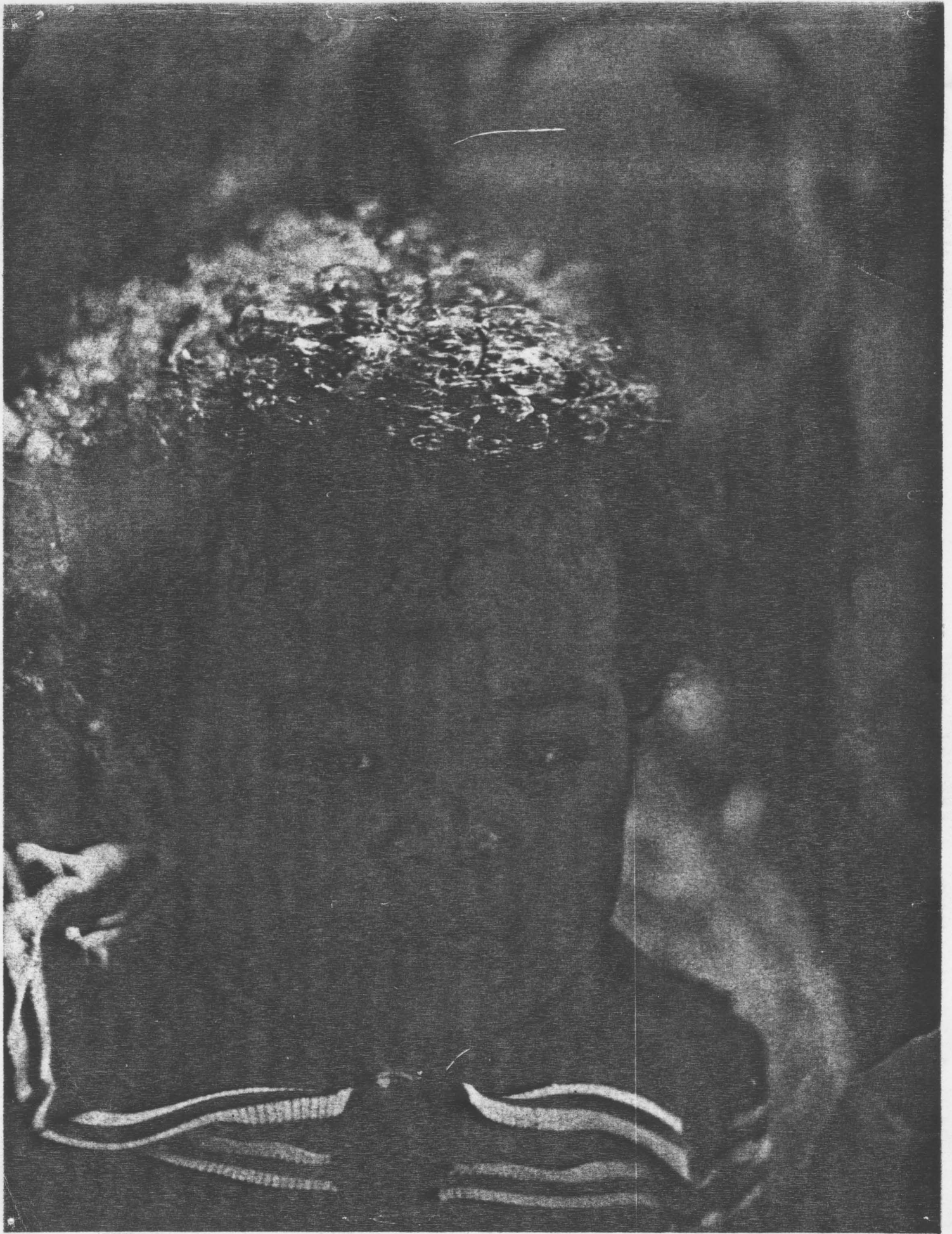
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Rosemary Taylor
mentioned

Bar girl Nguyen Thi Xuan, 24, holding 16-month-old Dung, is typical of thousands of South Vietnamese girls who pay foster homes to keep American-sired babies while they work. Xuan comes from same province where My Lai incident occurred. She knew black GI father of child was married but still hopes he will return. If not, she would rather find American sponsor to help care for boy than give him up for adoption.



