The depot is run as a cooperative. The waste pickers are cut in on the profits—in five months, an average of 15 tons a month have been sold—and at night young seminarians teach the dropouts and adult illiterates.

Aliou Badara N'jie, the Foreign Minister of Gambia, was just in Saigon, where he received an effusive official welcome. He was the first foreign minister of any nation to make an official visit to Saigon since the January, 1973, cease-fire.

Even though Gambia is very small (population 390,000), the South Vietnamese gave the Foreign Minister the royal treatment. The city was hung with banners wishing long life to “Gambia-Vietnam friendship” and the visitor was entertained at two sumptuous banquets.

One European ambassador said he nearly broke out in church giggles at the second banquet, since even some Saigon Cabinet ministers, smirking, found the fuss over the small African nation a bit disproportionate. “The whole city was doubled over with laughter,” said the ambassador.

Foreign Ministry officials now count Gambia as a sure vote in international conferences, where they are in stiff competition with the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government.

The demise of Givral, Saigon’s premier rumor mill, has been rumored for some time. An exception to the rule, this rumor has proved to be true.

Givral, the unostentatious coffee shop known to old hands as Radio Catinat, has been split in two—a tiny pastry shop bears the old name, but most of the building is now a slick restaurant called The Garden.

Saigon journalists now wander, unsatisfied, from one Tu Do Street coffee shop to another, looking for a new headquarters. “It will never be the same,” said one.

[From the Washington Post, Sept. 3, 1974]

SOME WOULD RISK COMMunist RULE—REFugeES CHARGE SAIGOn IMPEDES RETURN HOME

(By Philip A. McCombs)

DANANG, SOUTH VIETNAM, September 2.—Many war refugees are eager to return to their old homes even though it may mean living under Communist control, and some of them have been forcibly prevented from doing this by government police measures.

There are also many refugees who would rather remain on the government side than come under Communist control. It is impossible to determine how many fall in each group.

Under the Paris cease-fire agreement signed in January 1973, there is supposed to be free movement between the two sides. In fact, very little of this has taken place.

If it had, a large number of people might have been expected to return to homes now in Communist-controlled areas.

During the American involvement in the war, large numbers of people were loaded on trucks and helicopters and taken to refugee camps when the allies swept through large areas to “pacify” them.

By moving the people out, the allies could assume that anyone still in the area was the enemy, who could be killed.

The government has now been resettling the dislocated people in government-controlled areas, but many people seems to have a different idea about where they would like to live.

“If the government would allow me to go back home I'd go immediately,” said one woman, who was holding her baby as she talked in a refugee camp in Quang-nai Province, about 75 miles south of here on Vietnam's central coast. Her home is now in Communist hands.

“We can't return because our native village is controlled by the other side and the government won't let us,” explained another woman standing nearby.

They spoke about reprisals by government soldiers against those who might try to go back.

“If we went back, the government would have to guarantee us that there wouldn't be any arrests and that we wouldn't be disturbed by government soldiers,” said the first woman.

“No more shooting at us and capturing us,” put in a man. Asked if they meant they didn't care whether they lived under government or Communist control, the group of about 50 refugees gathered around said “Right, right”, they just wanted to go home.
An old man recalled how, long ago, they left home. "The Americans used helicopters, and they forced us on board," he said. "We went with just our bare hands, couldn't carry any kind of property with us."

The people said they had been flown to the refugee camp where they still live in Quangngai Province. Fighting has been heavy there for the past month as Communist forces press down to the coast from their mountain base areas.

For the first year or so, the people said, they had U.S. and government assistance. But that stopped and they had to support themselves by buying tea from mountain tribesmen and selling it in city markets.

The current fighting has made this impossible, and now they said they would like to go home, where they could farm.

There were no government officials around during the interview, which may account for the unusual candor. Usually officials are present and one can never be sure how much refugees' anti-Communist statements are affected by this presence. In some cases people voice genuine anti-Communist sentiments even when officials are not present.

Another example of people wanting to return to areas not controlled by the government is the village of Hoaphung, near the beach three miles southwest of Danang.

"There are a thousand people in my village and 90 percent of them are pro-Vietcong," said the young village chief dejectedly.

He was interviewed in Danang, where he lives because it is too insecure in the village for him to spend the nights there. He goes to the village office every other day, sharing the dangerous job with other village officials who also live in Danang.

The chief, Nguyen Mui, 29, said he was dejected because one day last month, 80 families in the village tore down their houses and carted them to rebuild in a nearby Vietcong-controlled area.

They told him, the chief said, that they would prefer to live there because it was their home ground, from which they had been removed in the late 1960s when the Americans were pacifying and bulldozing the area.

Though they were not moved far from their home ground, the place they moved to had poor soil and they were crowded.

After this happened, Mui said, he was accused by his boss, the district chief, of being pro-Vietcong, which he says he is not. He said the district chief ordered him to use "any suitable measures" to get the people back.

"I was ordered to have my cadres go in and destroy all the houses that the people tore down and rebuilt in the new area," said Mui.

He said he didn't like to do that, because "All the village chiefs before me applied military measures to suppress the people but I'd rather apply social-welfare measures that make the people like me."

The problem was finally resolved last week, when the district chief decided that the people could be controlled in their new location by moving a platoon of airborne troops into the area.

Mui said that one of the first things the troops did in the area last week was to arrest four persons thought to have led the people in tearing down their houses and relocating them.

He said the sudden move by the 80 families was "part of a Vietcong campaign to destroy all the refugee camps and get the people to return to their native hamlets."

Now that the airborne troops are in his village, Mui said the district chief told him to "explain to the people the situation so as to help keep them from falling into the Communist scheme of aggression."


**Both Sides Oppress Vietnamese Villagers**

(By David K. Shipler)

**Hoai My, South Vietnam, October 20.—**A deceptive serenity cloaks this humble village near the central coast of South Vietnam. The Lai Giang River, broad and clear, moves lazily through the lush rice paddies to the sea. On its southern bank, mingling among banana trees and coconut palms, thatched houses stand intertwined by meandering paths.

There is no barbed wire here, there are no sandbags or bunkers. But here is one place where the endless struggle of the Vietnam war is still being played out with the continuing agony of the last decade.
The people of Hoai My have just emerged from 18 months under Vietcong control; their village is occupied now by Government troops. But it has hardly been a step from darkness to sunlight, for they have found life under both painful and oppressive.

