ing medicine and medical personnel and classrooms are useless without teachers. We found that such situations were prevalent in several of the sites we visited.

**CONDITIONS AT REFUGEE SITES**

"1. GAO visited 38 representative sites in the 4 Military Regions in Vietnam.

"2. GAO states that 'on the basis of criteria established by GVN, many refugee sites needed facilities such as housing, classrooms, wells, medical facilities, medical services, and sanitation facilities. The most serious problem found at most of the sites visited was the lack of opportunity for self-support and/or economic potential.'

"3. 'No where in Vietnam are the problems of assisting refugees noticeable than in Military Region 1 that comprises the 5 northernmost provinces in Vietnam.'

"a. A March 1971 CORDS survey reported an unemployment rate of 40%, little education and medical services, and insufficient security.

"b. According to GAO, over 90% of the 252 sites covered by the CORD Survey were officially 'listed as being normalized, when, in fact, the survey showed that they did not meet GVN criteria.'

"c. GAO states that 450,000 refugees lived in the 252 sites surveyed. No one was being responsive to the needs of the refugees in these sites, 'although the sites were in existence about 4 years.'

**ASSISTANCE TO OTHER WAR VICTIMS**

"1. In addition to refugees and civilian war casualties, there are war widows, orphans, the physically disabled, and war compensation claimants. In 1970 the GAO reported that 'relatively low priority' was being attached to the problems of war widows et al. The GAO now reports that there has been 'no change' in this priority—that only a pittance is being spent to meet the needs of these war victims, and that their numbers are rapidly on the increase.

"2. The following statistical summary of other war victims is based on official GVN estimates as of September 1971. CORDS officials say these estimates are 'of questionable validity'. For example, the official U.S. estimates on the number of orphans runs over 700,000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>War victims</th>
<th>Civilian</th>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>War widows</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>75,800</td>
<td>144,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphans</td>
<td>127,000</td>
<td>393,300</td>
<td>520,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically disabled</td>
<td>56,000</td>
<td>113,000</td>
<td>169,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>War compensation claimants</td>
<td>241,000</td>
<td>432,000</td>
<td>673,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>549,000</td>
<td>432,000</td>
<td>981,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"3. The miniscule efforts being made to assist the physically disabled illustrates the low priority attached to the needs of ‘other war victims.’

"a. Statistical summary of assistance to the physically disabled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total registered</th>
<th>Total assisted</th>
<th>Cumulative backlog</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>1,070,000</td>
<td>860,000</td>
<td>170,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>239,900</td>
<td>290,600</td>
<td>169,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>198,100</td>
<td>131,300</td>
<td>236,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971 (September)</td>
<td>159,578</td>
<td>124,627</td>
<td>241,451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"b. Current plans call for the production of some 10,000 prosthetic devices annually. At this rate—which is not being met—it would be 9 years before all of the now-existing 88,020 amputees could receive a device. The problem is more serious, however, because a large number of devices must be replaced or repaired periodically. An adult requires a replacement every 2 years, a child requires a replacement every 6 months."
4. The grim situation is also illustrated by assistance to war compensation claimants.

a. GAO reports that backlog has increased on a yearly basis—from 160,000 in 1969 to 241,451 in 1971.

b. The slow response in responding to war compensation claimants is typical of what happened to some in Quang Nam province. GAO reports that in September 1971 war victims in Quang Nam province received some 0.328 of the 7,900 required sheets of tin. Some of these war victims were generated in 1969.

5. Since 1962 there has been a major population shift to urban areas because of the war. War victims who seek refuge in urban areas, however, are not recognized as refugees.

6. To relieve the vast overcrowding of urban areas, the GVN, among other things, established in March 1971 a Directorate General of Land Development and Hamlet Building to encourage the development of virgin land. GAO reports that the program is still in the formulation stages and no land has been distributed.

7. In the area of vocational training, for which there are hundreds of thousands of ‘prime candidates,’ accomplishments have not been significant.

8. According to CORDS the war fragmented the traditional Vietnamese family and community social structure. Mass movements of people have generated new social and economic problems and have aggravated existing ones. The community center program seeks to resolve some of these problems. Similar programs have been implemented successfully in other Asian countries and to some extent in Vietnam.

a. With U.S. counterpart funds, as of November 1971, a total of 17 community centers had been constructed throughout Vietnam and an additional 23 centers were under construction.

b. Now that facilities have been constructed throughout the country, they are not being utilized. A large unused center in DaNang was being turned into a regional referral center for vocational rehabilitation of disabled persons, and the center in Nha Trang was being used for GVN offices.

U.S. FOOD AND OTHER COMMODITY SUPPORT

1. Out of some $75,200,000 of P.L. 480 title II commodities programmed from the fiscal year 1969 through fiscal year 1971, only $42,900,000 were actually shipped. Fiscal year 1972 support is expected to be about $5,000,000.

2. Department of State auditors and AID auditors found cases where the food had been (1) used to feed farm animals or exchanged for traditional diet items, (2) held in storage for excessive periods allowing it to become unfit for human consumption, and (3) not always issued on the basis of need.

3. GAO reports that a high percentage of food is wasted in transit or storage.

4. Commodities are frequently held in storage for excessive periods causing a high rate of condemnation loss.

a. In May and June 1971, 10 percent of the inventories were identified as being unsuitable for human consumption.

b. Between April 20, 1971 and September 22, 1971 commodities valued at about $3.3 million had been disposed of due to condemnation.

5. Pilferage of commodities in transit is also a problem. In Region 2, advisors told us of instances where cases had been received with cans filled with sea water or rocks which had apparently been substituted for cans of cooking oil.

6. Often Public Law 480 items are given and distributed without regard to the need of the individuals. In September 1971, after the presidential election campaign began, the Phu Yen province warehouse doors were opened and commodities were given to anyone who wanted them. Authorized versus actual issues of commodities in September 1971 were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commodity</th>
<th>Authorized</th>
<th>Actual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bulgar wheat (bags)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>697</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking oil (cases)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>4,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn, sorghum, and milk (bags)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>9,238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rolled oats (bags)</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>589</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Other AID commodities were found to be stored in warehouses for excessive periods.

a. In Dac Nha province, for example, aluminum roofing sheets, tarpaulins, cloth, and farming tools were on hand for 2 to 4 years. The tarps were 'rotten' from dampness.

b. In Phu Yen province, GAO observed shop tools, such as anvils and saws, that had been in storage for up to seven years. Most of the tools, according to GAO, were not the type traditionally used by the Vietnamese and probably would never be used.

OTHER RESOURCES APPLIED IN SUPPORT OF WAR VICTIMS PROGRAMS

1. U.S. advisory personnel authorized for war victims programs have been reduced from 116 positions in January 1969 to 62 positions in September 1971—a reduction of nearly 47 percent. Further reductions are to be made to 36 positions in June 1972 and to 10 positions 2 years later. Thereafter it is expected that only minimal advisory assistance will be required. Personnel shortages continue to exist. As of September 1971 only 71 percent of the authorized positions were filled.

2. The lack of GVN manpower and expertise is becoming increasingly more apparent. GAO reports that 'there has not been an increase in GVN Ministry of Social Welfare personnel to offset the decline in the U.S. personnel. . . . The Ministry's staffing decreased from 2,203 in October 1970 to 1,944 in October 1971. . . . There is also an imbalance in the distribution of assigned staff.' GAO reports that, on a per capita basis, those areas with the highest number of war victims are assigned the least personnel.

a. The case load per assigned staff member varies from 68.3 in Military Region 8 to 1,944.7 in Military Region 4.

b. Ten of the 44 provinces and four autonomous cities handle about 56 percent of the total refugee and other war victims case load and use about 18 percent of the staff. Conversely, 17 provinces handling less than 1 percent of the case load have 84 percent of the staff. For example, the case load in Chuong Thien province quadrupled during 1971 because of military activity in the U Minh Forest. The province's 16 man staff handled an average case load of $1,000 refugees a month. During the same period a nearby province, An Giang, had a staff of 30 but did not have a single active case.

3. The GVN refugee and social welfare programs reportedly received, from all sources, financial assistance totaling about $72.4 million and $65.6 million in fiscal years 1969 and 1970 respectively. The fiscal year 1971 estimate is $50.4 million, down about 21 percent. The U.S. contribution decreased from 85 percent in fiscal year 1969 to 69 percent in fiscal year 1971, whereas GVN contributions increased from 0 percent to 18 percent during the same period.

4. Direct U.S. dollar assistance budgeted for refugee and social welfare programs decreased from $16,400,000 in fiscal year 1969 to $6,282,000 in fiscal year 1971. The amount actually obligated decreased from $10,075,000 in fiscal year 1969 to $3,791,000 in fiscal year 1971. During this period, less than 60% of budget funds were expended. An estimated $2,300,000 will be provided in fiscal year 1972.

5. The slow release of funds for the relief of war victims by the Ministry of Social Welfare continues to be a major problem.

a. During the first 8 months of 1971, only 36% of budgeted funds were expended.

b. A breakdown for the various categories follows:

For temporary refugee relief, 29%.
For war victims relief, 42%.
For resettlement and return to village, 35%.
For social welfare, 24%.

6. Voluntary agencies and countries other than the United States are potential sources of financial and technical support available to GVN, but little effort has been made by the Ministry of Social Welfare to increase assistance from these sources. As the American involvement declines, we believe that it is increasingly important that alternate sources of support are identified and used extensively by the Ministry if social welfare programs are to be sustained and developed further.
Appendix IV:

SELECTED PRESS REPORTS ON CURRENT REFUGEE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

[From the New York Times, Apr. 8, 1972]

100,000 FLEE BEFORE THE INVADING TROOPS AND CROWD INTO ENDANGERED CITIES

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

HUE, SOUTH VIETNAM, April 7.—More than 100,000 people have been driven from their homes in the frontier province of Quangtri since the North Vietnamese opened their offensive there nine days ago.

Most fled from the region immediately below the demilitarized zone after the North Vietnamese began pounding it with rockets and artillery shells. For four days the shelling continued and then the enemy moved in with troops and tanks.

Perhaps as many as 70,000 refugees have made their way down Route 1 to this old royal city, the capital of neighboring Thuathien Province. They poured South in the greatest numbers earlier this week during a lull in the fighting. But busesloads were still arriving this afternoon and many continued to enter the city on foot.

CROWDED ENCAMPMENTS

The churchyards, schools and parks are jammed with frightened and bewildered strangers who, after staking out a few square yards as a family plot, find little to do.

Many spend hours staring into space. Others busy themselves boiling and re-boiling pots of rice.