Rosemary Taylor
12/1/72



Though demand for mixed babies is great, adoption is difficult

BY ERA BELL THOMPSON

"IT'S nothing personal," said the secretary over one of Saigon's three telephone systems, "but Miss Taylor won't talk with reporters. Anything in the press and we are flooded with requests we cannot fill. *There are 50 families now for each child we have for adoption.*"

Rosemary Taylor is an Australian nurse employed by a church group based in her country. She acts as the intermediary between adoptive parents and five South Vietnamese orphanages. She has a reputation for handling black-mixed children, although her secretary said that, of the 250 being processed for adoption, only 50 were half-black.

I had gone to South Vietnam to write an adoption story about the abandoned children of black GIs and Vietnamese women. I found that



Mme. Vu-Thi-Ngai, directress of well-run An Lac orphanage, takes walk with black-Vietnamese girls Thu and Thi, both three. Layman (right) holds mixed-blood Njoc Diep, about two, in Buddhist orphanage. Both girls and boy are available for adoption.





SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS *Continued*

the demand for all South Vietnamese children is far greater than the available supply. The vast majority of all American-fathered children are at home with their mothers or other members of the extended Vietnamese family and, unlike over 50 per cent of the children in orphanages who are there for temporary care, black-mixed children are usually the abandoned ones.

So this is a report on the availability of these abandoned children fathered by black GIs, their acceptance into Vietnamese society, the conditions under which they live and what our readers can do to help them.

To be available, a child must be an orphan through abandonment or desertion by both parents, or its surviving parent must be incapable of providing proper care for it and, in writ-

ing, irrevocably release the child for emigration and adoption. The black-mixed children are the most available, but are more likely to be sent to child-hungry white families in Europe (where the Vietnamese feel "there is less racial discrimination") than to families in America, black or white. U.S. visa records for total adoptions may not bear this out, but as most out-of-the-country placements are through private channels which bypass social agencies, the real emigration figures are unknown. At one orphanage I visited, four of their five half-black infants were going to white French families and one was going to a black family in America. At another, the lone black-mixed child was being adopted by a Belgian married to a French-African woman.

A couple of years ago Europeans flew 90 children out of the country without papers or official clearance. After several bad experiences with foreign group projects and private placements, the government now forbids mass emigration.

Just how many children living in South Vietnam were fathered by American servicemen—and construction workers—is anyone's guess, and guesses run as high as 200,000, but the most quoted figure is 15,000. The number of children fathered by black GIs varies from an official "less than 500" to 10,000—an estimate made by Mrs. Hosea Williams of Atlanta, who was denied permission to set up a separate half-way house to bring black-mixed children to the United States. Says a returned black soldier. "There are more black than white mixed kids over there because it was easier for a white GI to get military permission to marry his girlfriend and easier for him to bring his child home."

Lunch time (top) is popular hour at orphanages. Two black-mixed boys in foreground are supported by foster parents living in Norway, are not for adoption. Diaper line is less apparent in poorer institutions where tots wear only shirts. Pen (below) separates the disturbed and deformed from others in often crowded quarters.





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Lunch time (top) is popular hour at orphanages. Two black-mixed boys in foreground are supported by foster parents living in Norway, are not for adoption. Diaper line is less apparent in poorer institutions where tots wear only shirts. Pen (below) separates the disturbed and deformed from others in often crowded quarters.



SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS *Continued*

Under Vietnamese law, all children born of Vietnamese mothers in Vietnam are Vietnamese citizens. Officially the government does not differentiate between racially mixed and other Vietnamese children, nor does it permit the establishment of separate programs or institutions for them, as happened following the French occupation (1955 to 1963).