The Vietcong, who held the village from April, 1972, until about a month ago, extracted heavy taxes in the form of precious rice, villagers say. Despite the Paris cease-fire agreement's guarantee of freedom of movement, those who tried to leave were sent into the mountains for indoctrination and forced labor, according to the peasants.

On the other side, the Government continually defied the cease-fire, subjecting the village to periodic shelling. In late September, as the rice was nearly ready for harvest, the villagers say, Government forces launched air strikes and heavy artillery barrages, killing a number of civilians and destroying houses.

**LOOTING LAID TO SOLDIERS**

Government troops then moved into Hoai My, stealing water buffalo and rice and jewelry from the people, who complain that looting and harassment continue.

Six women of the village said that on October 18 several militiamen of the Government's 217th Regional Force Battalion, which is occupying Hoai My, entered the home of a pregnant woman named Mrs. Tho and took her rice.

“She tried to stop them,” one of the women said, “and they beat her, and now she is ill.”

A young man who is a member of a Government ranger battalion stationed elsewhere said that his wife, a village resident who fled during the fighting, returned yesterday to gather some of her belongings.

“The R.F. took the necklace and bracelet she was wearing,” the ranger said. Tight-lipped and looking weakly at the ground, he had none of the normal swagger and pride of a ranger.

Hoai My is an hour's walk and then a boat ride from the nearest road, so there are no cars or trucks or motorbikes. In its remoteness it is beyond the reach of civilian government. Since the fighting, village officials have not dared return, and the prevailing force here is not the law but the gun.

**CAUTION IN PUBLIC**

People are afraid. Out on the dusty paths, where the young soldiers—many of them teen-agers—move back and forth ominously with their American-made M-16 rifles, the peasants speak cautiously. But in the coolness of their mud-and-thatch houses they tell their stories.

A middle-aged woman pointed to the sky visible through the skeleton of her roof. Part of it had been formed of sheets of corrugated metal, and Government troops, she said, tore most of them off to cover the outpost.

She paid heavy taxes during Vietcong control, she related, but at least she knew. "When the Government soldiers came," she continued, "they took the cows and buffaloes away or they killed them. They sold one cow for 20,000 piasters [$38] and one buffalo for 25,000, and we dare not say anything.

Without her buffalo she cannot plow her muddy fields, so she cannot grow the rice that South Vietnam desperately needs. "I do not know what to do now to earn a living, so I just buy rice and sell it in Bong Son," she said, referring to the nearby district capital on the main road.

As she spoke several villagers gathered outside to talk in quiet tones. A young woman related that a Government soldier was leading away her buffalo until she pleaded with him and bribed him with 5,000 piasters.

**SECOND BRIBE DIDN'T WORK**

Then another soldier came for the buffalo. She pleaded him to leave it and gave him 10,000 piasters. He accepted the money, she said, but he still took the animal away.

Suddenly the talk died. Outside a soldier in fatigues had appeared in the crowd. The people began to speak about innocent things such as the price of rice.

In a while, after the soldier moved away, another woman began. At the time the Government troops fought their way into the village, she said, her husband was in Bong Son, so she tried to flee, but before she could take her rice to Bong Son, the troops came and seized a lot of it.

Under the Vietcong the taking of rice was not so random, some villagers con-
tended, but a systematic, organized process. On a stalk of rice, you could pick the grain on top and the grain on the bottom, and all in between was theirs," said a sinewy man named Ho Ha.

"Life was terrible!" Mr. Ha spat the words. "All your body was marked with labor. Whenever they saw that you started to farm more, they would tax you more."

Phan Long, a farmer and carpenter, said the Vietcong made every peasant put a pot in his kitchen, "and every time you cook some rice, you put some in the pot."

Once in a while they came by and picked up the rice," he said. "Just listening to the tax rise, you could not sleep for many nights."

UNTIL THEY DIE

Both Mr. Ha and Mr. Long told of the imprisonment of Government employees and those who tried to leave. "Those who worked for the Government are imprisoned by them in the mountains until they die of disease," said Mr. Long, who assessed that he was "very happy to live under the Government."

"We knew of people trying to leave the liberated area and were caught by them," Mr. Ha said. "They had to be indoctrinated in the mountains—for one month to many months—lectures all the time and hard work, like digging trenches."

Every few months, he said, a visiting troupe of singers and dancers would come to the village to put on performances as a way to indoctrinate people—"they are always about how good they are and how victorious they are."

Those who had sons or husbands in the army were placed in a special category by the Vietcong, according to Nguyen Thi Nien, the mother of an infantryman stationed in the Central Highlands. These families were often assigned special tasks.

Before the invasion by Government troops the area was shelled and bombed. Mrs. Nien said, adding: "Whenever a woman in the village was killed by artillery fire, they told us to take her body to the district village to protest and also to ask the authorities to return our sons to us."

"The women would take the body to a nearby army outpost," she said, "and the troops would say it was not their company that fired into your area, but it happens, our country is at war and people get killed."

MURKY ALLEGIANCES

Hoai My, deep in a traditionally strong Communist area, has long been subject to shifting control and shifting political sympathies, and the allegiances of the peasants are as murky as the muddy water that inundates the paddies at this time of year.

All that seems secondary now, for if the war was ever truly a battle for men's hearts and minds, it has lost this character here, degenerating into a fight over rice.

The Government offensive was initiated to deprive the Vietcong of rice just at harvest time, according to Capt. Dang Sanh Son, deputy commander of the Regional Force battalion in the village.

"The occupation of the area is a big setback for Communist forces in the province," the captain explained. "Their forces in the western part rely on the forces in this eastern side for a rice supply."

He does not talk about changing men's minds. He is proud of a night ambush he staged two nights ago in which six Vietcong soldiers were killed. He is proud of cutting off an irrigation canal that had been providing water for the rice in a few hamlets still under Vietcong control. "With no water their rice will die, and they will die with it," he said.

Without embarrassment, he reported "that when we moved in here, many people ran the other way." He noted too that his men had made their headquarters in the house of a Vietcong official whose wife stayed behind.