Le Thi Luu, a 39-year-old mother of three from Quangtri, was doing that this afternoon in the grounds of a school. Like many who lived near the demilitarized zone, Mrs. Luu had been driven out of another village a few years earlier. Some who have had to flee several times as the fighting pressed closer often do not know whom to curse — the North Vietnamese, the South Vietnamese or the Americans.

When the shelling from the North began on Sunday, Mrs. Luu was preparing lunch after having returned from church. She recalls that she passed only to grab her purse.

On the muddy grounds of another school, Nguyen An, a 39-year-old disabled veteran, knelt beside an exhausted and starving sow. Twice a year for eight years the sow had produced a litter of 9 to 12 pigs, which Mr. An sold for money that helped him build the neat cement house he had abandoned.

Tenderly Mr. An poured watery milk into the sow’s mouth—the first food it had had in a week. Then he fed it bread soaked in milk. Slowly the animal raised itself, haltingly found its legs, grunted, snorted and set to rooting in the mud.

Since the refugees began arriving, Boy Scouts, students and others have been bringing their food. Students at Hue’s elementary and high schools have given thousands of loaves daily, and religious groups elsewhere have sent several tons of rice.

A group of South Vietnamese and American officials visited several of the refugee camps here and in Quangtri city yesterday. The leader, Dr. Phan Quang Dan, who is in charge of helping the new refugees, brought the first major contribution from the Saigon Government — nearly $50,000 in plaster to be used for buying rice.

In Quangtri city, 36 miles north of here, Dr. Dan and his party found that most of the permanent residents had fled. The city, believed to be a principal objective of the North Vietnamese, was shaken by exploding bombs and shells.

The refugees huddled together in the churches and schools appeared more unkept than those here. Many have not gone South because they are not up
to the long walk and they cannot afford the prices being charged by the few daring truck and bus drivers who are still making the trip to Hue.

An American official said the trip now costs nearly $50 a person. A few days ago Mr. An paid roughly $10 in piasters for him and his seven children and $8 more for the sow.

Dr. Dan said he would say to it that as many as wanted could ride to Hue free in military trucks beginning tomorrow—provided, of course, the trucks were not needed by soldiers.

He also intends to offer the refugees in Hue the opportunity of free transport to resettlement sites north and east of Saigon.

[From the New York Times, Apr. 30, 1972]

THOUSANDS FLEEING DOWN HIGHWAY 1 FROM QUANGTRI

(By Sidney H. Schanberg)

MYCHANH, SOUTH VIETNAM, April 28.—Thousands of South Vietnamese refugees—and some government soldiers—fled south today in confusion and fear as the North Vietnamese invading force drove deeper into the northern region.

"Things went pretty bad today," said one American adviser, smiling ruefully.

Things were more than pretty bad for the people of the region. The section of Highway 1 between Quangtri, which came under heavy shelling today, and Hue, nearly 40 miles to the southwest, was choked with refugees trying to get away from the enemy onslaught.

But the road itself was not safe.

Enemy tank and infantry columns have moved even south of Quangtri on both sides of Highway 1, trying to cut the road. Refugees were fleeing from as far south as this Village of Mychanh, 10 miles below Quangtri. And as they moved out onto Highway 1, heading south for Hue, several were killed and wounded by enemy small-arms and machine-gun fire.

MANY REFUGEES KILLED

Over a hill to the north, clouds of smoke rose as enemy artillery fire pounded in, and refugees coming from that direction said that many other refugees had been killed by the explosions.

Long government convoys carrying ammunition and troop reinforcements were bogged down not only by the enemy fire but by the swarms of refugees filling the road. Though frightened, the peasants were not panicly but rather stoic and pragmatic. Many of them had been through it all before, some only a few weeks ago when they fled their homes in the first Communist offensive and later returned, mistakenly believing it was safe again.

"We tried to get away from the shells coming down on Quangtri," said a woman who was fleeing with her two children for the second time. "But the shells were landing everywhere and we had to leave the city."

Many refugees reported seeing North Vietnamese troops and tanks within a few miles of Quangtri, and military officers said that except for the tenuous highway link to Hue, Quangtri was surrounded, with only about three to four miles of breathing space around the city in Government hands.

A SILENT RIVER

The river of refugees stretched unbroken in some places for three miles or more. Silhouetted against a darkening and drizzly sky, they plodded south with their sacks and babies and animals. Piglets squealed, Chickens clucked. The people were silent.

The fortunate ones rode—on tractors, cars, trucks, buses, motorcycles and bicycles. The road just south of Quangtri was under the heaviest enemy fire, and the Government, which was sending trucks up from Hue to help the refugees evacuate, would not send the vehicles that far. So most of the refugees had to negotiate that dangerous stretch on foot.

When they reached safer ground, about 12 or 13 miles south of Quangtri, the government vehicles took some of them the rest of the way, but there were too many refugees for the trucks and most had to continue walking.
Some were so exhausted from carrying their belongings on bamboo poles slung across their shoulders that they simply abandoned their possessions in the middle of the road and walked on empty-handed.

Sometimes a small private bus meant for 15 or 20 people would come along from Hue. A hundred refugees would swarm into it, threatening to burst out of the interior and hanging onto the roof and sides as well.

And sometimes South Vietnamese soldiers fleeing from the front would push civilians off and take the places for themselves.

Several hundred soldiers were seen retreating haphazardly down Highway 1. Military officials in Hue, however, said they know of no major units that had collapsed or deserted on the battlefield, and they said they thought the desertion problem was not serious.

At one point on the road, three soldiers who had fled from overrun Dongha, a town north of Quangtri that was attacked by tanks and infantry yesterday afternoon and fell early this morning, said they were heading for Hue to get out of the fighting. Asked why they did not stop at Quangtri as they retreated, in order to help defend that city, one of them said: "We have already fought hard. Quangtri is not safe for us."

Two members of the Popular Forces, a kind of home guard, frankly admitted their fright as they clambered onto a small bus for Hue.

"We are scared of the shelling," one said. "Let the regular troops do the fighting."

Parts of some Government resupply convoys led by tanks reportedly got through to Quangtri from Hue late today, and two companies of infantry reinforcements from a nearby fire base also got through. But because of the enemy fire from both sides of the road, the bulk of the reinforcement column of trucks carrying ammunition and troops bogged down in long lines along the highway.

Almost all leaving city

American and South Vietnamese helicopters that flew along the highway on reconnaissance missions were shot at regularly today by small arms and machine guns, and some were reported to have been hit though not downed.

American advisers who flew over Quangtri in helicopters reported that almost all the inhabitants of the provincial capital, which once held 50,000 people, were packing up in great confusion and rushing out of the city.

Their haste seemed justified. Yesterday, a traveler from Hue was able to drive up Highway 1 with relative safety to within five miles of Quangtri. Today, the point of danger was 10 miles south of the city.

The French, who lost many soldiers on this highway two decades ago in their fighting to keep it open against the Communists, named the road "La Rue Sans Joie"—the Street Without Joy. It is earning that name again.

[From the Washington Post, May 2, 1972]

Refugees by Thousands Flee to South in Panic

Near Hue 5,000 refugees from the Communist advance scrambled onto boats in the hope of reaching Danang by sea.

On the "Street Without Joy," the old coastal highway below Quangtri over which the French retreated 18 years ago, fleeing civilians brave ambushes from behind sand dunes to continue moving south.

In Kontum, frantic Vietnamese seeking a way out of the battle zone rush moving planes at the airport in an attempt to climb aboard.

Across South Vietnam, as many as 350,000 refugees are estimated to be on the roads seeking havens from the fighting in the northern provinces and the Central Highlands.

On foot, in carts and rickety buses, even on their tractors, carrying their children and a few possessions, they are streaming south toward Hue and Danang, or scrambling around in Binh Dinh Province looking for a district still under government control.

At Kontum, the remote province capital in the Central Highlands, Highway 14, the only land route out, has been cut by the North Vietnamese—but small groups of refugees were reported to be trying anyway.
At the Kontum airport, refugees ignored rockets and rifle fire in a scramble to board transport planes. The scene is repeated there three or four times a day, whenever a U.S. plane lands to unload food and ammunition for the government troops who are holding off a surrounding force of 20,000 North Vietnamese.

In a second, the planes land, unload and continue taxiing for a takeoff to avoid Communist rocket fire. As the refugees rush toward the moving planes, many are bowled over by the blasts from the propellers; others are scattered by a yellow forklift truck driven into them by a soldier.

Still they pick themselves up and a handful manage to crawl, stagger or fight their way to the moving doors of the plane and clamber aboard for the flight to safety.

A mile away, at the American advisers’ compound, another thousand women and children sit without shelter beside a helicopter pad, waiting for flights to Pleiku.

NUMBERED AT 20,000

According to American officials assisting in refugees relief, about 20,000 Vietnamese civilians have been caught up in the swirl of fighting around Quangtri, the northernmost provincial capital, which was abandoned to the North Vietnamese yesterday.

Some are fleeing toward Hue, about 35 miles south, down the now-unused coastal highway known in another era of the war as the “Street Without Joy.” Others are coming down the main paved road, Highway 1.

Either route is fraught with danger, and hundreds have been wounded or killed. Highway 1 was the scene of fierce fighting on Sunday as South Vietnamese rangers tried to link with government troops making forays out of Quangtri to try to open the road.

Between those two forces is a North Vietnamese regiment. Around its command post can be seen a group of captured refugees, forced to remain out in the open and apparently being used as a shield against allied shelling and bombing, American advisers reported.

Refugees who make it through the battlefield still face miles of walking over a highway seeded at night by mines and shelled in the daytime.

On the coastal road, refugees are being hit by ambushes laid by local Vietcong units in the dunes.

For most of the refugees, the goal is Hue, but even if they make it an uncertain future awaits them.

Hue itself is threatened with enemy attack now that Quangtri has fallen, and about 300 refugees a day are already being flown out of the Hue area to provinces southeast of Saigon. Others are going to Danang, about 50 miles south of Hue.

At Hue University, classes have been suspended and the five-story buildings, stretching over two blocks, are filled with almost destitute families, their few possessions a mix of pot, sleeping mats and military clothing collected from abandoned army posts along their escape routes. Others sleep on sidewalks.

For many, the misery is compounded by their strong spiritual and religious ties to their native villages.

In coastal Binhdinh Province, the nation's most populous, one official said there “has been so much fighting the people don't know which way to run.” It is rice-harvest time in Binhdinh, and most of the big crop was reported going into Communist supply lines.