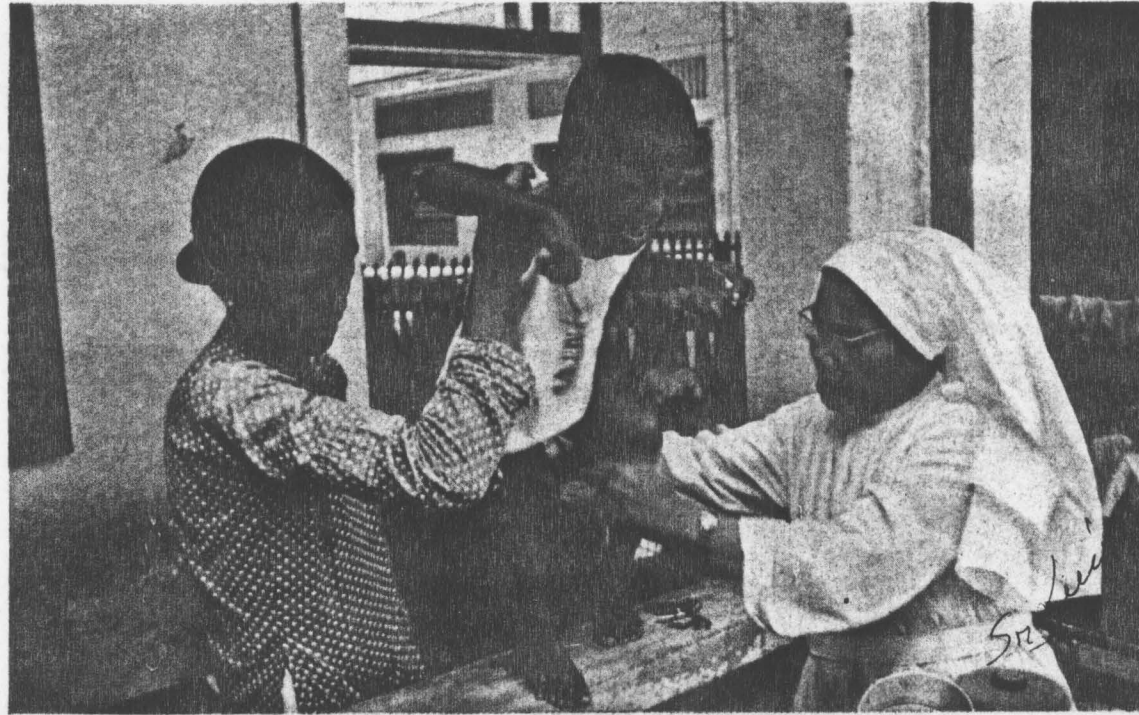
"Having suffered through 100 years of colonialization," says Dr. Tran Nguon Phieu, minister of social welfare, "we are tolerant of other races. Racial mixing makes for a more vigorous nation. The black-mixed child may suffer a little now—the white-mixed child may also suffer—but in two generations," he believes, "all will be the same."

Although less hung up on racial purity than the Japanese and Koreans, Vietnamese admit privately that their people are prejudiced against dark skin. Ladies carry parasols and wear the long-sleeved *ao dai*, a colorful long-paneled blouse worn over black silk pants, to protect them from the tanning effects of a tropical sun. A national dress, it is also worn to separate the "good girls," from the mini-skirted "bad" girls who fraternize with American soldiers.

White-mixed infants are considered beautiful and some orphanages prefer to keep them. Black-mixed infants are considered cute and sometimes are pets of institution personnel, but few Vietnamese will adopt them. It is assumed that they will be rejected when older by the society into which they were born, that when the U.S. Forces are gone, they will have no black community of their own.

Contradicting this theory, Dr. Vu Ngoc Oanh, assistant minister of social welfare, points to the "integration" of some 400 older children fathered by French African soldiers and Vietnamese women. Others use them as examples of non-acceptance.

Said the children of Paul Kpénou, an apartment building guard who heads one of six or seven black French families in South Vietnam: "It is very bad for us here. Other children don't



Crippled Thao resists nun and attendant who hold him up for picture. Now four, he came to orphanage as abandoned, newborn baby. Like most deserted black-fathered children—and the deformed—he is available for adoption. Go Vap, one of largest orphanages in Saigon, got 196 additional children when government closed a Buddhist temple; now has total of 1,460 in town and on a nearby farm.



My Le, 18-month-old baby, is pet of André Nguyen Van Vung, bachelor founder of Sancta Maria orphanage (right). Unable to care for them when black GI father of My Le returned to States, mother brought her and Vietnamese half-sisters Hong, 7, and Cuc, 9, (below) to orphanage. André is now in Paris hospital for

skirted "bad" girls who fraternize with American soldiers.

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Said the children of Paul Kpénou, an apartment building guard who heads one of six or seven black French families in South Vietnam: "It is very bad for us here. Other children don't like us because of our color, because we are poor. They call us names like 'black' and 'Indian.'" Although her mother is Vietnamese, Suzanne, 24, dates only French boys and refuses to wear the *ao dai*.

Suzanne is lucky. She has her family, a French passport and a secretarial job. After the French withdrew from the country in 1954, thousands of their mixed children were taken to France. Fewer than 20 fathered by black Frenchmen who remain, are French citizens and, therefore, are entitled to assistance from local French agencies. The other 380 or more are Vietnam Nationals because their African fathers failed to officially recognize them. For the boys it is the army for sure and perhaps a life of crime. For the girls, marriage is a problem as Vietnamese men seldom wed mixed-bloods. So they are mostly entertainers, bar girls and prostitutes. Those who can, pass for Cambodians in an effort to be more "acceptable."