SOME SAY IT'S UNSAFE

Many villagers ran to the Government side, fleeing the fighting. While some have come back, others who check the village by day leave well before dark. They consider it unsafe, citing an unexploded bomb in a house and remarking that fighting still breaks out from time to time.

Captain Son wishes they would return, especially the officials who can tell
whether the women who trudge into the village every day to take out rice are residents or opportunistic outsiders. This is an issue that has produced friction and exchanges of charges of corruption between the Regional Force battalion in Hoai My and a Ranger unit across the river.

This morning a militiaman in a boat headed for Hoai My shouted to a boatload of women carrying rice the other way that the Rangers were stealing everyone’s rice. He directed them to a path that would avoid the rangers.

The rangers say that the Regional Force is selling rice cheaply to anyone who gets to the village and that the ranger checkpoint across the river is designed to prevent outsiders from making off with the crop. Identity papers are examined, a ranger said, and if a nonresident is found, she is detained for a few hours and warned.

Beneath the surface of Hoai My’s idyllic setting, the war continues on many levels. Asked when he thought it would end, Captain Son replied: “I will let that question be answered by the politicians. Our duty is just to protect our land and our native place. The more land under our control, the better. The fate of the country will be decided by others, not by us here.”

[From the New York Times, Aug. 24, 1974]

VIETNAM VILLAGERS ARE VICTIMS OF BOTH SIDES

MAIMED OFTEN DON’T KNOW WHOSE MINE WAS RESPONSIBLE

(By David D. Shipler)

QUANG NGAI, SOUTH VIETNAM.—Just off the major highways along South Vietnam’s central coast, the patterns of Government and Communist control shift and glide and overlap like shadows.

It is not strange, then, that the 14-year-old boy named Nguyen Hue does not know whose mine it was that blew off his leg two weeks ago. He was cutting firewood, as he had done many times before, in a place near Son Kim village, where his parents have a farm. The mine had been planted out of sight. By whom? “How can I know?” he asks.

Nor is Tran Dinh Du, 13, sure about the mine that took his right leg off below the knee as he was cutting grass to sell as feed. “I don’t know,” he says, “but people then told me it was ours.”

What people mean by “ours” in Quang Ngai province is not always certain, for as a method of survival during this long civil war, the peasants have acquired an instinct for blending with the current political landscape, whatever genuine sympathies and allegiances they hold below the surface.

Many move quite easily from one political vocabulary to another, and in this kind of war there is no neutral terminology to describe the combatants.

Some American Quakers who run a medical clinic here for amputees like Nguyen Hue and Tran Dinh Du have observed that if a patient from the countryside is asked a question about “the Vietcong” or “the Communists” he will answer approximately in that lexicon. But if the same question is asked about “liberation forces,” the “front” or the “Provisional Revolutionary Government,” the answers come back in that terminology.

In the countryside around the district capital of Nghia Hanh, six miles south-west of Quang Ngai, the Vietcong have reportedly spread the word that they will refrain from shelling the town from 7 to 9 a.m. each day to give people a chance to go to the market.

As skillful and manipulative as this may appear, in some views the Vietcong have lost political sophistication in recent years. Their local cadres and guerrillas are younger, more hot-headed, less disciplined. Their methods of violence, once calculated and tailored to precise objectives, have acquired an erratic quality and a measure of unpredictability.

This partisan analysis, advanced by some American and South Vietnamese officials who have an interest in discrediting the Vietcong, sustains the notion that American military involvement did score a certain victory here after all by depleting the ranks of the Vietcong’s experienced leadership, leaving them without mature people to carry on the struggle.

If it is true—and the truth of such matters is always elusive in Vietnam—it may explain some of the senseless cruelty.

When Nguyen Cho was very small, his father was killed in his ricefield by Government troops. “I don’t know where his grave is,” says the boy, who is now 13.
As he grew up, he met Vietcong guerrillas many times. "Once they told me to go away with them—'the revolution will take care of you,' they said. I told them I didn't want to go."

Two months ago, while he and friend named Tu were watching over a grazing cow in a familiar field, Cho walked up to a guava tree from which he had picked fruit once before. Suddenly, an explosion ripped through the lower part of his left leg, killing Tu and leaving Cho bleeding on the ground.

"The Communists had tied a mine to the bottom of the tree," Cho explained. "I knew immediately it was the Communists because as I lay on the ground there, villagers came and were about to take me away when the Communists came and told the people not to take me, but to pay for the mine before taking me away.

"I begged them to release me. They told me and the villagers, 'pay for the mine or we'll take this boy to the mountains.' I begged them, telling them I was an orphan. They finally agreed, but they said they would get payment from the lady I worked for."

Cho figures that the guerrillas were angry to have wasted a mine on a boy when it was evidently intended for Government troops.

"The war is crueler than before," said Pham Cong, chief of the village council of Binh Thanh, 12 miles north of Quang Ngai city. "They have more weapons now," he said of the Vietcong, "and they have changed their policy. They don't spend much time teaching or giving propaganda lectures. They are very tough with those not on their side."

At the edge of Binh Thanh village, not more than 200 yards off the main Government highway, Route 1, there is a settlement of refugees who get frequent visits from the Vietcong.

In broad daylight after the Government militiamen had gone off to lunch, some Vietcong guerrillas, firing small arms, came to the periphery of the settlement. A burst of gunfire came from behind a row of houses.

"It was answered with the thump of a Government mortar round fired from the highway. Villagers raced for their homemade bunkers. More automatic weapons fire. Whoomp! Another mortar round. Silence.

[From the Washington Post, Aug. 7, 1974]

'PEOPLE GRABBING' SEEN AS AIM OF VC ATTACKS

(Danang, August 5.—During a visit to the Vietcong a few months ago, I sat at dusk beside a trail in the high mountains southwest of here, sipping spiced tea from a canteen and gazing 20 miles across the dark plain at the evening's first twinkling lights in Danang.

It was quite a view, and my Vietcong guides fell silent for a time as we rested in what seemed an atmosphere of utter peace.

Suddenly, about three weeks ago, that same vast coastal plain and the lower valleys of the high brooding mountains erupted in spasms of war as Communist forces attacked four important population centers nestled in against the mountains, all located an easy hour's drive from Danang.

At least 20,000 refugees have come out of the valleys and across the dusty plain, and 25,000 more persons have either been or are about to be lost to the Communists or liberated by them, according to your point of view.

