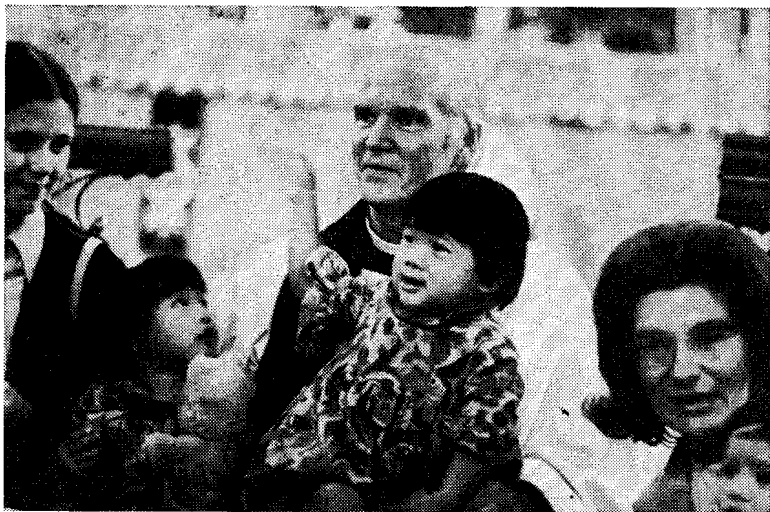


THE VICAR WITH



"Let's not be put off by the millions, let's try and rescue one."

THIS was the seed thought that brought Project Vietnam Orphans into being.

One evening a group of men were at our Vicarage discussing some aspect of Christian responsibility.

During the meeting my wife had been watching a B.B.C. film about refugees in Vietnam, and when I went into the kitchen to get some coffee for the men, she told me what she had seen. She said: "Couldn't we do something for the children? They looked so utterly lost."

I took the coffee in to the men and told them what she had said. One man said: "But there are millions of refugees all over the world—millions of children in need. We couldn't do anything."

Then someone said: "Let's not be put off by the millions, Let's try and rescue one."

I put a note in the next month's parish magazine asking people to pray that if this idea was of God, we should go forward, but if it was just a human bright idea, it should come to nothing.

The local newspaper picked it up, and then the national Press.

We wrote to the big organizations asking for advice, and in general their advice was "Don't try—it's not a job for amateurs."

And we were a bunch of complete

By the
 Rev. PATRICK ASHE
 Vicar of St. Mary's, Leamington Spa

amateurs, knowing nothing of the complexities of such an undertaking. So we prayed, and tried to take every step, and make every decision, prayerfully.

Step by step we picked our way through the tangle. Wallace Haines, of International Christian Leadership, went to Saigon, and advised us to send out two nurses to help in the desperate need of orphans and abandoned children in Vietnam.

So the Project developed a two-pronged objective—to help abandoned children in Vietnam; and to bring some children to Britain to be adopted into Christian homes.

Offers of homes poured in, funds to make the work possible, and two Christian nurses volunteered to go out for two years.

In February, 1968, I went out to arrange where they should live and work.

I ARRIVED at Saigon Airport with travellers' cheques, but no Vietnamese money,

22 CHILDREN



One man and his wife launched



PROJECT VIETNAM ORPHANS



MAI LILU was found abandoned at Da Nang

She is now with the Rev. and Mrs Roy Clarke of Stockton Rectory, near Rugby.

—and here is his own story . . .

and found there was nowhere I could change the cheques. I was in a military zone—no buses, no taxis.

I did not know what to do, so I stood on the kerb and prayed: *Lord what shall I do?*

No voice answered me from heaven, so I waited.

After about five minutes, I saw a young man going across to the only car on the car park. He turned and saw me, hesitated, and then came straight across to me. He said, *Qu'est qu'il y a?*

I explained my predicament, and he said, "Come with me"—so I went. I thought he was a taxi-driver.