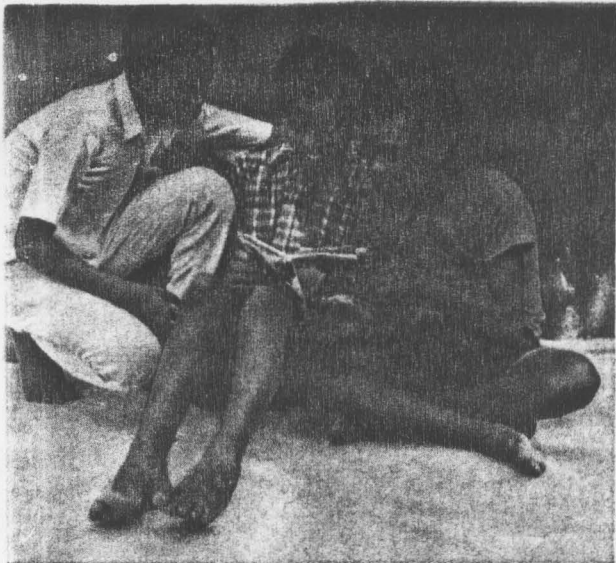
Thousands of Vietnamese peasant girls driven to the cities by war or attracted to them by the need to earn money for them-

fathered children and the children who is available for adoption. Go Vap, one of largest orphanages in Saigon, got 196 additional children when government closed a Buddhist temple; now has total of 1,460 in-town and on a nearby farm.

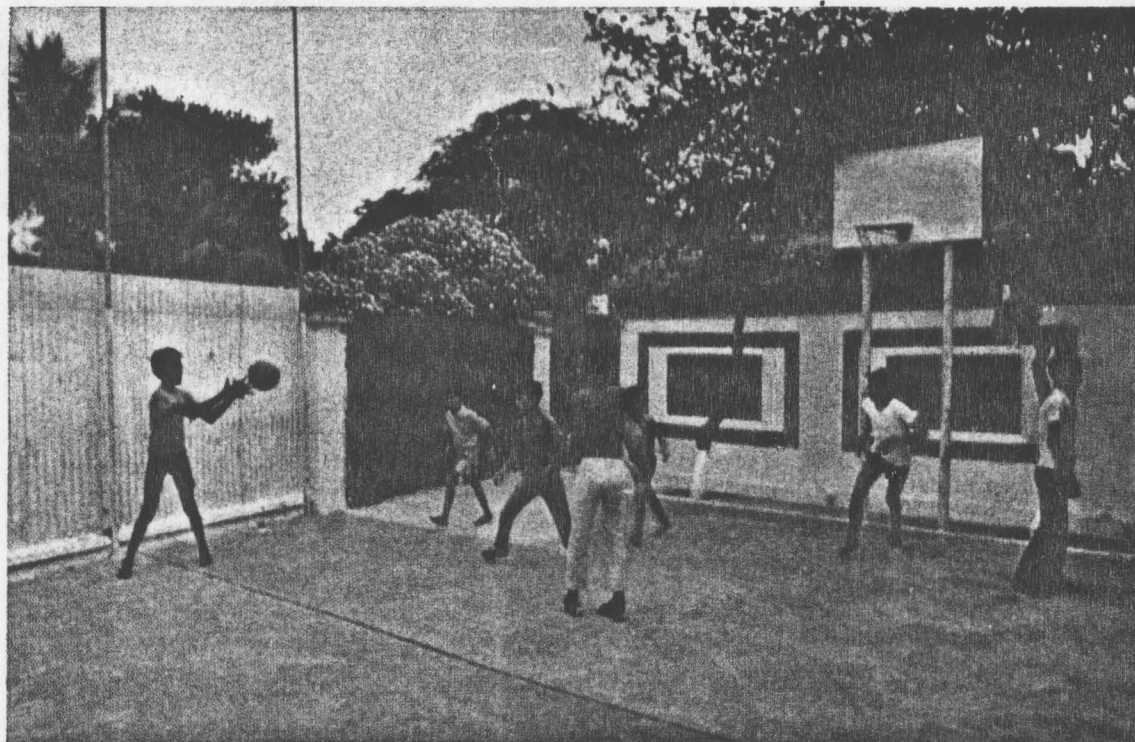


My Le, 18-month-old baby, is pet of André Nguyen Van Vung, bachelor founder of Sancta Maria orphanage (right). Unable to care for them when black GI father of My Le returned to States, mother brought her and Vietnamese half-sisters Hong, 7, and Cuc, 9, (below) to orphanage. André is now in Paris hospital for another operation for bullet wounds received during 1970 Viet Cong ambush.