The fighting is still going on and masses of people are still being rooted out of their homes to be claimed by one side or the other.

Accordingly to observers here, this is the largest-scale fighting in the Danang area since the Vietnam cease-fire went into effect 18 months ago.

In addition, it is the first time since the cease-fire that regular units of the North Vietnamese army have been committed to battles near Danang. Since these are the best units that the Communists have, their presence is taken to mean that, whatever the Communists intend to accomplish here, they are very serious about it.

There are nearly as many theories about the reasons for the latest series of attacks as there are observers: The Communists want to attack Danang, they want to cut off highway 1 stretching all the way to Saigon, they are "practicing" for a general offensive next year.

All of these theories may be true, but there seem to be two more important reasons for the attacks.
First, they appear to be designed to "grab people" to live in the sparsely-populated Vietcong areas. Second, there is the Vietcong's own explanation that the attacks are in retaliation for continuing cease-fire violations by government forces in the area.

During my visit to the Vietcong in April, they were careful to steer conversations away from their own military plans, although they spent a good deal of time accusing the Saigon government of invading their territory or shelling it in violation of the cease-fire agreement.

They were also careful to avoid any suggestion that North Vietnamese units were in the area or that northerners might have any kind of an influential role in the Vietcong political and administrative setup.

Instead, the Vietcong emphasized their political idealism, their hatred of the "American imperialists," and the tremendous effort they are making in the zone they control to open schools and hospitals and bring about economic development—in short, to get life back to normal for the people whose lives had been shattered by so many years of war.

But things seemed far from normal south of here last week.

The scene was a stunning spectacle of war in sharp contrast to the relative peacefulness of a few months ago.

The sound of bombs and artillery explosions came from all sides. A dozen spirals of dirty black, brown and white smoke dotted the plain like whirlwinds, marking the targets of government air strikes or Communist artillery shells fired from deep in the mountains.

You could look up toward the green mountains and see jets darting earthward out of the clouds, and the explosions of their bombs and rockets on the hillsides.

The "people grabbing" efforts that have followed these attacks have been described by refugees here.

Refugees from the Queson Valley said the Vietcong had come into their villages before dawn and announced over loudspeakers that they would bring trucks later to transport the people deep into the "liberated zone."

"They set up checkpoints to keep people from leaving the village," said one 19-year-old girl. "About half the population was able to escape anyway."

Another refugee said the man with the loudspeaker had a northern accent, which is quite different from the accent of the people here on Vietnam's central coast.

The refugees made it clear that they were not as much afraid of the fighting as they were of being picked up by the Vietcong and taken away.

"I was afraid they would take me into the mountains of their zone," said an old woman. "I'm afraid I would starve there because I heard they make you live on a collective farm."

An old man said: "We are all afraid of the Vietcong. You must work hard for them hauling supplies, and they don't pay you anything."

Not far away in the mountains, in a formerly government-controlled area in southern Duc Duc District, the government has completely lost contact with another 2,000 people and the soldiers who were with them.

Reports coming out of the area say that the Communists are loading these 12,000 people on boats and trucks and taking them several miles south and deeper into the mountains near the old district capital of Hiepduc. I remember that area very well, because it was near my deepest point of penetration into the Vietcong zone during my two-week visit with the Communists.

It was a pleasant enough place, seemed firmly under Communist control, and economic development, mainly the reopening of long-closed ricelands, seemed to be taking place.

But I remember noticing that there were very few people in the area—a few merchants here and there, a few peasants working in the fields.

It was a sharp contrast to the lands controlled by the government or in contested areas on the flatlands to the east, where thousands of people lived in crowded huts along the roads and where the fields were packed with hundreds of working peasants.

The grand hopes and plans of economic development voiced by the Vietcong officials seemed somehow out of key with the rather barren landscape.

Should a large number of people be brought to that area, an economic boom might certainly follow.

The Vietcong said that only about 100 people a month moved into their zone, a small trickle for a province as large as Quangnam with a total population of about 600,000.
The trickle was so small, the Vietcong said, because government secret police and military operations prevented the people from crossing over. About 20 miles east of Danang, in another area that has been a hot spot in recent weeks, about 13,000 people are surrounded by Communist forces in the town of Thuongduc.

The fighting has been so intense that helicopters for several days were not able to make it in even to evacuate the wounded. The government has been able to maintain radio contact with the garrison there, however.

The second reason for the attack—government cease-fire violations—was advanced by Vietcong spokesman Vo Dong Giang in Saigon the other day. In April the Vietcong claimed that the government had shelled at random in their area of control and had, some months after the cease-fire, set up a series of hilltop outposts in Vietcong territory.

They also said that government troops had conducted many battalion-sized and smaller sweeps through Vietcong territory in violation of the cease-fire. The government reply to these claims is that it has done nothing that was not a direct response to Communist cease-fire violations.

Well informed, non-Communist sources have confirmed that the government did, in fact, set up hilltop outposts after the cease-fire went into effect, and that this was a military measure intended to disrupt Communist efforts to gather the important rice crop in the Quason Valley area 20 miles south of here. Since the cease-fire agreement stipulates that "the armed forces of the two South Vietnamese parties shall remain in place," setting up the outposts would seem to violate the agreement.

The most purely retaliatory act in the past several weeks of fighting appears to be the Communist shelling of Ducduc district town located on the plain just over the mountains from the Quason Valley. The town has been virtually leveled. About 600 houses have been destroyed or damaged. A total of about 9,000 shells fell on the town, sometimes as many as 600 a day.

Some 8,000 refugees, almost the entire population of the town, fled to Danang. This weekend, shells were still falling sporadically on Ducduc, and some refugees were returning for their possessions.

**SAIGON FORCES RETAKE 2 BASES NEAR DANANG**

SAIGON, August 5.—Counterattacking South Vietnamese Rangers today captured 2 of the 11 outposts lost in weekend fighting on the approaches to Danang, but military spokesmen said two key towns are still in "imminent danger."

Government officers in the field said casualties in the fighting were 208 Communist-led soldiers and 30 government troops killed, 98 government troops wounded and 25 missing.

New fighting was reported on a broad front west and south of Danang.

Military sources in the field said the recapture of two outposts near Ducduc and Thuongduc does not lessen the threat to the towns from units of the Vietcong 511th Division and the North Vietnamese 324th Division.