[From the Washington Post, May 4, 1972]

HUE: LOOTING, TURMOIL AND EXODUS

(By Michael Fathers)

HUE, South Vietnam, May 3.—The con mang, a small deer which is the most dreaded omen of ill fortune in Vietnamese folklore, has been seen in Hue, according to rumor, and the people are fleeing.

Tonight 60,000 people were on the road south. Many of the rest left yesterday.
Gasoline has run out, food is becoming scarce, and law and order has broken down. Soldiers have taken over the two main hotels and are rapidly depleting their liquor stocks.

The only people who were not moving farther south are those from Quangtri Province below the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), which was captured by the advancing North Vietnamese army this week.

They look as if they have traveled too far already and see no reason or means of going farther. They wander aimlessly through the streets, not flinching at the frequent bursts of gunfire from the disordered soldiers.

The looting, shooting and drinking were not new to them and did not appear to seem out of place in this once-staid city, which in the 19th century housed the court of Vietnam's emperors.

The road south to Phu Bai and Danang was so clogged with people that it took this correspondent four hours to travel the six miles from the airfield at Phu Bai to Hue.

Three and four lanes of cars, trucks and buses, all grotesquely overloaded with people and their possessions, were inching south. Thousands of poorer refugees moved out on foot.

The refugees did not seem to be impeding the flow of military supplies north along the road to the front line 20 miles north of Hue—nothing else was going north.

The mother of Vietnam's last emperor, the bethroned Bao Dai, who still lives in her house here and is now 83, told reporters she was worried about the situation, despite the concrete bunker she had built in her garden.

"But there is little point in moving. Where would I go? It is much worse than the Tet offensive in 1968 when I stayed here all the time."

The gracious old lady, in a city turning wild, asked us to relay a message to her son, who now lives on the French River.

"I'm very well," the message said.

South Vietnamese, who protected the flight of refugees south from Quangtri by a highly praised rearguard action in which they destroyed 11 tanks, were searching for soldiers of the army's scattered 3d Division in the city tonight.

Last night the big new market building beside the Perfume River was completely gutted by fire.

The fire started shortly after a long exchange of gunshots was heard resounding through the market.

The burning of the market itself—flames reached 200 feet into the night sky—has been interpreted as a bad omen for the entire city by the soothsayers still on the street corners and in the coffee houses.

Cascades of flares lit the sky to the north again tonight, indicating that the marines on the front lines going empty back to Danang were under attack for the second night in a row.

Most Buddhist and Catholic officials have apparently gone south to Danang. Buddhist monks left behind to look after refugees were furious:

"I must suffer and share the miseries of my people. The place of a Buddhist at such a time as this is in a place of suffering. Right now, communism or democracy are no problem—keeping alive is," said one monk.

The 22 refugee camps administered in the city by Buddhist organizations had no money and virtually no food left, he said.

On the spur of land where the river runs into the sea thousands of refugees mobbed ammunition barges.

Christopher Pritchett reported from Danang that while most refugees were arriving there by road, thousands had sailed in on fishing boats, returning ammunition barges and tiny wooden sampans.

People in Danang, strolling along the waterfront in the cool of the evening, stop to stare silently as a steady stream of vessels passes by.

Danang, with its big American air base and port, separated from Hue by 63 miles and a string of mountains, seems relatively safe to the refugees.

They are content to sleep in the trucks which brought them, or to squat in a church or pagoda grounds or beside any building offering a little cover.
From the New York Times, May 4, 1972

IT'S EVERYONE FOR HIMSELF AS TROOPS RAMPAGE IN HUE

(By Sidney H. Schanberg)

HUE, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 3.—The fabric of Hue is disintegrating today, with at least 150,000 panic-stricken people fleeing south on foot, by truck and in flotillas of leaking sampans as the North Vietnamese push ever closer.

The government of Thua Thien Province, of which Hue is the capital, is in the process of collapsing, and signs of anarchy began to permeate the city today.

South Vietnamese Army runaways from the scattered Third Division, which abandoned the northern city of Quangtri to North Vietnamese forces on Monday without a fight, were roaming through Hue today like armed gangsters—looting, intimidating and firing on those who displeased them.

Sniper fire and bursts from automatic weapons crackled all day, as rival factions of Third Division deserters clashed with one another.

DESERTERS HEAVILY ARMED

Neither the city police nor the military police were doing much to try to stem the rampage, for the soldiers, with their automatic rifles and grenades, are much more heavily armed.

"Right now, it's everyone for himself," said a despondent Hue student.

"We are trying desperately to dampen the panic," said an American adviser, "trying to get the local government to form an emergency committee to keep essential services going—police, health, feeding the refugees. I've got my fingers in the dike, but I've got more holes than dike."

Of the deserters, he said: "They ought to shoot thein."

Last night, a group of the deserters, who apparently number in the thousands, set fire to the city's sprawling central market place during a wild and drunken gunfight with another military unit. One report said that the other unit consisted of South Vietnamese Marines, who are the only Government troops reported fighting well on the northern front and who are ashamed and angry over the headlong flight of the Third Division.

The Third Division runaways are also angry—at their officers, who they say abandoned them in Quangtri, about 32 miles above Hue, and left them to find their own way out of the enemy encirclement. Many were penniless and had not eaten for two days when they reached Hue yesterday, and they told friends that they had set the fire to express their rage at their Officers.

At one point last night, some soldiers shouted: "Burn it all, let's burn the whole city." The arson got no further than the market.

The fire burned spectacularly all night—fighting both the sky and the adjacent Huong River as it gutted acres of small shops and buckled the main steel and concrete market building.

This morning, as the market smoldered and occasionally flickered into flame, scavengers and looters, both civilian and military, roamed through the ruins, which were littered with the brass of expended rifle shells.

An old woman, trying to resurrect her smashed vegetable stall, shouted bitterly at some looters nearby: "Why are you taking things that don't belong to you?" They just smiled sheepishly at her.

There was nothing sheepish, however, about most of the looters. A family of three was hanging away with steel bars at a locked metal chest to try to get at what might be inside.

A dozen people calmly looted a rice shop, shoveling the grains into sacks and boxes, not at all bothered that someone was photographing the scene.

And a Government political indoctrination worker in a black uniform strolled off grinning with several sacks of food and clothing slung over his shoulder.

OFFICER DECLINES TO ACT

A Lieutenant from a commando unit watched the scene, sitting on his parked Honda motorbike. Asked why the army did not stop the looting, he replied mildly, "it is not our job."

When it was pointed out that soldiers had started the fire, he said: "I was not here."
On the open second floor of the main market building, the naked body of an old woman lay in a corner of the large hall. She had apparently been raped and then shot.

The market place was crucial to the food supply of Hue. No eggs or bread were available today at the rundown Huong Giang Hotel, the city’s best, where most of the large group of foreign reporters here are staying. One of the hotel room men—anticipating that the North Vietnamese would open their attack on the city soon—was wearing a steel helmet today as he made beds.

It is impossible to tell when the attack will begin, but the North Vietnamese pushed a little closer today—perhaps consolidating their forces for the final drive on Hue.

One American Marine adviser, a major posted with the South Vietnamese Marines on the front above Hue, said: “We’re holding here, but we don’t know what we’re supposed to do. Nobody has given us any instructions.”

Another Marine adviser at the front growled, “I don’t know any more whether I’m in northern South Vietnam or southern North Vietnam.”

The people of Hue apparently think the city will soon be part of North Vietnam. Hue had a normal population of 200,000, which in the last month was swelled to 300,000 by refugees pouring in from the north as the Communists advanced.

More than half of the people now have packed up frantically and pulled out of Hue. Most of them in the last 24 hours—moving south toward Danang, 50 miles away.

The city is fast becoming deserted. Those left are nervously trying to decide how long they can stay before Hue becomes unsafe.

The roads out of the city today were choked with people, furniture, animals and vehicles. Most were going toward Danang. But thousands headed to the Tanmy naval base outside Hue in hopes of getting on one of the seagoing landing craft that bring ammunition to Hue and then return to Danang for more. And still others were leaving in fleets of sampans from the banks of the Huong River.

Almost all the shops in Hue are shuttered and locked. Many of the merchants have left, but some have boarded up their stores simply because of the looting.

Some basic government services continued to function, such as electricity, water and telephones. But large numbers of civil servants have fled. At the province headquarters, for example, 75 per cent of the staff have gone.

And 90 per cent of the staff have fled from Hue’s central hospital, which is overflowing with hundreds of wounded refugees. On one of the main street corners in the city today, an army psychological warfare truck with a loudspeaker blared out the following message from the northern command: “All soldiers who have lost contact with their units are directed to report to Phu Van Lau Square by tomorrow. After tomorrow, you will be considered deserters and will be tried before a military court.”

Deserters in uniform and carrying their weapons, strolled by the truck, paying no attention.

[From the New York Times, May 5, 1972]

REFUGEES CHOKE DANANG AS THREAT TO HUE MOUNTS

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

DANANG, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 4.—Thousands of refugees continued to pour into this bedraggled port city today as fears of an all-out attack on the former imperial capital of Hue mounted.

By early evening, allied officials estimated that more than 200,000 displaced persons had jammed into Danang, which with a population of 440,000 had already been badly overcrowded.

The city’s streets were choked with bumper-to-bumper traffic as more and more packed buses, trucks and automobiles arrived from Hue and other smaller communities to the north in the path of the advancing North Vietnamese forces. American officials who flew over Route 1 between Hue and Danang today estimated that there were up to 50,000 people in vehicles creeping south through the
steep and winding Hai Van Pass and that 20,000 others were heading toward Danang on foot. 

Because of the heavy traffic, the 45-mile motor trip from Hue to Danang now takes up to 10 hours, compared with the usual two and a half hours. Some drivers are reportedly charging as much as $100 for a ride from Hue to Danang. Throughout the day, Government helicopters, huge transport planes and coastal barges also ferried people south.

The allies have stockpiled food, blankets and medicine for 500,000 people, but one American official said there could be as many as a million refugees.

Americans returning from Hue say that at least half that city's population has fled and that it is rapidly becoming a ghost town. In contrast, Danang is taking on the appearance of a boom town.

Several stalls offering soft drinks, coconuts and melons have sprung up on the banks of the Han River, which runs through the city. One young man was even hawking fancy plastic dolls and noisemakers on the kind of high rack that vendors carry at parades and football games in the United States.

Business in the marketplace and in the downtown shops was brisk and the prices of many essentials had doubled. The few hotels were filled with newsmen, soldiers and refugees with money.

Before the refugees began flooding into Danang three days ago, South Vietnamese officials had set aside five former American military camps and a police training center to receive them. By today, the Government had opened a total of 12 camp sites.