French African-Vietnamese Hoang, 13, Ly, 14, Cong, 15, avidly read *Jet* at An Lac, play basketball. Boys and two mixed French African girls attend high school, are not for adoption. Mme Ngai vows girls will marry Vietnamese, not soldiers. There are about 400 such children in South Vietnam. All are teenagers and older.



SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS *Continued*

selves and their families, also become prostitutes or work as bar girls making as much as \$300 a month drinking \$2-a-glass "Saigon Tea" (colored water) bought by the Americans. This is why so many girls are able to keep and care for their mixed-blood babies, clinging to the hope that the father will return to marry them and take them to America, the land of milk and money.

The continued withdrawal of American troops will eventually reduce the earnings of these girls, but at last report, there are still plenty of GI, merchant marine and civilian customers—and no perceptible increase in the number of children in orphanages.

There are notable exceptions, but, by American standards, conditions in the average institution are deplorable. South Vietnam has endured 27 years of almost uninterrupted war. And it is poor. Only 30 per cent of the small social welfare budget goes for child services. Orphanages are mostly private and Catholic, although half a dozen are operated by Buddhists and a few by American and world organizations. The \$2 per child per month paid by the government to registered institutions is supplemented largely by public donations and help from GIs who not only supply food and clothing but perform maintenance chores and, more important, play father to children who never knew their own.



Dahomey-born Paul Kpénou, 64, Vietnamese wife Hai, 46, and six children are one of seven French African families in country. Suzanne, 24, rides Honda to job as secretary in French school. A son is in French Navy. Much decorated Paul spent 15 years in French Army. Apartment building guard, he will soon retire to France with family.



Singer Yvonne Bokassa, 19, wails at The Adam, then rushes to another club date. Below, she rides down Saigon



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In understaffed and overcrowded institutions, case histories and records are almost non-existent. Pathetically lacking in medical care, it is little wonder that the Vietnamese infant mortality rate runs as high as 90 per cent. Abandoned children brought in by police or picked up at maternity hospitals usually arrive in critical condition and institutions, even the good ones, are hard put to keep them alive while they are being processed for adoption.

Dressed only in abbreviated shirts in some cases, children play and nap on bare cement floors. Some are kept in bins that sunlight never reaches, and there are children, I was told, who are five before they can talk and have never learned to chew their food before swallowing it. In one series of ramshackle buildings, a European worker explained, "We may be dirty, but we are happy."

WHAT can our readers do to help these children?

1) Give financial support to existing voluntary agencies working in South Vietnam, rather than attempt to set up new ones.

2) Adopt the black-mixed children whose future in that country is admittedly dim.

Adds Mr. Wells C. Klein, associate director of ISS (International Social Service), urge Congress to provide adequate funds for child welfare services in South Vietnam. The government has earmarked some funds specifically for this purpose, but only for the current year.

The most comprehensive of several bills recently introduced in Congress was the Williams-Hatfield-Hughes bill S. 2497 which acknowledged the United States' responsibility to facilitate the care or adoption



Dahomey-born Paul Kpénou, 64, Vietnamese wife Hai, 46, and six children are one of seven French African families in country. Suzanne, 24, rides Honda to job as secretary in French school. A son is in French Navy. Much decorated Paul spent 15 years in French Army. Apartment building guard, he will soon retire to France with family.

Singer Yvonne Bokassa, 19, wails at The Adam, then rushes to another club date. Below, she rides down Saigon street in pedicab. Her Senegalese father was killed in war, Vietnamese mother lives in Vung Tau with Vietnamese husband and son, 16. Older full brother has been in Vietnamese Army three years.