South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu said in Saigon that the fighting along the northern coast was the beginning of a general Communist offensive. He compared it to the 1968 Tet offensive declaring: "They think the allies can no longer help us."

**GIs' VIETNAM TERRAIN ABANDONED—COMMUNISTS HOLD OLD BATTLEFIELDS**

SAIGON, August 5 (UPI)—Two years after American troops stopped fighting major battles in the Vietnam war, almost all their famous battlefields are in the hands of the Communists. Hamburger Hill at the edge of the Ashau Valley, where one officer ordered 12 charges up the slopes for a "gallant victory," lies for behind Communist lines. Khesanh is a North Vietnamese airfield and missile ground. Conthien is a Vietcong political stronghold.

U.S. commanders during the Vietnam war turned out to be mistaken in their belief that the Communists never fought to hold land. Today, the Communists control more land than they did in 1965 when the Marines landed at Danang. Only one of the famous American battlefields of Vietnam, a coastal enclave
around Chulai Base, 335 miles north of Saigon, can be visited by Westerners today, but it is surrounded on three sides by the Vietcong.

American troops entered the “Iron Triangle” Communist stronghold 15 miles north of Saigon in 1967 for a highly publicized victory, but now the area is dominated by the Communists again.

War Zone C, 60 miles northwest of Saigon and the target for operation Junction City in 1967—another “victory” which claimed 282 American lives—today is a major North Vietnamese army recreation and rest area.

The first American battlefield stand was made by the 1st Cavalry Division in the Ia Drang Valley of the Central Highlands, 280 miles north of Saigon, against the best of the North Vietnamese army in November 1965.

The Americans claimed victory but the valley today is firmly under control of North Vietnamese forces.

The last American stand came in the summer of 1972 at Artillery Base Pace, 75 miles northwest of Saigon. It also lies deep behind Communist lines now. The Vietcong’s de facto capital, Locninh, is close by.

In 1967, U.S. paratroopers fought their way up Dakto Hill, losing 325 men.

The troops ate hot Thanksgiving meals that November even as the battle raged, but the Communists eventually won the hill and control it today.

[From the New York Times, Nov. 30, 1974]

JAMMED CITIES POSE A LONG-TERM PERIL TO SAIGON GOVERNMENT

By David K. Shipler)

SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM.—The urbanization of Vietnamese society is proving to be one of the most durable products of the American involvement in the Vietnam war, and one that contains acute political and economic liabilities for the South Vietnamese Government.

Millions of rural families were pushed from the countryside during the years of warfare, especially by the intensive American bombing and shelling, and were drawn to the cities by the concentrations of jobs and the short-lived economic boom at American military installations.

In a rapid and dramatic migration the proportion of the population living in cities jumped from 15 percent to 45 percent between 1960 and the final American withdrawal 19 months ago.

Now the cities are swollen, impoverished and unwieldy. Although they lie beyond the reach of direct Communist control, they provide breeding places for anti-Government sentiment and hold the potential for political instability. Since the American withdrawal they have become sites of widespread joblessness, declining living standards and increasingly vivid contrasts between rich and poor.

IMPACT AND GOAL

As a result the immense American impact may ultimately help undermine the major American goal: the retention of a stable non-Communist government for South Vietnam.

Saigon is now one of the world’s densest cities, more so than Tokyo, New York or London.

Cam Ranh, a seaside town of 3,000 in 1960, exploded into a ramshackle city of 115,000 by 1972 as refugees settled around the gates of a vast American base, building shacks out of ammunition crates and the debris of war.

In the same period Da Nang, also the site of large American installations, rose from 104,000 to 458,000. Nha Trang from 49,000 to 206,000, Can Tho from 49,000 to 171,000.

This “false” urbanization was described as “one of the hidden costs of the war” in a 1972 study by James E. Bogle, a planner who was under contract to the United States Government.

“The United States, in its pursuit of the war, has accomplished two objectives which will affect development in both Vietnams,” he wrote. “First, it has defeated the Mao Tse-tung theory of a revolt against urban centers by the urbanization of the people of South Vietnam. and, second, in bombing North Vietnam, it has forced decentralization of the urban centers in that country.

“It is not hard to speculate on which of the two Vietnams may emerge politically and economically the stronger. The republic’s gross urban problems lie before it, while North Vietnam should be much better able to cope with fewer urban problems.”
The war has always had priority, and neither the vast American aid program nor the Government in Saigon has placed much emphasis on urban ills. Although Washington has occasionally financed urban-planning studies, there is no urban specialist among the array of American technicians and advisers still in South Vietnam, according to John F. Hogan Jr., press attaché at the embassy. Little money goes to urban programs.

‘ONLY SOLUTION’: LAND

Part of the reason lies in the fundamental economic theory that seems to guide both Washington and Saigon: that once peace comes a great tide of reverse migration will sweep jobless urban residents back to the countryside, where they can produce the food, rubber and timber considered essential for economic recovery.

The main exponent of this assumption is Dr. Phan Quang Dan, Deputy Premier for social welfare and land development, in whose office stand four six-foot-high filing cabinets stuffed with applications from families that want to return to rural areas.

“They have lost their jobs,” Dr. Dan said. “There were no factories, no industries. Just the sheer presence of American troops, American enterprises, attracted them to the cities. The only practical solution is to give them a piece of land. I do not see any other solution unless you bring back the G.I.’s.”

Dr. Dan’s view is widely held, and the Government has made deliberate decisions not to try to make the cities more attractive. Electricity and running water have not been extended into vast new Saigon neighborhoods of shacks on stilts above canals and marshland.

“We think Saigon is growing too fast, said Bui Huu Tuan, Deputy Minister of Public Works. “Everything we do now is to stop this growth. We cannot do nothing—not anything is impossible. We do the minimum to keep down the political pressure in Saigon.”

“Right now we do not destroy any slum area,” he explained in a recent interview. “We leave them there, we forget them. We do not provide them with water or power—we forget them.”

Yet Mr. Tuan is part of a small corps of officials convinced that migration back to the countryside will be limited. Urbanization must be reckoned with and harnessed to promote industrial expansion, he believes, so he is interested in building up smaller cities where agriculturally related industry is needed.