But thousands of refugees who made their way into Danang late last night and early this morning were unaware of the Government's preparations. In desperation they broke into schools, churches and pagodas.

"We woke up this morning and found all the churches and schools filled," one American official said.

"The refugees stopped in any building they could find," he continued. "Now we're trying to move them to the camps around the city. Some of them don't want to move, so we'll probably end up leaving them where they are. The camps are going to fill up anyway."

Hundreds of boy scouts, students and boys and girls in religious and political organizations have volunteered to work with the displaced persons. The majority of the refugees are not in camps and have not asked the Government for help. Many have moved in with friends and relatives. For example, tonight there were 20 persons living in the home of Ton That Lan, a 32-year-old teacher. Normally there are four.

"Almost any Vietnamese you talk to here has got a house full," one American said.

Throughout the city today there were little groups of people—mothers, fathers and babies—sitting on the roadside with their pigs, chickens, a few bundles of clothing, often an electric fan and sometimes even a refrigerator. Some of the children had cried their eyes red. Most of the adults just stared blankly, at a loss for what to do.

Eventually, allied officials say, Government trucks will come and take the people to camp sites.

In the meantime, Nguyen Hieu, a Danang merchant, has taken matters into his own hands. As darkness fell he drove through the city, stopping wherever he saw people clustered, and handed them hot loaves of bread from the back of his pick-up truck.

"They are hungry," he said. "Perhaps I can help a little."

[From the Washington Post, May 7; 1972]

QUIET HUE PREPARES FOR BATTLE

(By Peter Braestrup)

HUE, May 6.—The sky darkened this afternoon over this waiting, half-deserted city and a few drops of cool rain splattered down on the well-groomed lawns on the south bank of the Perfume River.

The weather is one thing everyone here keeps an eye on. Good weather means good flying for the U.S. fighter-bombers striking at the North Vietnamese to the
west and north of here. Bad weather means the enemy gains a respite from the aerial pounding and can push forward. Outgunned by the Communists' Soviet-provided artillery the South Vietnamese defenders of Hue must depend on U.S. airpower.

So far during the past three days pressure has been relatively light. One outpost west of Hue in the mountains—Firebase King—was hit sporadically last night and this morning by 82-mm mortar fire. The Communists were believed to be digging in their heavy 130-mm artillery and preparing for a renewed push against Hue.

Lt. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, new commander of Military Region I, continued to reorganize the city's defenses and reshape South Vietnamese tactics.

ELABORATE CEREMONY

This morning at Thuathien Province headquarters an elaborate ceremony and parade were held to inaugurate the Thuanhoe Division, which carries the old Vietnamese name for the Hue area.

Some 2,000 civil servants, war veterans, policemen, and Revolutionary Development Cadre, marched up to receive the first weapons for their role as neighborhood militia in the defense of Hue. Heading the parade was a 70-year-old graybeard, an 18-year veteran of the French Army.

The home guards will be equipped with carbines and a few M-16 automatic rifles, and each group will be charged with patrolling a specific block in this city which now has an estimated 40,000 of its 200,000 inhabitants still remaining.

Big Japanese trucks from Danang arrived here today to move the furniture and merchandise belonging to those among Hue's better heeled residents who had fled to Danang earlier this week.

Danang, according to U.S. officials, is now coping with perhaps 300,000 refugees from Quangtri Province and Hue. The Refugees are being housed on former U.S. bases in schools and churches. Danang police are beginning to screen them for Vietcong infiltrators.

MILITARY RECOVERY

In Hue today, there were more signs of military recovery from last week's Quang-tri debacle. Few stragglers were seen in the streets and some 20 truckloads of troops belonging to the 3d Division, which fell apart last Monday as Quangtri fell, were seen heading in well organized convoys to take up positions around the city. However it was not known how many of the division's original 10,000 men can be counted fit and present for duty.

Moreover, the 3d Division lost most of its artillery and tanks at Quangtri and in earlier fighting along the Demilitarized Zone when the North Vietnamese offensive began March 80.

[From the New York Times, May 7, 1972]

THOUSAND STILL ON ROADS: HUE 80 PERCENT DESERTED

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

DANANG, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 6.—The Mayor of Danang said today that his city had become critically overcrowded with refugees and appealed to officials in Saigon to move some of them farther south.

The latest estimates put the number of people who have fled to Danang from the Northern front at more than 800,000.

The mayor, Col. Nguyen Ngo Kho said "we have been trying our best, but now it is too much, too much. This is not a Danang problem, but a Vietnamese problem."

The majority of those who have jammed into Danang have come from Quang-tri "Province, which fell last Monday, and Hue, which is believed to be the enemy's next target.

A senior American official who flew the 60 miles from here to Hue today estimated that 80 per cent of the city's 200,000 residents had left. Some of them
were still moving south today in trucks, buses and cars on Route 1 and about 5,000 arrived in Danang aboard barges.

Large numbers of people are also reportedly moving toward Danang from Quangtin and Quangngai provinces to the south. The mayor said priority would go to refugees from the north and that he would take steps to discourage those who tried to enter the city from the south.

There has been no significant fighting reported south of Danang, and American and South Vietnamese officials wonder what started the people moving. "Maybe they're just running scared," one American suggested.

One of the gravest concerns for American and South Vietnamese officials has been that enemy agents would infiltrate into Danang with the refugees.

They also fear Communist agents might try to incite the refugees to riot or use the camps as bases for terrorist attacks.

Police and military intelligence men have been checking identifications at roadblocks on the outskirts of Danang, and plainclothesmen have been put into the refugee camps. But the checks on the roads are often hasty and cursory, and some of the agents in the camps each have as many as 500 people to watch. So far, no suspects have been arrested.

Colonel Khoi said, however, that the roadblocks have turned up 100 to 200 army deserters a day and that they had been ordered back to their units near Hue.

Thousands of refugees are living in schools, churches and Pagodas in Downtown Danang. Colonel Khoi believes that infiltration of these centers might be the disastrous and he has tried to shift the people to camps on the fringes of town.

But some of the people have resisted, saying that they feel more secure in the city. Even when some of the central arms have been emptied, it has only been a matter of hours before they have been filled again.

"We are just running out of space," one American said.

Efforts are being made to reconstitute a provincial government of Quangtri at City Hall here. "Sort of a government in exile," one American said.

So far, there has been enough water and rice, but sometimes the water has run low. No major health problems have yet been discovered, but both the Americans and the South Vietnamese are worried about poor sanitation. In many camps, there are not enough latrines and in others where there are latrines, the people are unfamiliar with them and refuse to use them.

Traffic in Danang has grown increasingly worse. Today, a trip across town that could normally be made in half an hour took nearly four hours.

Two American refugee officials said they spent eight hours yesterday trying to reach an outlying camp and finally gave up.

In the last seven years, the population of Danang has nearly tripled to 440,000. Less than 10 per cent of the city has running water. Only 12 per cent of the people have electricity. There are no sanitary sewers, and more than half of the homes have no garbage collection.

"The problems facing Danang are of such magnitude as to almost defy solution," one American official said. "The city is literally choking itself to death."

[From the New York Times, May 12, 1972]

WAR TURNS TEACHER, FARMER AND A BUSINESSMAN INTO REFUGEES

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

DANANG, SOUTH VIETNAM, MAY 11.—Hoang Huu Vinh was a teacher, Bui Van Nam was a farmer, and Tran Khanh was a prosperous businessman.

Now they are all refugees—three of the some 400,000 who have crowded into the Danang area in recent days since the fall of Quangtri Province to the invading North Vietnamese.

The teacher, the farmer and the businessman have never met, but their experiences illustrate the effects of the war felt throughout the social fabric of South Vietnam.

Their experiences also recall the usefulness of education, money and the right connections in weathering a crisis.

For the teacher and the farmer, who lived near Quangtri city, the trip to Danang was long and tortuous. Both of their families were caught in a crossfire.
The father of Mr. Vinh, the teacher, was killed, as were his 2-year-old son, his sister and her two children.

**A DAUGHTER IS WOUNDED**

The 18-year-old daughter of Mr. Nam, the farmer, was wounded by shrapnel. She lost her way and for days her parents thought she was dead.

The two families hitched rides on sampans, trucks and buses and walked for many hours. Finally, the farmer and his family were given a place on a coastal barge with hundreds of others who collapsed into exhausted sleep as the craft set out to sea.

It was somewhat different for Mr. Khanh, the businessman. When word reached Hue that the provincial capital, Quang Tri city, had fallen, he locked the doors of his farm supply store, loaded four of his children and a niece into his jeep with some clothes and drove south. The highway was choked with traffic, but within 10 hours they had covered the 60 miles to Danang.

Mr. Khanh, who is 53 years old, took two rooms at the Grand Hotel, then treated himself and the children to a meal at their favorite Chinese restaurant. Mrs. Khanh had gone earlier to Saigon, where her husband has a small shipping business.

The military truck that had picked up Mr. Vinh, his wife and their six children in Hue broke down 15 miles from Danang and they had to walk the rest of the way.

"It took us several hours," the 36-year-old teacher recalled, "because the children could not walk very fast and all of us were tired and hungry and sweating and our feet were swollen. We threw away our sandals and tore our clothes and used the rags to wrap our feet."

**ENTERED SCHOOL BUILDING**

As darkness fell they entered a technical school in Danang. It was filled with other refugees, so they had to trudge farther into town to a high school, where they are sharing a classroom with eight other families.

A military truck took Mr. Nam and his wife and five children to the same school after their barge landed. There are 15 other families in their classroom.

The families of the teacher and the farmer sleep on straw mats and, like most of the other refugees, they make their meals from rice provided by the Government, garnished with whatever meat, fish and vegetables they can afford.

For Mr. Nam, the 59-year-old farmer, the days have been dragging. He was never one for striking up acquaintances with strangers and, besides, all he can think of is the rice crop he had to leave just as it was coming to maturity. Most of the time he just sits quietly by himself.

"This year, the best in years," he told a visitor. Then his dark, leathery face stiffened. "By now," he said grimly, "if the VC have not harvested our rice fields, they must have been burned by the bombs."

Mr. Khanh, the teacher, has been appointed the "representative" of the families in his classroom. He has organized cleaning and foodgathering details and has helped the others to fill out Government registration forms.

**SHIFTS GOODS FROM HUE**

After getting settled in the hotel, Mr. Khanh sent an elder son back to Hue with three big trucks, which he had rented for a total of about $400 and found a warehouse in Danang where he could put the pumps, generators and tractor accessories from his store.