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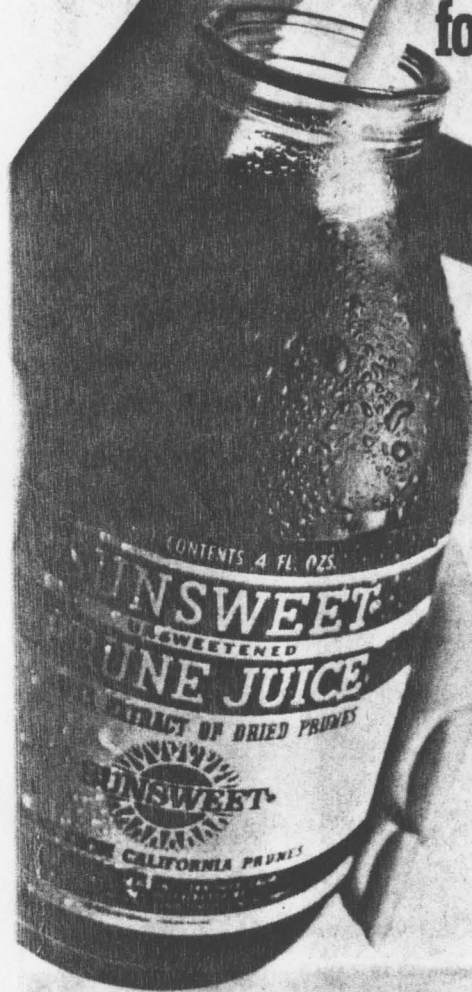
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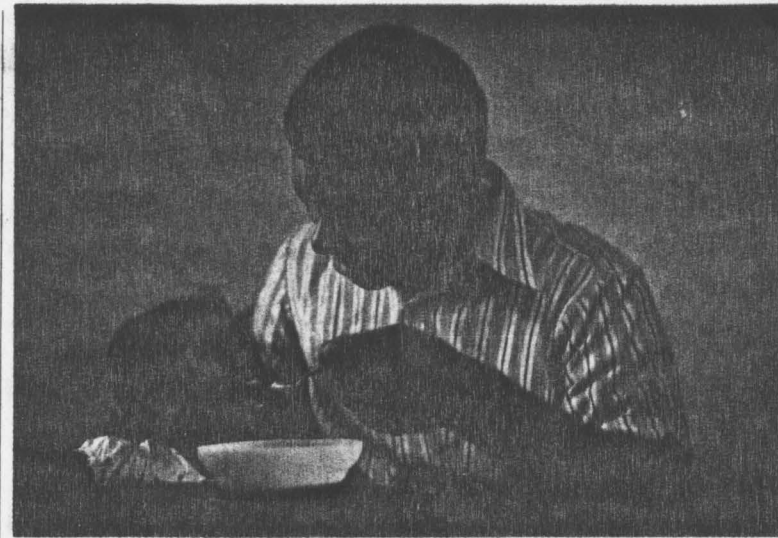
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Bachelor Simon W. Lambert, 39, Staff Sgt. at Andrews Air Base, feeds daughter Eraina, 4, at home of sister in Baltimore, Md. Lambert called President, Congress, and ISS to help bring her to States. Unsuccessful in marrying child's Vietnamese mother, Lambert took out cohabitation papers.

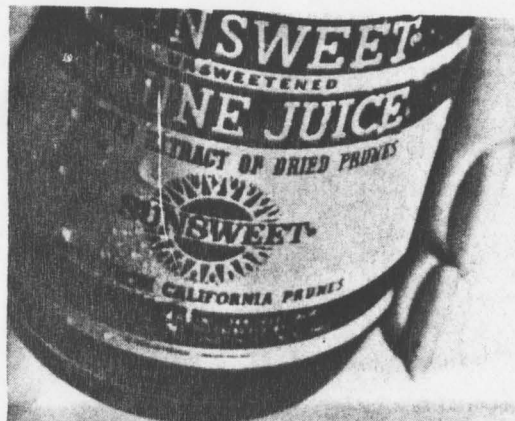


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stance, make a fruit nog by mixing one cup of chilled Sunsweet with one-quarter cup non-fat dry milk solids. Stir together, add an egg, beat until frothy and garnish with nutmeg. Delicious!

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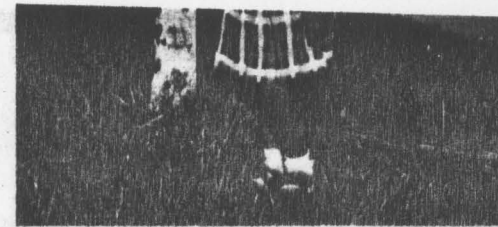
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mother, Lambert took out cohabitation papers.



Nicholas, 5, is only boy in family of Dr. David F. Ruf, 37, and wife, Jackie, 35. The Rufs have three daughters: Elizabeth, 13, Amy, 10, Margaret, 8. Since 1970, Nicholas is one of four blacks in Darlington, Wis. Other three are adopted children of white dairy farmer Jack and Jeanne Meier. Doctor's parents were upset over prospect of half-black grandson, but pleased when he arrived.

hinks ENVIY R

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look of a natural part. It
features a longer tapered
back and sides and is de-
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Can be worn on the back, or
top of your head adding full-
ness and new style to your —
own Natural.....