Officials believe that since the American withdrawal the flow to the cities has slowed to a trickle. Despite the continued fighting and the normal trends of developing countries toward some urbanization, there has even been some reverse migration.

Cam Ranh, for example, appears to have lost population. It has the air of an old mill town whose only industry closed down a few years back. Along the roads and paths outside the former base some shacks stand empty. Some families have been accepted into the Government’s resettlement program.

It is also easy to find those who will stay in the cities. They are everywhere, many of them children who barely remember the farm.

CENTERS OF OPPOSITION

The cities have become the centers of political opposition to President Nguyen Van Thieu, and while Western intelligence analysts see no evidence of an increase in Vietcong political activity there, the Communists have made little secret of their delight over the growing unrest. Governmental corruption becomes more infuriating as economic fortunes decline in the cities, and it is the Roman Catholic anticorruption front that poses the greatest threat to Mr. Thieu. Its leaders and sources of support are in the cities, as are the constituencies of most of the opposition legislators. Mr. Thieu and his political allies have done least well in balloting in city precincts.

Many Vietnamese believe that urban life has changed their society irreversibly by loosening family ties, bringing crime and drug addiction and sowing suspicion among neighbors.

Housing is bad. The Government has built only 800 subsidized apartments in the last year, most priced well above the means of poor families.

To many, the city seems alien. Western, un-Vietnamese. A young man said sadly: “The Confucian basis of the country, which respected intellectuals and did not respect merchants and soldiers—now that is reversed. A lot of people are attracted by the city. They will not do the old thing again.”
INTERESTING STREET GAMES FOR SAIGON'S CHILDREN

(By David K. Shipler)

SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM, September 14.—Eight-year-old Dao Chich, whose
nickname means “Burglar,” holds a sandal up to one eye and squints seriously
along the sole, taking careful aim at a small cluster of rubber bands that he and
his two opponents have put on the sidewalk about 30 feet away.

With a sudden snap of his wrist, he sends the sandal skimming just above the
pavement, sliding precisely into the little stack of rubber bands and spraying
them across the concrete. Dao Chich has won again. He scampers down the side­
walk, picks up the rubber bands and stuffs them into his pocket.

Saigon is a city of street games. Along the broad boulevards, in the quiet side
streets, deep among the labyrinths of lanes and alleys that lace the city, children
play with what they have, making ingenious games of the simplest ingredients:
sandals and rubber bands, cans and battle caps, chopsticks and coins, corncobs
and sticks, marbles and stones, broken bits of brick.

SANDAL-THROWING GAMES

Sandal-throwing is the base for a whole family of games with numerous varia­
tions. Sometimes instead of rubber bands the targets are bottle caps or cans.

In one popular version called tat lon—the words mean “throw” and “can”—
a can is placed inside a small circle drawn on the street. One boy, who is It,
stands by the can.

Others try to knock the can away with their sandals. Whoever succeeds must
then run and pick up his shoe before the boy who is It can get to the can and put
it back in the circle. The child who loses is It for the next round.

Coins are used in another category of games, and there is hardly a residential
block in Saigon where, if you listen carefully, you cannot hear the clink of coins
against concrete. The basic idea is to throw your coin at your opponent's. If you
hit it—which these small Saigon marksmen do with regularity—you keep it.

The variations go on and on. The Government has conveniently made coins
about the size of a quarter that are worth only 1½ cents, so coin games flourish.
As for marble games, there is dan lo, in which a little hole is dug and each
player tries to shoot into the hole first. Whoever wins has the first turn to try to
hit someone else's marble. “If a boy hits my marble three times, then he can pick
up mine,” explains Xuan, a 13-year-old.

There is nam lo, “five holes” which is played something like croquet. Each
player shoots the marble into one hole after another, and whoever gets to the
fifth hole first can then hit the others' marbles.

And there is what the children call dan mo, which is a bit like the opening
shots of billiards. Nine marbles are placed inside a triangle drawn on the side­
walk, each player trying to knock the marbles out with a marble of his own. The
word “dan” means “marble” and “mo,” pronounced “maw,” is simply a Viet­
namese imitation of the French word “mort”—dead marbles.

GIRLS' PLAY DIFFERS

“Do girls ever play these games?” a bunch of boys is asked. They hoot with
laughter.

“Girls play marbles very well,” says Thanh who is 13. “They couldn’t get a
marble into a hole 10 meters big.”

Girls play a game like jacks, but with chopsticks. Nguyen Thi Diep, a 12-year
old, agreed to show a curious American how it was done.

She squatted on the sidewalk, threw a ball into the air with her left hand, let
it bounce once and caught it. While that was happening, she did fancy things
with five pair of chopsticks.

First, she held them in a bunch and turned them over in her two hands twice.
On the next throw, she tossed them on the ground, picked up two with her left
hand and caught the ball in the same hand.

Then, as the ball was in the air again, she slapped the chopsticks twice against
her left palm and caught the ball. Then she tapped them twice on the sidewalk
and caught the ball. Then she tossed them down again, picked up two with her
left hand, put them under her right arm and caught the ball.
Then she began again, doing everything in threes, then fours, fives, sixes. The ball flew higher and higher, the chopsticks clicked and clicked. Even the boys watched in admiration.

Soccer in Saigon is like stickball in New York. The goals are made of piled rocks. The ball is often so deflated that it seems soggy when it bounces. The players get tangled up in neighbors’ laundry, and sometimes in neighbors’ children. But the boys who play are usually very good, and some go from the streets to the ranks of professionals.

The war creeps into some of the street games, which are played by children who have never known a time of peace in their short lives. Some have fights with stones, and they call it combat.

Others line up in teams, one on either side of Cong Ly Street and hurl corn­cobs at each other. One side is the Vietcong and the other is Vietnam. The corn­cobs are their grenades.

Recently a 12-year-old boy who ran across the street to retrieve a corncob was hit by a car and killed. The kids on Cong Ly Street don’t play the game much anymore.

[From the New York Times, Jan. 22, 1975]

HEAVY PSYCHOLOGICAL TOLL IS HALF-HIDDEN BUT SHATTERING RESULT OF THE LONG VIETNAM WAR

(By James M. Markham)

SAIGON, SOUTH VIETNAM, JANUARY 20—An outsider in South Vietnam is forcefully struck by the appearance of normality almost everywhere. In the bustling cities, in the beautiful, expansive countryside, people conduct their lives in seeming obliviousness to the war.