He took me into the town, to a convent I wanted to visit, to the bank where I changed £15, to a hotel where he arranged for me to stay.

I imagined the bill getting larger and larger—I even wondered if I had changed enough money! I said, "How much do I owe you?" He said, "Owe me?—Nothing! I do this for God."

He came every day and took me round to the places I had to visit. He introduced me to many influential Vietnamese. His wife was the niece of the Archbishop. In a few days I had met more Vietnamese people than I would have met in months but for God's answer to my prayer.

I found in one orphanage three babies in each cot. Too few women struggling to keep alive too many babies, brought in too late. They were abandoned because they were sick, or could not be fed, or the mother already had more children than she could cope with. They were brought in with skin diseases, polio, T.B.

In some places I was told that the mortality rate was over 80%. The bottle was just propped in the baby's mouth; if it slipped, the milk poured out on to the floor.

Those who survived sat listlessly in the corridor rocking to and fro. They did not cry, or crawl, or play. Above everything else they needed love—people who could spend time on them and make them feel wanted.

The task was so vast it appalled me. We could only touch a tiny bit of the problem, but this we were determined to do.

Soon after I returned to England, the two



SARAH JANE is being cared for by Mr and Mrs Clarence Hendrickse of St. John's College, Nottingham.

nurses went out. They helped in various places where there was need, and then their activities centred at the Hoi Duc-Anh Orphanage, where we are trying to improve conditions in which the children live, and to give them a start in the battle of life in their own country.

Since 1968 to date 22 children, including 14 babies, have been brought to England, and it is certain that most of them would not be alive today if they had not been rescued.

THE STORY of Project Vietnam Orphans is a series of miracles and answers to prayer.

We needed someone to bring back the first child who had been adopted by a family in Manchester. We prayed for an escort. One day a schoolmaster, Tony Bathurst, rang up and came to see me. He told me he intended to hitch-hike to Saigon in the summer holidays and would help in any way he could.

I was doubtful if he would succeed, but soon he came back with an offer of a free flight by Mr Gilbert Brown of the Far East Travel Centre. Mr Brown not only gave him a free flight to and from Bangkok, but paid his return fare to Saigon and brought the child back free.

Since then the Far East Travel Centre have been most generous in their gifts of free flights, and have made it possible for us to extend the work. We look upon this as a sign of God's good hand upon the Project.

IN SEPTEMBER of last year, we ran low in funds. It has been costing £500 a month to maintain the four workers now in Saigon, and to cover legal and transport costs. We had £581 in the bank.

We met to pray—not that we should get more money, but to ask whether it was the will of our Lord Jesus that we should wind up the Project, or whether we were to make any changes.

We decided to ask the Ockenden Venture to co-operate, and take over the educational work which had developed.

Within a few days the Vietnamese piastre was devalued. From getting 260p to the pound, we got 680p. Our money nearly trebled without getting any more in.

Without any appeals the money has come. We have never seen more than four months ahead, but we have never run out of funds.

The kindness, sympathy and goodwill in this country is enormous, and we have had over 3,000 offers of homes. We have tried to put children into families who will really be able to explain to their child what it means to become a Child of God.

Children who have come from such a totally deprived background, where they



A legacy of war.

have lost everything, race, family, culture, language, need more than a good home.

We believe they need to discover Jesus as a living reality, as He only can give them total security.

WE NOW have recruited two nurses and two nursery nurses, and the Ockenden Venture have taken over the teaching programme. They are planning a training course which will equip Vietnamese girls in child care.

There is also a "Sponsor Scheme", through which people in England can support a child in the orphanage. They are given a photograph and details of the child so that they can keep him in constant prayer, and help to improve the conditions in which he lives by giving £1 a week.

So often the presence of evil, war, and cruelty are looked on as proof that there cannot be a God of Love. But when the way of Jesus is applied, one can see His redemption at work.

It is little enough that has been achieved, but we know that without Him we could have done nothing.

Patricia Ashe.