At bar where she works
as "Number 12," Xuan
rests before going on
duty. She and sister
Huong, 19 (below),
make daily visits to baby
Dung at foster home op-
erated by Mrs. Diem
(r.) who has 10 children
of her own. Bars since
ordered off Saigon
streets have converted
into "restaurants," bar
girls to "waitresses."



SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS Continued

SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) is now
working with ISS to facilitate the adoption of an initial 12 black-
mixed children in the care of their representative, Victor Sriniva-
san, in Saigon. ISS is seeking black Catholic families for seven
others now being processed for adoption.

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SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS *Continued*

SCLC (Southern Christian Leadership Conference) is now working with ISS to facilitate the adoption of an initial 12 black-mixed children in the care of their representative, Victor Srinivasan, in Saigon. ISS is seeking black Catholic families for seven others now being processed for adoption.

Prospective parents should be seriously and deeply committed. They should be able to pay initial and subsequent medical costs (children may have serious maladies), have the patience to sign 25 documents—and wait.

For further information on child adoption, write to International Social Service of America, 345 East 46th Street, New York City, 10017.



Adopted in Saigon by ABC-TV foreign correspondent, Jim Giggans, 31, and Italian wife Patricia, 27, Alexandra Nguyen travelled around world twice before year old. Parents believe mixed children respond best to mixed couples.

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Nhat Chi Mai orphanage near Bien Hoa and operated by Buddhist nuns has two black-mixed children: Tai, about two, a disturbed boy who is for adoption, and girl, 7 (r.) who is not. Tai's mother failed to pay for his care. Girl's mother works, gave her to woman who brought her to nuns.



SOUTH VIETNAM ORPHANS *Continued*

of these orphaned and abandoned children whose fathers are U. S. citizens but the bill was dropped.

To those interested in adoption, your chances, says Mr. Klein, are only "fair." Orphanages are not always willing to release black-mixed children and the South Vietnam government's reluctance to intercountry adoptions involves nationalism and pride. The process is long, involved and sometimes costly, but recent revisions of the old French adoption laws has stepped up the pace considerably.

Stationed in Saigon, ABC-TV correspondent Jim Giggans and his Italian wife, Patricia, were able to adopt Alexandra in only six months and at a nominal fee. On the other hand, when Sgt. Simon Lambert tried to bring home Eraina, his own daughter, he got bogged down in government red tape, held up by lawyers and the money-minded Vietnamese mother of his child to the tune of "\$6,000 or \$7,000." And he still does not have Eraina's papers.

Normally, it should take no more than a year to adopt a Vietnamese child and not over \$600, including various fees and plane fare to the West Coast. Couples should have been married ten years or more, one must be at least 30 and they should have no natural children. Such requirements, however, can be waived by

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GIs from Tan Son Nhut Air Force base entertain children at Xom Chieu orphanage with magic show. Organized as Afro American Cultural Association, GIs take bus load of soldiers and civilians to poor orphanage twice a month. They give food, money, even diapers, to Mother Superior, also make repairs and give parties for kids.

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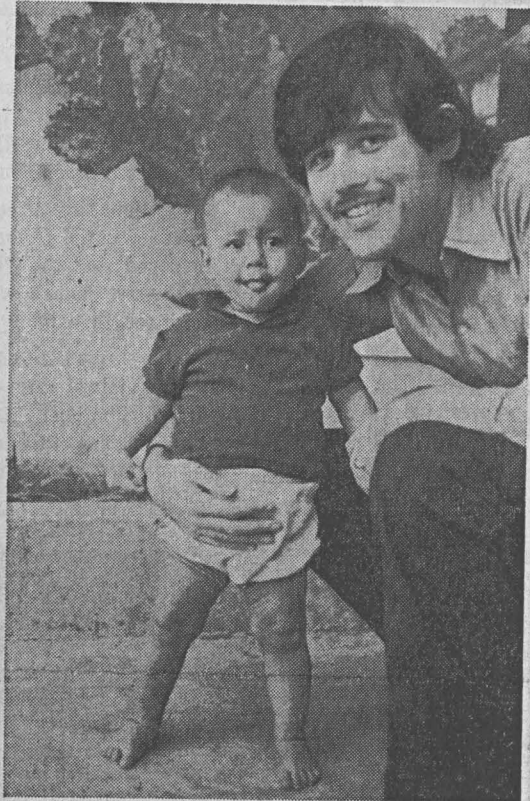


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VIETNAM ORPHAN BENEFACTOR AND FRIEND
Steve Johnson With Ky

Love Works Best When It's Given, Mother Believes

By Katherine Karras
Correspondent

RIVER FALLS — Wis. — "Love is something that has to be given away," Mrs. Ronald Johnson says. She thought this when she and her husband organized a chapter of Friends of Children of Vietnam (FCV) in River Falls last September.