After decades of foreign intervention and civil conflict, this may be one of the people’s most precious achievements, but it appears to be extremely costly.

The mental stress of a war whose weapons have been as much psychological as military has been enormous, and since the uneasy cease-fire of January, 1973, it appears to have become even more intense.

“In the beginning there was great hope for peace,” a Saigon psychiatrist said, “and now the despair is greater because there had been hope.”

He said that after it became apparent that the fighting would continue, a number of women with draft-age sons came for treatment for acute depression. They had hoped that their 17-year-olds and 18-year-olds would be spared.

AGONIZING CROSSROADS

Among teen-agers reaching the agonizing crossroads of deferment or of conscription until age 43, a rise in the number of cases of schizophrenia has been noted, the psychiatrist reported. In Europe and America the onset of analogous crises usually comes much later, he added.

Dr. Tran Minh Tung, a former Minister of Health and a pioneer in mental health in South Vietnam, agreed that the sundering of the cease-fire and the continuing war has had a dispiriting effect on “the mind of the people.”

“Maybe the people have become more war-weary, more pessimistic about the outcome, even though the people were very blase about the prospect of peace,” he suggested. “But still we did entertain some hope.”

Dr. Cao Van Le, who runs the country’s one overloaded mental institution, at Bien Hoa, north of Saigon, believes the sharp economic decline after the American disengagement added importantly to the level of stress, with the patient load tripling in a year.

Biet Noa has slightly fewer than 2,000 resident patients, the bulk of them psychotics who became uncontrollably violent at home, Dr. Le said, and about 20 outpatients appear daily for a month’s drugs.

DRUG SUPPLY REDUCED

The American pullout has reduced the drug supply, so shock therapy is widely used to make up the difference. Aside from helping to train a few doctors, the United States has given no assistance to South Vietnam’s fledgling mental health program.

A. Terry Rambo, a Vietnamese-speaking American who, as a social anthropologist, has made several studies of stress, has noted “much more open display
of violence—fist fights in the streets, to a small degree violent crime, and suicides.”
Such behavior is extremely unusual for Vietnamese, who are disciplined from
infancy to smother aggressive impulses in personal relations.

Mr. Rambo and others believe that the greatest psychological pressures are on
people in “contested” zones in rural areas where control passes back and forth
between the Communist and Saigon sides.

In a study two years ago on the people of Ben Suc, who were uprooted from
their village and believed to be sympathetic to the Vietcong—by the United States
Army in 1967, it was found that the level of strain was significantly higher than
ever recorded in studies of other nations and cultures.

Sixty-five percent of those interviewed, the new study reported, “register
above the point which, by the clinical standards of North America, would be
considered an indicator of need for consultation and very probably for therapeutic
aid.”

It is noteworthy that the Army operation in 1967 split up families that, for a
variety of reasons, have not been reunited. Students of Vietnamese behavior
believe that the enduring institution of the family—the focus of the most intense
loyalties—is probably the strongest guarantee against psychic and social disen-
tegration.

Discussing earlier problems, Dr. Tung, the former Health Minister, recounted
that after he had helped the villagers from some war-torn Mekong Delta districts,
be soon had a flood of patients from the area, mostly poor people who made the
long trip in hope of relief.

They complained of bombing and shelling attacks, he said, and they were
worried about their teen-agers conscripted into militia units, about a husband
abducted by the Vietcong or a brother jailed on suspicion of helping the Com-
munists.

“They suffer,” the doctor said. “They think this is fate. They do not blame
the officials. They do not blame the Communists.”

Gary D. Murfin, a political scientist at the University of Hawaii, is completing
a study on the long-term effects of the dislocation of 10 million of South Vietnam’s
19 million people from 1965 to 1974. He argues that forced relocation for political
reasons generates such psychological strain that people become immune to
appeals to loyalty.

Another Saigon psychiatrist said that many psychotic patients appeared to
have trouble establishing a national identity.

“Some say they are French, some Americans, other nationalist—but what is it,
a nationalist?” he said. “They feel the other side is perhaps more Vietnamese—
that it has a stronger identity in psychological terms!”

“But,” the psychiatrist added, “the other side is also more fatiguing, disiplined,
demanding.”

“Almost all my paranoid schizophrenics believe they are being followed by
the C.I.A. or the political police,” he continued. “The simple, uneducated ones
talk about the political police, the younger, more educated ones about the C.I.A.”

He maintained that the suspiciousness bred by civil war had led the Vietnamese
to develop “a total loss of confidence in one another” apart from the family.

Even a casual observer can see manifestations of this suspiciousness: a bureau-
cracy in which no one trusts another to do his job, a Government that sees most
signs of opposition as Communist plots, the governed who rarely believe their
leaders and who concoct the most fantastic, Byzantine explanations for the
simplest events.

“We live very much in an atmosphere of distrust,” Dr. Tung remarked. “We
have become more or less paranoid in this war.”

[From the New York Times, Nov. 13, 1973]

VILLAGERS LINGERING IN MISERY IN ‘SAFE’ SITE NEAR SAIGON

(BY DAVID K. SHIPLER)

BINH HOA, SOUTH VIETNAM—It has been nearly seven years since American
troops suddenly surrounded the prosperous village of Ben Suc, forced its resi-
dents into a barren make-shift camp 20 miles away and then burned, bombed
and bulldozed the village out of existence.

The campaign was part of Operation Cedar Falls, an effort to end once and
for all the Vietcong’s resilient stronghold in the Iron Triangle, an area of forests
and settlements northwest of Saigon.
That day—Jan. 8, 1967—proved pivotal in the lives of the villagers, but not in
the way the Americans had foreseen.

The people of Ben Sue were told that they were being rescued from Vietcong
domination, that they would be moved to a “safe” location, that life would be
better. It was a struggle to win their hearts and minds, the Americans explained.

Now the villagers are forgotten people, landless and poor, living in rows of
cramped concrete houses that are jammed together along a few dusty paths here
in Binh Hoa, 10 miles north of Saigon.

'A VERY EASY LIFE'

"In Ben Suc we had a very easy life," said a strong-faced woman. "A lot of rice,
rice fields, fish, a lot of vegetables near the forest, a lot of brick houses with red
tiles."