Fortunately, the last tractor had been sold two weeks earlier. At one point, a policeman stopped Mr. Khanh's son and told him that he could not move merchandise out of Hue. But the boy offered a $75 bribe and the policemen let the trucks pass.

Mr. Khanh telephoned Saigon to see that the office there was doing all right and he spent the rest of his time in Danang with business acquaintances and friends.

A few days ago, Mr. Khanh sent most of his family group to Saigon on an Air Vietnam plane, and yesterday afternoon he and his elder son left, too.
Most people are being told by Air Vietnam that the planes to Saigon are fully booked for the next two weeks. Those who manage to get a ticket these days often pay three times the advertised price. But Mr. Khanh has known the manager of Air Vietnam in Danang for years and he was able to get six tickets to Saigon immediately without any under-the-counter money.

Yesterday afternoon, when the time approached for the plane to depart, a nephew who is an officer in the South Vietnamese Army called to drive Mr. Khanh and his son to the airport in a Government jeep.

In Saigon Mr. Khanh will look for another home, now that he has given up the Hue place, and try to figure out how to liquidate the stock of farm supplies.

For the two other men and their families, as for the bulk of the refugees, the future is almost too overwhelming to consider. They have little money, no transport and, really, no place to go. Government officials expect the refugees to be in Danang for weeks, if not months.

For the time being Mr. Vinh is hoping that a Quangtri primary-school-in-exile will be opened in Danang and that he will be able to work there. As a civil servant he will draw his monthly pay of $80 whether he works or not.

But most of the refugees are country people like Mr. Nam, who enjoyed the independence of being a farmer, and they will have no income.

Mr. Nam, barefoot and wearing only a pair of shorts and a T-shirt, said wearily that he and his family had been driven off their land so many times by the war that he had lost count.

"But," he said blankly, "we've never had to run this far before."

[From the Christian Science Monitor, May 8, 1972]

RICH FLEE HUE, BUT POOR ...

(By Daniel Southerland)

HUE, VIETNAM.—The proud city of Hue is now a city of refugees, soldiers, frightened civil servants, and poor people who cannot afford to pay for the trip southward that might get them out of danger.

The rich people of Hue didn't even wait for the fall of neighboring Quang Tri Province last week. Most of them left Hue last month, not long after the North Vietnamese tanks rolled across the demilitarized zone into Quang Tri Province. Leading Buddhist monks also left weeks ago, much to the dismay of the younger monks involved in refugee-relief work here.

But it was after the fall of Quang Tri City that the great exodus began. University professors who had earlier vowed "to stay until the end" decided it would be prudent to leave. Only one professor could be found who was staying on. Businessmen clanged shut the iron gates in front of their shops. It's now difficult to find a place where you can buy so much as a cup of tea in the old Imperial city.

ANTI-RED FRONT COLLAPSES

With the retreat from Quang Tri, a loosely formed anti-Communist front in Hue, consisting of political and religious groups, which was formed after the North Vietnamese invasion, collapsed. No one ever expected that the front would amount to much anyway. Only the Americans—who had hoped that the front represented a new unity among the country's political and religious factions—were truly disappointed. And they are now kicking themselves for living with an illusion.

The music has gone out of Hue, too. Trinh Cong Son, South Vietnam's most celebrated songwriter and a native of Hue, finally decided to leave his beloved city despite earlier declarations that he would stay. No one can hold it against him. During the Tet offensive of 1968, when the Communists invaded Hue and held much of it for 25 days, Mr. Son's house was shattered, and he and his family ended up living for a while in a refugee camp.

Only a week ago, you could still spend a night on a sampan, floating gently on the Perfume River, which flows through the heart of the city. Women living on some of the sampans would sing plaintive songs, and floating "restaurants" woulduddle up to the sampans and offer Chinese soup and a mixture of vegetables and pork rolled up in rice paper called cha gio.
Now even the sampans are gone. No one is quite sure whether they left because of orders from the police or because of rumors that an attack might come soon.

"Hue is not lost, but its spirit is," said a young, well-dressed university student.

The student is staying on. But his only reason for not leaving Hue is a fear that the police might pick him up on the way out because his draft deferment has expired.

**REPUTATION CHERISHED**

There are those who say that the spirit of Hue died even before the current crisis. Most of the city was rebuilt after the 1968 attack. But, as one American who knows Hue well said, "After Tet '68, the laughter in the city died."

Still there was something which gave the city life and hope, and that was its youth and its schools and university. Hue is proud of its reputation as the cultural and intellectual capital of South Vietnam. And many of the prominent figures of recent Vietnamese history were graduated from the city's Quoc Hoc High School. Among them were many of the leaders of North Vietnam, including Ho Chi Minh, Premier Pham Van Dong, and Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, mastermind of the current offensive.

The emperor Bao Dai, now living in France, and South Vietnam's late president Ngo Dinh Diem, were also among the school's graduates.

One of the most exquisite sights of Hue until recently was that of hundreds of slender young girls bicycling down Hue's riverside Le Loi Street from the Dong Khanh High School with their long black hair and immaculate white ao dias billowing out behind them.

Now the school is closed, and most of the students are gone. The government has taken over the school and is establishing emergency committees there to deal with its most pressing problems. Soldiers have set up a barbed-wire barrier blocking off the riverside street.

But why did so many leave their beloved city even before a shot was fired?

One obvious reason is that the horrors of the Tet offensive of four years ago are still all too fresh in the minds of the people of Hue. Most of the city was destroyed, and the Communists massacred at least 3,000 of its citizens. Few families remained untouched by death and destruction.

When the word spread that Hue was within range of the Communists' huge 130-millimeter artillery pieces, many needed no further encouragement to start packing. The thousands of refugees from Quang Tri Province who had flooded into Hue in the earlier stages of the offensive were full of stories about the terrors of the Communist artillery fire.

Another reason for the mass exodus from Hue was simply the lack of any guidance from the government immediately after the fall of Quang Tri Province. Most people felt the government would tell them to leave only after it was too late. And, in fact, for three days after the retreat from Quang Tri there was virtually no government in Hue. Civil servants were busy getting their families out of the city.

**HOW MAYOR FEELS**

The attitude of the province chief and Mayor of Hue, Col. Ton That Kien, was that it was better for as many people as possible to leave the city so that they would not be in the way if the attack, which everyone now considers inevitable, came. The government has provided transport aboard empty ammunition ships for upwards of 10,000 people leaving a port near Hue as of this date. But the government failed to organize any transport for the much larger number of people trying to get out of the city by road.

Truck and bus drivers have been making handsome profits hauling thousands of refugees down the highway to Da Nang. Because he could not find a vehicle in Hue—everything with wheels on it was already taken—a Hue university professor rented a truck in Da Nang and drove it to Hue to pick up his mother and father. Soldiers trying to get their families out of Hue took the truck away from the professor. The same thing happened a second time. The professor finally got his parents out on the third try.
For a while it seemed that the entire city was on the move. On nearly every city block, a military truck or civilian bus could be seen packed with refugees getting ready to head south. Every square foot of available space aboard these vehicles was packed with people, sandbags filled with rice, and pots and pans.

But some are staying. According to the latest estimate, about one-fourth of the city's original population of about 200,000 people are still in Hue. And there are probably at least as many refugees from Quang Tri Province still here, camped in schools and along streets throughout the city.

Some families have been sending most of their members to the south, but have kept one or two of them in Hue to guard possessions and watch out for looters.

One man who is staying on in Hue is a policeman. He broke down and cried as he told an American friend of how he had saved from his meager earnings for years—he had never taken a bribe, he said—and had finally built a small house for his family. Now it might be destroyed, the policeman said.

The police are getting nervous. The Communists' liberation-front cadre in some of the districts surrounding Hue are apparently getting bolder, and numerous arrests have been made. One person who was detained by the police but later released unmolested said that the police were forcing soapy water down the mouths and nostrils of suspected Communists cadre, trying to get them to talk. Rumor has it that an entire Communist "government" is ready to take over the city at a given signal.

Hue, always a city of rumors in the best of times, now is particularly vulnerable to them. And there seem to be some professional rumor spreaders operating in the city. One man wearing a military uniform was detected getting on and off buses all over the city a few days ago. He told one and all that he had just been to the front and that the government army was taking a terrible beating. The man was "believed to be a liberation-front cadre."

[From the Baltimore Sun, Aprl 80, 1972]

TRAPPED REFUGEES AT KONTUM PACK AND AWAIT ATTACK

(By Michael Parks)

KONTUM, SOUTH VIETNAM.—Ly Hoang Bo's big blue truck, usually busy hauling rice, now sits in his front yard here loaded to the top with all his family's possessions.

Mr. Bo's family of seven, knowing that Kontum is likely to be destroyed in a soon-to-come battle between North and South Vietnamese troops, is waiting to leave.

"We want to leave, but we cannot, for the Communists are already surrounding the city and the road is cut," says Mr. Bo. "We are trapped."

The feeling of entrapment predominates in Kontum. "Everyone who knows what is going to happen wants to leave," says the Catholic bishop, the Most Rev. Paul Seltz, "but few can."

"Even those who do not completely recognize how Kontum is going to be destroyed know that they are trapped. Even Asian resignation to fate does not offset this."

Yet there appears to be little panic in Kontum, a pleasant, French-style provincial town with wide tree-lined streets, stucco-houses, a few villas and a bustling marketplace.

The townspeople watch the South Vietnamese troops brought here to hold Kontum with a mixture of curiosity and worry as the soldiers prepare the city's meager defenses.

But the panic that swept the city at the start of last week when North Vietnamese troops took the first of string of bases protecting it has subsided, officials say.

"What we have now is just a sense of helplessness," says an American adviser here.

"Many would leave if they could but they cannot. The road south is cut, the airport is under rocket attack and there are not enough helicopters or transport planes to take them all out," the adviser said.
Mr. Bo, the rice trucker, said the other day, "When the Communists come, Kontum will fall. The North Vietnamese are like the ocean tide and will sweep over Kontum. The [South Vietnamese] Army will not be able to stop them."

Despite this, Kontum is becoming a haven for refugees flowing by the hundreds each day from the area north of the city that Communist troops already control. More than 7,500 Vietnamese and Montagnards are already in refugee camps here, and three times that number are believed to be staying with friends and relatives in the city and in the hills on the outskirts.

Altogether, the refugees are expected to double Kontum's population of 27,000 in another week—unless the North Vietnamese attack begins first.

Most of the refugees say they came to Kontum not so much to escape the Communists as the heavy American bombing now trying to pound the Communists out of the hills and jungles around the provincial capital.

