

First Canadian stopover for refugees

Scores of Indochinese men, women and children are now arriving weekly from Southeast Asia and spending their first days on Canadian soil at staging areas in Edmonton or Montreal.

Co-operative reception

Once they have arrived at Longue Pointe in Montreal or Griesback Barracks in Edmonton, the refugees become the responsibility of a corps of immigration officials, medical experts, military personnel, customs and agricultural officers, interpreters and volunteer agency representatives.

The centre at Longue Pointe is open 16 hours a day, from 8 a.m. to midnight, seven days a week. Three teams of nine Department of Employment and Immigration staff take care of immigration documentation for the refugees, with ten to 30 interpreters available to help as needed. Doctors from National Defence and National Health and Welfare conduct the medical examinations. The same facilities are available in Edmonton.

The 22 people at Griesbach Barracks are divided into teams who work on the basis of an eight-hour day. On days when the planes come in, however, they can work as long as 24 hours.

Full schedules for all

Humanity and efficiency are the watchwords of those preparing the refugees for the journey to their final destinations in Canada.

On arrival at Longue Pointe or Gries-



Touchdown — and first steps in a new country.

bach, the incoming refugees are ushered into reception areas and given a welcome to Canada and an introduction to their staging area where they will stay for the next two to five days. As this is taking place, a light meal is prepared and rooms are assigned. The new arrivals are ten to a room in Longue Pointe. At Griesbach refugees are allotted one room a family.

After a brief customs, medical and agriculture check, the refugees usually rest overnight before undergoing more time-consuming immigration procedures and, if necessary, receiving medical treatment.

In the days that follow, families move

in and out of the various offices. At Canadian Immigration Centres, they are first given the status of permanent residents in Canada.

Preparation for life in Canada

When all immigration and other clearance procedures have been carried out, the refugees are given some basic information about the Canadian way of life and general explanations of such things as Canada's monetary system, provincial health insurance plans, the labour market and social insurance system, and the services available to them through the Government.

They also receive a small kit containing a map of the country and basic information on credit systems, housing, volunteer organizations, etc. They are also provided with a daily allowance to meet small expenses.

The small store set up at the Longue Pointe military base provides each individual with such things as underwear, two pair of socks, trousers and a sweater. The steadiest clothing demand seems to be for children under the age of three.

Hamburgers and rice

Except for their large consumption of rice and general disinterest in breakfast cereal, the Indochinese generally follow western eating habits. Hamburgers and hot dogs are big favourites and usually disappear quickly.

The popularity of these North American staples is second only to apples. Accustomed to paying \$2 an apple in Southeast Asia, the refugees take advantage of this Canadian delicacy.

Travel not finished

During the refugees' brief stay at the staging area, immigration officials are kept busy clearing up a number of details, including arranging transportation to final destinations and notifying the Canada Immigration Centre in the destination community as to their arrival. The centre will then contact sponsoring groups or other relevant local organizations who will meet the family on arrival and help them integrate into the community.

The refugees receive more detailed counselling from local immigration centres, sponsorship groups, and immigrant aid organizations after they have reached their new homes.

(From Panorama, October 1979.)

Indochinese refugee statistics — sponsorship program

Sponsorships as of November 2, 1979	Sponsors	Persons Sponsored
<i>Provincial distribution</i>	4,165	22,706
British Columbia	550	3,022
Alberta	396	2,287
Saskatchewan	187	1,084
Manitoba	310	1,569
Ontario	2,061	11,356
Quebec (as of October 26)	499	2,528
Nova Scotia	54	275
New Brunswick	58	335
Prince Edward Island	15	87
Newfoundland	25	131
Yukon	7	13
Northwestern Territories	3	19
TOTAL	4,165	22,706