"I had received letters from a classmate in Geneseo, Ill., telling me of the appalling death rates of the thousands of orphans in Vietnam," said Mrs. Johnson. "We contacted the president of FCV in Geneseo — Mrs. Sherri Clark. I could hardly believe conditions were so bad there until I saw the slides taken in the orphanages.



MRS. JOHNSON

was stationed in Vietnam. Children have been abandoned. Some have even been found alive among the garbage in trash cans. Others have been left at overcrowded orphanages where the mortality rate often runs as high as 80 per cent."

One highlight of this work

lieve conditions were so bad there until I saw the slides taken in the orphanages.

"I RAN UP a big telephone bill calling Mrs. Clark until I found out why food and funds were necessary to save the little ones." Mrs. Johnson traveled to Illinois to visit Mrs. Clark and see the three children who had been adopted by the Clarks.

"This wonderful couple had four children of their own but they found room in their hearts to give their love and care to three more," she said. Mrs. Johnson returned home and began holding coffee parties to get people interested in donating food, clothing, and money for the orphans.

"We had a garage sale and cleared \$370," she said. "About 20 people joined our chapter, and many people in the area became interested and helpful."

In November the Ministerial Association donated its Thanksgiving collection from the churches. Mrs. Johnson said that more than 1,000 pounds of dried mild, dried cereal, baby diapers and clothing were shipped.

"We sent \$1,400 to Vietnam," she said. "No money is needed for administrative costs. This is a non-profit organization and all the work is done by volunteers."

MRS. JOHNSON has shown slides and given talks in Wilson, Hammond, and Ellsworth. "FCV was organized by a group of doctors in Denver," she explained. "In 1967 they had returned from giving at least two months service in civilian hospitals in Vietnam. They organized the Friends of Children of Vietnam because they wanted to help American parents adopt Vietnamese children.

"Many of the children are 'Amerasian,'" said Mrs. Johnson. "The father is an American who

SCHOOL GETS GRANT

EAU CLAIRE, Wis. — District One Technical Institute-Eau Claire has been awarded a \$550 grant from the Wisconsin Arts Board, Madison. The grant money is to be used to help develop and encourage the dramatic arts at the Technical Institute during the 1973-74 school year.

overcrowded orphanages where the mortality rate often runs as high as 80 per cent."

One highlight of this work has brought new friends into the Johnson's lives from half way around the world. "We learned that an American working in Saigon travels 400 miles by plane twice a month to St. Paul's orphanage in Qui Nhon to deliver supplies sent by FCV," said Mrs. Johnson. "His name is Steven Johnson (no relation) and out of an exchange of letters and pictures has come 'Ky' the 18-month-old son we are adopting."

SHE SAID THAT Steven wanted to adopt the little fellow himself, but the orphanage does not allow single persons to take a child. "Our three daughters Kim, 9, Jane, 7, and Christie, 6, have been wild with anticipation waiting for their little brother," said Mrs. Johnson.

Prospective parents may contact Mrs. Johnson at 203 North Lewis, River Falls. To become a foster parent send a \$10 donation a month to FCV. "The foster-parent plan is working," she said. "They receive a picture of their child and there are letters telling of his progress. It is truly a gift of love to support one of these tragic orphans. Some have been mutilated by war. Others have been abandoned."

"She added that an Amerasian child has no civil rights in Vietnam. "He is ostracized by the Vietnamese people. There are about 30,000 little ones waiting to be welcomed into American homes."

On Feb. 28 at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls in the gymnasium, a basketball game will be played between members of station KDWB and university faculty members. Proceeds will be given to Friends of Children of Vietnam.

Mrs. Johnson said her husband, co-owner of a men's clothing store in River Falls, warned his wife as she became more and more enthusiastic about the chapter's work "to not take on any more work than she could handle." She said that she has an answer for that. "I have never been busier and I have never been happier. That is the way love works. You have to give it away."