"The Viet Cong come so the airplanes shoot and bomb, and so we leave," said a woman from Dak To whose family is now staying at a school here.

Most of the refugees who have come to Kontum are Catholic villagers led by their priests. They brought some clothes and goods and food for a few days, but now are being fed by the South Vietnamese government.

Officials here are worried about the city's food supplies. Most of the food stalls in the market now are closed as the merchants board rice and other produce, and the interdiction of the road north from Pleiku has prevented the shipping of more food here.

"I suppose we are shortly going to get into the airlift business to keep the people fed," said an American official. "Unless Route 14 is open, people are not going to get out, and food and other supplies are not going to get in."

[From the New York Times, May 1, 1972]

THOUSANDS FLEE KONTUM IN PANIC AS ENEMY NEARS

(Saigon, South Vietnam, May 1.—Thousands of people were reported yesterday to be fleeing in panic from Kontum, a key city in the Central Highlands encircled by North Vietnamese forces.

Military sources said that 10,000 people had been taken by plane or helicopter from Kontum to Pleiku, to the south, over the weekend.

Nuns, priests, military dependents, officials and many military men, including deserters, were among those leaving. All but a dozen Americans were evacuated.

Reliable sources in Kontum said in reports telephoned to Saigon that residents were bribing South Vietnamese helicopter pilots the equivalent of $240 a person to make the 20-minute trip to Pleiku.

MANY ALSO FLEEING PLEIKU

The evacuation rush from Pleiku was also intense. Some 600 Vietnamese were said to have obtained space on military planes flying to Saigon Saturday.

Intelligence sources said that North Vietnamese commandos at a village three miles south of Kontum had told the villagers that the flag of the National Liberation Front would be raised over the province headquarters in Kontum today, May Day.

These were the other developments in the military situation:

In the northernmost part of the country, the provincial capital of Quangtri was still in Government hands, but Americans in the area said they felt that the city would not be able to hold out much longer against enormous enemy pressure.

Another district capital, Hiep Duc in Quang Tin Province, has fallen to the Communists. The village, defended only by regional militia forces, was the ninth district capital to fall since the Communist offensive began at the end of March. There are nearly 240 districts in South Vietnam, roughly equivalent to American counties, each with its principal town.

With two of the three bases that had protected the approaches to Hue now lost to the Communists, there was growing apprehension that enemy 180-mm. artil-
lery would be in a position to bombard the city. The 130-mm. gun has a range of 17 miles.

In the central coastal province of Binh Dinh, where two district capitals have already fallen, a third is apparently expected to be occupied by the enemy soon. The American advisory team was evacuated yesterday from the town of Tan Quan on the South China Sea coast and withdrawn to a strongpoint called Landing Zone English for a stand. This position reportedly was being heavily shelled yesterday.

Military sources said that the Communists controlled most of the northern part of Binh Dinh Province, where about 100,000 people live.

In one of the few optimistic reports of the day, military sources said yesterday that the first civilian convoy in three weeks had succeeded in carrying badly needed supplies of fuel and food from the coastal port of Quinhon to Pleiku in the highlands along Route 19. This main highway had been closed by North Vietnamese forces until two days ago, when the South Korean units responsible for defense of the area finally broke through the roadblock.

The siege of An Loc, 60 miles north of Saigon, which began on April 8, continued yesterday with no appreciable change. Authorities calculated that at the present rate of fire, the Communist forces, in another day or two, would have fired 20,000 artillery shells into the town since the beginning of the siege.

In Taynhinh Province, northwest of Saigon and adjoining the Province of BinhLONG, where the An Loc battle is raging, heavy clashes were reported. Government troops reported having killed hundreds of the enemy in a number of engagements in Taynhinh Province and near the town of Godauha, 27 miles northwest of Saigon.

**R-52's FLY 28 MISSIONS**

Reflecting the intensity of fighting, in which Saigon forces continue to pin much of their hopes on American air support, United States B-52 heavy bombers flew 28 missions over South Vietnam during the day. This was said to have been the highest number of such missions ever recorded on a single day.

Fourteen of the B-52 strikes were in the vicinity of Kontum.

The Air Force announced yesterday that during the period from April 20 to 29, more than 700 sorties were flown by B-52's over North Vietnam.

The Air Force reported having destroyed or damaged more than 250 enemy trucks, logistics craft and port facilities, 19 bunkers and 16 warehouses, fuel and supply depots, antiaircraft and coastal artillery sites, and communications lines.

The big bombers were said to have destroyed one MiG-17 fighter plane on the ground.

There was speculation that Saigon itself was due for a wave of terrorist bombing, and possibly infantry assaults similar to the 1968 Tet offensive.

Large enemy forces are within striking distance of the capital and it is known that May is considered by the Communists to be a month of decision.

An intelligence source said yesterday that two North Vietnamese divisions normally assigned to the so-called Skyline Ridge in Laos south of the Plain of Jars had left that area.

The source said that it was normal for the North Vietnamese to leave the ridge at this time of year because of the onset of the rainy season and consequent problems of supply.

However, there was also speculation that the North Vietnamese might have abandoned the area this time with the intention of moving into the Kontum area of South Vietnam to strengthen the forces already there.

In Kontum, violence broke out frequently yesterday as frantic South Vietnamese sought rides to safety.
SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 7.—The South Vietnamese government announced last night that it had decided to evacuate all civilians from Kontum city, in the Central Highlands, south to Pleiku by road.

Officials said that the plan was to evacuate the civilians beginning Wednesday. The only road between Kontum and Pleiku, Route 14, has been cut by Communist forces for two weeks at several different points.

Elements of the Government's Airborne Division on their way from Kontum to Pleiku were hit hard by an enemy attack on Fire Base 42, only three miles north of the Pleiku city limits, early yesterday. The fire base is right on the strategic highway.

**30,000 CIVILIANS TRAPPED**

The road, the only one out of Kontum, also remained cut at the pass near Chupao Mountain, about midway between Kontum and Pleiku. Traffic was impossible.

Thirty thousand civilians are believed to be trapped in Kontum which is apparently ringed by North Vietnamese troops. The town was hit by four Communist rockets yesterday and an artillery base called November, a mile and a half to the northwest, was under sporadic attack all day. One Government tank was destroyed in the fighting.

The airborne troops—the last paratroops in the Central Highlands—left Pleiku today on United States Air Force C-141's for Saigon.

The Government's attempt to break a month-old Communist encirclement of Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon, ran into trouble again Friday.

**ANLOC IS SHELLED AGAIN**

The South Vietnamese infantrymen who are trying to break through to Anloc lost an artillery base 10 miles south of the city on Route 18.

United States B-52 bombers flew five missions in the area between noon Friday and noon yesterday—an indication of the seriousness of the loss.

At Anloc itself, the North Vietnamese reportedly continued their daily artillery bombardment of what is left of the Government's Fifth Infantry Division, which has been under siege for a month.

On the southern front, around Hue, the only significant combat action reported was a day-long Communist mortar bombardment of an artillery base called King, 10 miles east-southeast of the city. To the north, Government forces continued their efforts to reorganize their defense lines at the border of Thua Thien and Quang Tri Provinces.

North Vietnamese forces that took over Quang Tri Province last Monday are believed to be regrouping for a push on Hue. The attack is expected in the next few weeks—possibly within days.

South Vietnamese forces under their new commander, Lieut. Gen. Ngo Quang Truong, are now operating under a new command structure: The commander of the South Vietnamese Marine Division, Lieut. Gen. Le Nguyen Khang, whose troops have fought well, has been appointed as assistant to the chief of the joint general staff in charge of the northern battlefront.

**B-52 RAIDS CONTINUE**

American warplanes continued their raids on North Vietnamese supply lines north and south of the demilitarized zone yesterday to try to delay any further enemy push.

B-52 raids also continued in Kontum Province, where 10 South Vietnamese battalions totaling 8,000 men at the most now face a North Vietnamese attacking force of at least twice that size that is equipped with tanks and heavy antiaircraft weapons.
The Government forces are mostly from the shattered 22d Infantry Division, which crumbled under the initial onslaught on its forward command post at Tancanh on April 24. Reinforcements from the 23d Division were later moved north from Banmethout with a few hundred men from ranger battalions. The paratroops were sent to the area in February, when fears of an offensive in the Central Highlands were at a peak. They have been the only troops in the highlands to really take the fight to the enemy, and now that they have left, the fall of Kontum city appears to be mostly a matter of time.

5 MISSING GI'S FOUND

If it is not possible to move out the remaining population by road, aircraft will probably be used. An American refugee official said, "Our logistics situation is quite strained, but we're trying to make aircraft available."

Five American soldiers who had been believed killed in the crash of a helicopter at Dakto on April 24 turned up in the jungles near there yesterday and were flown to hospital in Pleiku, according to American advisors at Pleiku.

[From the Washington Post, May 7, 1972]

CIVILIANS TO LEAVE KONTUM
BUT FAILURE TO OPEN ROAD PERILS PLAN

(By Peter Osnos)

SAIGON, May 7.—The South Vietnamese government said Saturday night that it has a plan to evacuate civilians from threatened Kontum Province by road to neighboring Pleiku further to the south.

A brief announcement provided no details on the move, but sources said that 40,000 people will be involved and that the move will begin Wednesday. For a number of reasons, sources here said, the plan to evacuate Kontum Province is unlikely to succeed, at least as it is now outlined.

In the first place, the road from Kontum to Pleiku, Highway 14, has been cut by enemy forces and efforts to reopen it in the past two days have failed.

North Vietnamese forces Saturday recaptured the vital Chupao mountain pass seven miles south of Kontum on the highway, after government troops had briefly cleared the pass Friday, allowing one convoy from Pleiku to get through to Kontum.

In addition, the sources said, elements of the airborne brigade that constitutes only elite troops in the Central Highlands, are being withdrawn, increasing even further the prospects that the road will remain closed.

Before the North Vietnamese offensive in the Central Highlands began late last month, the South Vietnamese pulled out other units to reinforce the Saigon area.

The alternative to the road plan would be to fly the civilians out in a massive airlift, but up to now officials have said that not enough planes are available for such an undertaking. But as the danger continues to increase, the planes may be diverted.

Kontum City has been surrounded for more than a week by an estimated two North Vietnamese divisions that are moving into place for an expected all-out attack sometime soon.

If that assault comes before Wednesday, then the Saigon government evacuation plan would almost certainly become impossible to implement.

The following other developments were reported by the Associated Press:

The North Vietnamese struck hard at a South Vietnamese brigade headquarters known as Firebase 42, six miles north of Pleiku.

Advancing under a mortar barrage, enemy demolition troops smashed into the bane, damaging bunkers, destroying several artillery pieces and killing or wounding 100 South Vietnamese in a three-hour attack. The defenders counted 88 enemy dead inside the base. One U.S. adviser was killed.
Smoke was still pouring after daylight from the base's command post bunker, the main target of the attack.

Another government position, a ranger camp of Poleikleng, 14 miles northwest of Kontum, came under increasing pressure. Field reports said two U.S. advisers were evacuated, and the camp was hit by 300 rounds of shell fire during the day.

Poleikleng has been hit by daily bombardments for the past week, and field reports said that the camp has lost about 25 men killed and 100 wounded. The base is important because it is the last major position below "Rocket Ridge," guarding and observing the approaches to Kontum.

On the northern front, around Hue, field reports said that the North Vietnamese had moved 130-mm artillery guns within range of the old imperial capital. The reports said three of the big guns, which have a range of 17 miles, were knocked out by U.S. fighter-bombers.

Fighting also was reported around Firebase Birmingham, 10 miles west of Hue. The Saigon command said that 30 enemy were killed, and government losses were two killed and 11 wounded.

U.S. 7th Fleet ships bombarded enemy positions to the north of Hue between the Cuaviet River and Quangtri which fell to the enemy Monday. They were credited with a secondary explosion in a supply and tank area.

It still was generally believed that new assaults were only days away in the north, with Hue as the enemy's next prime objective, and in the Highlands with Kontum and possibly Pleiku as the goals.

Although the 38-day-old North Vietnamese offensive has slowed during the past week, it was thought this was only to give time for bringing in more supplies and for the regrouping of forces.

Nearer Saigon, a bridge on a secondary road 15 miles southwest of the capital was blown up and traffic was halted temporarily. There were isolated attacks and shellings in other provinces adjacent to the capital.

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[From the Washington Post, May 7, 1972]

SOUTH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES TIRED, RESIGNED, HOMESICK

(By Peter Osnos)

GÓIAU, SOUTH VIETNAM, May 6.—It is hard to find anyone in this crowded, makeshift refugee receiving center less than one hour north of Saigon who knows that Quangtri Province has been lost or that Hue and Kontum are in grave danger.

The survival of their country may be threatened, but these people have troubles of their own.

It is natural from a distance to see the crush of several hundred thousand refugees streaming out of besieged or encircled towns and cities throughout South Vietnam as a pitiful mass, but talk to just about anyone of them and there's a story worth retelling.

There is little anger in what they say, at least to outsiders, and now that they have successfully escaped there isn't much fear either, except the worry for those who haven't yet joined them. Mostly, the people are tired and resigned and they'd like to go home.

A toothless old man said his house in a district town was destroyed by a rocket, he thinks it was Communist. Matter of factly, he added that most of the casualties he observed were civilians, caught in airstrikes or crossfires.

He has eight children, he said, and his oldest son, a soldier, was killed in the fighting. The son had another five children. The old man himself was a soldier once, serving in the French army during the first Indochina war, and he left his home in North Vietnam to come and serve in the South. Lately, he had been a woodcutter.

A neatly dressed middle-aged man who spoke good English said he came here every day looking for his wife and eight children that he left in Anloc while he worked at a job closer to Saigon. So far, he said, no one knows what has happened to them.
"May I ask you a question?" he begins, touching my arm lightly, "the fighting has been going on like this for more than a month and I would like to know when it will end."

I shrugged and he answered himself: "There is nothing we Vietnamese can do. The Vietnamese people cannot end this ourselves. President Nixon and President Khrushchev must make an agreement."

A lady who also speaks English and also comes here every day in a vain search for her family said quietly, "He means Kosygin."

On the outskirts of a flattened village not far from Godau, a pretty woman of 28 said her four-year-old son was wounded by shrapnel and is in a hospital now.

Perhaps stupidly, I asked her who won the battle in the village.

"We don't know," she replied, speaking for a friend as well, "because we are too busy fleeing." Both women smiled demurely.

At the refugee camp again, two 16-year-old boys from Anloc described how they spent three days as Communist captives, with their hands tied, receiving political indoctrination which they said they did not understand.

The North Vietnamese told them, they said, that every town and every city had been taken by the Communists and told them South Vietnam and North Vietnam will be unified because there is really only one Vietnam.

Most of the Communist soldiers were no older than they were, according to the boys, but seemed to be better disciplined than South Vietnamese troops. The North Vietnamese Army kept them in a rubber plantation, they said.

Finally, as they recalled it today, they were released because one had a lame foot and both were students. The boys volunteered that what they would like to do most is finish their education. They said, in passing, that out of 800 students in their school, 87 had been killed, wounded or are missing. The principal was killed by the first rocket to hit the city.

Somehow the boys, having found their families in the rubble that is Anloc, made it to Godau. In that sense they are among the lucky ones.

Godau is a flat, nondescript bit of countryside about 25 miles from Saigon that happens to be a convenient stopping place for refugees, no one really knows how many, escaping the fighting in the provinces northwest of Saigon.

Most come from Binhloing, where the provincial capital of Anloc has been fought over inconclusively for a month, but there are others from Phouclong and even the northern districts of this province, Binhduong.

Once they find their way here, they camp in what appear to be abandoned military barracks and quickly adjust to their surroundings as best they can. It is better if neighbors and friends have come with them.

Sleeping mats are unfolded, babies are fed, children find games to play and a soup stand is opened.

Every refugee site is different. This must be one of the better ones. At least the people say they have been given enough to eat. In the north, everyone is poorer and there are more mouths to feed with less food.

This afternoon, two vanloads of women from the International Women's Association of Saigon showed up with packages of rice and other goods distributed to the 200 neediest families. The Ministry of Social Welfare was also distributing rice, and some monks arrived with piles for water.

Across the province line in Haunghia, a 20-minute ride from here, is the destroyed village of the 28-year-old woman with the wounded son. The scene there was somewhat different from the refugee camps.

The village called Truong Lap (actually two hamlets with about 4,000 people) had the misfortune to be chosen by the Communists for a major foray on April 24. Two nights and a day later, air strikes had wiped out all of one hamlet and nearly half of another.

Unlike Binhloing, the fighting in Haunghia has been limited so far. The North Vietnamese withdrew from Truong Lap and, it's not at all clear what the purpose of the exercise was in the first place. But as far as the people are concerned it doesn't really matter. They don't have any houses anymore.

Instead, most of the villagers have moved to a field nearby and live under ponchos. A few preferred to stay behind in the wreckage. The local district
the chief has wangled two bulldozers and some building equipment from the army and government and he promises everything will be rebuilt.

The chief said he brought in the airstrikes, all Vietnamese, reluctantly and only after warning the people to evacuate.

From the New York Times, May 14, 1972

Refugees in Saigon Living in Trucks

(Saigon, South Vietnam, May 11.—Phan Dinh Nao and his wife, their four children and their daughter’s child live in a truck parked on Phan Thanh Gian Street, one of Saigon’s busiest.

Until a few days ago they were at the family home in Quinhon, on the coast in the central part of the country.

“Certainly a lot of our things will be lost in our absence,” his wife said, “but the shells were landing very near; how can we care about our belongings?”

Mr. Nao said that the repeated Communist rocket attacks on Quinhon—the capital of Binh Dinh Province, most of which the Communists have captured—had led him to fear that South Vietnam would be cut in two, leaving no escape route.

Poor Folk Hitched Rides

Although Mr. Nao did not say so, it is probable that the owner of the fleet of trucks for whom he worked as a driver considered the time ripe to move his assets out of the battle zone, and Mr. Nao grasped the opportunity to bring his family to relative safety.

The rush out of Quinhon is in full swing, and Pham Ly, another man who has parked his truck on Phan Thanh Gian Street, said he could not bring his furniture because “about 60 poor people” clambered aboard and begged to be taken to Saigon.

“Some have found their relatives and friends here and others are looking for them,” he added. “None are living in my truck.”

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of refugees visible because they are in camps, equally great numbers vanish because the Vietnamese clan and friendship system provides unquestioning shelter. Some stay for years, heavily burdening their hosts, but complaints are rare.

When Mr. Nao was asked how long he would stay in this strange city, which he finds noisy and his wife and children find frightening, he replied: “We will wait here until the fighting ends.”

For many years and in many places throughout Indochina people have spoken that consoling and self-deluding formula. Some have said it more than once, but few have returned to their homes.

In a television address this week, President Nguyen Van Thieu said that the North Vietnamese offensive had made 650,000 people homeless.

Mr. Nao said he would wait for a month because he had enough savings to support his family in the truck for that long. “After that we’ll see,” he added.

Mr. Ly, whose wife gave birth two days after their arrival here, said that if returning to Quinhon did not prove feasible, the big problem would be to find a home. Jobs for drivers are easy to get in Saigon, he explained.

The shop owners on Phan Thanh Gian Street are unhappy because the trucks block their entrances. The owner of a noodle stand, a gentle young woman helped by her son, says she has lost two-thirds of her usual daily trade because of Mr. Nao’s truck.

Shop Owners Troubled

“So many people drive them away, but I just cannot do it,” she said, accepting the effect of the war on her life with as much equanimity as do the refugees.

Members of Mr. Nao’s family knock at doors to ask for water but have sought no other help from anyone. They do their cooking on the truck.
Mr. Ly and Mr. Nao, asked whether they would return to Quinhon if a peace settlement gave it to the Communists, responded cautiously, although both made clear an aversion to life under the Vietcong.

"Impossible," Mr. Nao said at first, but later he remarked: "As a humble citizen I have nothing to be afraid of."

Mr. Ly, looking to the possibility of peace all over Vietnam, said that when the war ended he would go to Quinhon or to Quangbình, his native province in the North, which he left in 1954.

[From the Evening Star, April 28, 1972]

REDS LETTING REFUGEES BY

(SAIGON.—Communist troops that are trying to trap Saigon's soldiers in the Kontum area have been letting refugees stream through their blocking position south of Kontum, field reports say.

Some young civilians have been pressed into service by the Communists to carry supplies. But in general refugees are not bothered by Communist forces in the Kontum area, where a major attack is being prepared.

Similar reports have come from other areas, such as Quang Tri Province.

The reports are in sharp contrast with a statement made yesterday at the Paris talks by U.S. Ambassador William J. Porter. He accused the Communists of voicing a desire for negotiations "while you go about killing helpless refugees as you burn and devastate their villages."

Intelligence reports before the North Vietnamese army (NVA) launched its offensive four weeks ago said there were Communist instructions to leave refugees alone. This has generally been the case.

Refugees were allowed to flee south past NVA troops during the first push into Quang Tri province from the so-called demilitarized zone four weeks ago. Now they are being let through the NVA regiment that has closed Highway 14, south from Kontum to Pleiku.

NOT ALL ESCAPE.

Civilians have not been entirely exempt from bloodshed in the last four weeks, however.

NVA troops and Viet Cong units have mortared cities, killing civilians. Some civilians have been trapped in battle areas from which they could not flee.

There have not been any reports of deliberate burning and devastating of villages.

What has been more noticeable than NVA treatment of civilians has been the way the ARVU (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) has in many cases rather hastily abandoned civilians.

Much of the fighting so far in the offensive has been in rather thinly populated areas, or areas like Quang Tri from which civilians fled.

But in at least two cases within recent days the ARVN itself fled from civilian areas when NVA troops attacked.

One area was around Dak To in Kontum Province.

Reports from there say local defense units fought one heroic action against NVA soldiers after the ARVN had gone.

The local militia, fighting for their homes after ARVN soldiers from distant parts of the country had lost interest there, destroyed one NVA tank and captured a second to use it against the attackers, an intelligence report said.

The second and more significant area of ARVN's leaving civilians was in Bình Dinh Province.

The province, along the South China Sea coast of the Central Highlands, has always been at the bottom of government security ratings.

It had the highest number of Viet Cong agents and armed bands—mostly composed of NVA soldiers—of any province.
As part of Hanoi's strategy for the offensive, these Communist units took advantage of ARVN's being spread thinly and moved out of their mountain hideouts to attack coastal towns.

Field reports say ARVN has not put up much of a fight. In some areas it fled.

There has been a tendency in some quarters in Saigon to consider this relatively unimportant. "We've always known that Binh Dinh was mostly Communist, so what's happened there the last few days isn't surprising," one official commented.

This attitude overlooked the fact that South Vietnamese residents of the coastal towns had been encouraged to commit themselves to the Saigon government during recent years when the Communists were being pushed up into the mountains.

Now those who stood with the government might find themselves targets for Communist revenge.

Three weeks ago, when NVA troops captured the town of Loc Ninh, about 70 miles north of Saigon near the Cambodian border after outnumbered ARVN forces retreated, they publicly shot three persons. The three were members of the local militia who became Communist examples of what happens to Saigon's supporters.

A number of South Vietnamese government officials were taken to an NVA rear base across the border at Snoul in Cambodia. They have not been heard from since.

[From the New York Times, April 26, 1972]

FOE ARRIVES, WARNS VILLAGERS TO FLEE

(By Joseph B. Treaster)

PHUC HIEU, SOUTH VIETNAM.—North Vietnamese soldiers, about 300 strong, quietly made their way early today to this village 24 miles northwest of Saigon.

"Dear uncles and aunts," a political officer said through a portable loudspeaker. "You are advised to pack up and leave your homes before light. Otherwise you will run the risk of being killed by the puppet army artillery. The revolutionary forces will be here for three days."

A similar announcement was reportedly made in neighboring Trunglap, which the North Vietnamese reached late last night. In each area, the soldiers started digging trenches and building bunkers.

TOLD TO SEND MEN

At 3 o'clock this morning a militiaman awoke Le Dinh Binh, the village chief here with the news. The chief, who later related the story, radioed district headquarters and was told to send militiamen and members of the People's Self Defense Force—which is made up of those too young or too old to be in the regular forces—and he was instructed to send an early warning system—to chase the North Vietnamese away.

By 11 A.M., Mr. Binh said he had heard only one heavy exchange of gunfire and no one had been wounded.

As noon approached, he sat on a rough bench in front of the village headquarters with half a dozen other local officials, watching clouds of dust and powder rise a half mile away as artillery shells and bombs sporadically landed where the North Vietnamese were supposed to be.

An ambulance raced past with its siren screaming, three or four trucks of militiamen rolled past, stopped and started and then one backed over a civilian's motor scooter. A helicopter circled for a while. One of its machine guns sounded out a few times and then the aircraft went away.

The village chief nervously sucked on a cigarette, his arms hugging his chest, and said he hoped the North Vietnamese could not come any closer.

"We are doing our best," he said. "There's nothing else I can do."

American and South Vietnamese officers were not sure what the North Vietnamese had in mind. The officials said they were afraid that the enemy soldiers would try to attack the district capital of Cu Chi, which is four miles
to the south and is regarded by many as the northwest gate to Saigon, or that they would try to cut Route 1 between here and Cuchí.

American intelligence officers have been saying that the North Vietnamese could conceivably strike at Saigon. Some of them say that Cuchí would be an excellent staging area.

Another rather direct route would be to come out of the Parrot's Beak area in Cambodia and to drive southeasterly toward the capital. In such a case, taking Cuchí or simply blocking Route 1 in the vicinity of the town would make it difficult if not impossible for the Government to bring troops now operating northwest of Saigon to the defense of the capital.

It seems unlikely, however, that 300 North Vietnamese would try to take Cuchí. But at this point it is impossible to say whether the troops here and at Trunglap—identified as members of the 101st North Vietnamese Regiment—are operating alone or are merely the first to be discovered of a larger unit.

In Cuchí, which has a population under 20,000, the Government had mounted loudspeakers on utility poles on the two main streets. Between long runs of popular Vietnamese polytonal music there was a tape-recorded message:

"Firmly believe in the final victory of the armed forces of the Republic of Vietnam. Don't panic. The enemy will be defeated and we will win."

"I feel people here are getting nervous," said Khau Van Chau, as he stood barefoot and bare-chested in his jewelry shop, having just emptied its showcases.

"Since yesterday many women and children have left this town for Saigon or elsewhere," he continued. "My family, for example. Everyone has left and I'm all packed up and ready. If it should get a little bit worse I will leave immediately. My car is filled with gas. What remains for me to push the starter and go."

SOME STORES PADLOCKED

The doors on several nearby shops had already been chained and padlocked. Some people who apparently have decided to stay, no matter what, have started building sandbag bunkers.

Many of the men and women from the village invaded by the North Vietnamese have drifted into Cuchí. They left home in a hurry, as refugees usually do, and most of them have little more than the clothes on their backs.

They expressed little resentment toward the North Vietnamese. But an incident at Trunglap turned some against the Government force.

"When the villagers began to leave, as the enemy had instructed, some militia-men tried to turn the people around. A few shots were fired and two or three villagers were killed.

"The VC had the kindness to tell the villagers to go to avoid being killed by the fighting," said Mrs. Le Thi Tan.

"I don't know why the Government troops wanted us to stay," she said. "Maybe they wanted us to stay to make an obstacle for the VC."

[From the New York Times, April 24, 1972]

REFUGEES DESCRIBE LIFE IN TOWN OCCUPIED BY FOE

SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM, April 28.—The North Vietnamese and Vietcong have set up a small district administration in the captured town of Locninh in Binh Long Province, just south of the Cambodian border, according to some refugees who escaped from there last week.

Locninh fell to an invading North Vietnamese force on April 5, and the South Vietnamese infantrymen who had been there went south to Anloc, which has been under seige since.

But because most of the people in the village did not leave, American officials say, Locninh has not been bombed unlike Anloc, the northern third of which was seized by North Vietnamese troops and tanks and has almost been wiped out in the heavy fighting of the last two weeks.

ENEMY FORCES MOVE IN

Villagers who left Locninh a few days ago told intelligence officers that, after the Government troops retreated south, 3,000 enemy soldiers—80 per
cent North Vietnamese troops in their teens and 20 per cent older officers and political cadre—came in and raised the National Liberation Front's flag.

Twenty of the local militiamen who had been defending the town against the possibility of enemy attack over the years were allowed to keep their M-16 rifles, and were given the job of being the local policeman, the refugees said.

Then, according to the refugees, political officers who came south with the invading force rounded up the townspeople and, with the help of local guerrilla agents who lived in the town, began identifying Government and South Vietnamese Army officers. These officers were reportedly placed in a warehouse that served the town's major industry—a rubber plantation.

All the rice stored at the plantation's warehouses was reported confiscated—enough to feed 7,000 workers for three months—and taken by truck back north on Route 18 to the Cambodian town of Snoul, which is apparently the rear base for the invading forces.

Some of the prisoners were also taken to Snoul, the refugees said, and questioned closely there. Some who were mistakenly identified as Government officials were allowed to return to Locninh.

All privately owned vehicles in Locninh—motorcycles, bicycles, and a few automobiles—were confiscated. The enemy officials told the townspeople that the vehicles would be "redistributed to the poor" at some future date, according to the reports.

Three Government officers were executed by firing squad in the village square near the police station, according to the reports. They were a lieutenant, who was in charge of the Locninh People's Self-Defense Force, the irregulars the Saigon Government keeps in all villages and towns to supplement the regular militia, a sergeant who had headed a platoon in the militia and who had been accused of killing five enemy soldiers, and a sergeant who had refused to surrender.

CLAIMS OF LIBERATION

The clandestine enemy radio broadcast claims of "liberating" Anloc as well as Locninh, and intelligence officials in Saigon say the North Vietnamese troops were told they had been sent to do battle in Anloc to open an approach route to Saigon.

Although the enemy has not publicly said so, intelligence officers here believe that one objective in the offensive in South Vietnam is to establish a capital for the National Liberation Front.

Intelligence officers do not believe that the enemy wants to establish it in Binhlong, which is a sparsely populated, poor province. Instead, the intelligence community believes, the objective is Hue, the historically important former imperial capital in central Vietnam.

[From the Washington Post, May 10, 1972]

BONG SON: THE STORY OF A PACIFIED HAMLET

(By Herbert H. Denton)

Occasionally the oldtimers in my Army unit referred to the "Battle for Bong Son," but by the time I got there in July of 1967, with the 1st Air Cavalry Division, Bong Son, which fell the other day to North Vietnamese troops, was considered to be pacified.

It was a somber place with a certain loveliness. There were dense growths of palms and vines around the thatched roof houses. Pretty school girls in flowing white dresses brooded down the main street. The rice fields farther out were neatly manicured and silky green. The weather was generally warm and balmy.

So you could say it was pacified and that is the way it probably showed up in the statistics that made up the "progress reports" that had so much to do with the Johnson administration's euphoria about the war in the autumn of 1967. That was the trouble with the numbers game played by American government officials at the time; it could not adequately take into account the critical importance to Bong Son's security of a large American presence, in the form of men and arms and equipment and advisers; with the Americans on-hand, Bong