"Who wanted to go away? Nobody at all," she told an American visitor, adding:
"Your troops came and told us to get out, and if we did not go they threatened to
shoot at us and burn our houses."

Now most of the villagers have no land to farm. Those who grew up depending
only on the strength of their backs must reply on others to hire them by the day
at tiny wages.

In Ben Suc they had been secure in the abundance and stability of a rich
agricultural community; now, in desperation, some have slid into the orbit of
Saigon, commuting to the city, subjecting themselves to the profound uncertain­
ties of the deteriorating urban economy.

"I have not had work for a long time," said Lam Van Ba, a muscular man who
had been a farmer in Ben Suc but who was sitting idle in front of his small
house.

"Life was easy there," he said. "You have so much rice at home you feel very
comfortable. You are not afraid of anything. If you stop working for a month
you are not afraid. But here if you stop only for a week you worry very much."

DOLLAR A DAY FOR A WHILE

He has worked as a mason’s helper, earning about a dollar a day. Recently,
as the prices of concrete and steel have risen sharply, construction has been cur­
tailed, and he and other villagers have gone without jobs.

"Life is very bad," Mr. Ba said. "The price of rice is very high. Many families
eat just once a day."

The woman with the strong face commented: "We are very sad. The pay is
nothing. We have barely enough rice, and not even enough money to buy wood
for the kitchen."

Some pride has gone out of the people too. One house stands empty, abandoned
by a family that fled to escape deep debts. "They were honest and sincere peo­
ple—just unlucky," a neighbor explained.

No Government official has visited the people of Ben Suc for years, they say.
Soon after the village was destroyed, the Government had the dingy concrete
houses built here and it provided rice for six months.

Then officials came to take a census, the villagers recall, and others gave out
old clothing, some so tattered that it had to be thrown away. Since that time,
they say, there has been nothing.

A few people have been caught in a kind of reverse land reform. Seven years
ago Government bulldozers cleared away some forest so that a little farming
could be done. Villagers worked the land, digging up stumps and roots and plow­
ing and planting.

THE OWNERS REAPPEAR

While some people paid a modest rent, others were given plots by the Govern­
ment and paid nothing. Now that the land has become productive, its owners are
arriving to take it back.

"Mine was taken away last year," said Vo Van Lung. "I was given 1,000
piasters [less than $2] by the owner for my labor, for cultivating the piece of
land."

He charges that the "owners" recently bought the land from Government offi­
cials. "They are relatives or friends of the district chief," he said. "They are
rich and they are powerful, so how can you complain?"

Now Mr. Lung, who has six children, works occasionally for a dollar a day
clearing weeds or helping to harvest somebody else’s crops.
He does not blame the Americans who forced him from his village. "It is because of war," he said. "It is because of the situation. You have to accept it."

This spirit of resignation is common, but not universal, among the people of Ben Suc.

When an American walks through the settlement, he is introduced to Nguyen Van Loi, 9 years old, and is told that American troops killed his mother and father when Ben Suc was destroyed.

**FOUR SONS WERE SLAIN**

An elderly woman says angrily, "My mother was 80 years old, and one American hit her on her head with a stick!" Phan Thi Dep tells how her four sons, aged 14 to 18, were killed that morning as they worked in their rice fields. "My daughter survived because she went to the field late on that day," she added. "She had to cook rice."

Still, smiles seem to come easily. "Smiling is a good omen for the future," said Nguyen Thi So. "Even if you have nothing in your stomach now, you smile in the hope of having something in your stomach tomorrow."

A woman said, "If you run out of tears, then you have to smile."

In the book "The Village of Ben Suc," Jonathan Schell describes in detail the American attack, ending with an account of the final bombing of the ruins, "as though, having once decided to destroy it, we were now bent on annihilating every possible indication that the village of Ben Suc had ever existed."

If that was the goal it was not attained, for Ben Suc is still part of the people who lived there; they want to go back. "Maybe we will get back when we die," one old woman said to another. "Maybe they will take us back and bury us."

[From the New York Times, July 6, 1974]

**WHERE WAR IS LIFE: TALES OF THE VIETNAM DELTA**

(By James M. Markham)

**ONG CHUONG ISLAND, SOUTH VIETNAM**—In the delta, it is the war that defines life. The war is ancient, ordinary. But other things happen in the delta. Some are not so ordinary.

For example, on June 6, on this placid riverine island, 20 elderly men cut off the tips of one of their little fingers in front of a large crowd. Then, using the severed fingertips, they wrote "bat khuat"—"indomitable"—in their own blood on large white banners.

A photograph of the 20 fingertips, encased like cuff links in a small tray, was "respectfully" sent to President Nguyen Van Thieu in Saigon.

This grisly act of defiance was in keeping with the sanguinary reputation of the Hoa Hao, a reformist Buddhist sect born of the social and psychological disruptions of French colonialism.

The Hoa Hao, who once slit French and Vietminh throats with equal pleasure, are no longer what they used to be: a law totally unto themselves. Divided into at least three major factions, the Hoa Hao spend much of their energy fighting each other. A string of underworld-style killings of Hoa Hao dignitaries remains unresolved.

**POTENTIAL FOR HAVOC**

But the finger-chopping exercise was an ominous reminder of the Hoa Hao's potential for causing havoc. And the Government respects their virulent anti-Communism.

So, after having refused for some time to meet a series of seven demands, President Thieu on June 21 flew to Can Tho and huddled with Luong Trong Tuong, leader of the most vociferous faction.

Mr. Thieu wisely bent on enough of the seven demands—increasing the number of draft-deferred Hoa Hao officials, granting three-day leaves to Hoa Hao soldiers on their religious holiday, promising to increase the number of Hoa Hao district and province chiefs—to mollify the militants on Ong Chuong.

But some of the Hoa Hao are still restless.

"We have fought against the Communists since 1945 and throughout the delta are our bones and blood," said Ta Anh Dang, a rigid-faced farmer and one of those who chopped off their fingertips. "Hundreds of thousands of Hoa Hao have died. But we are still mistreated."

The rambling delta district town of Ben Tranh has a cause célèbre.

On Oct. 25, 1973, Le Van Duyen, a well-to-do farmer who had been waging a
one-man crusade against corruption in the district, was shot to death in his home in the early morning.

Eventually, three local militiamen confessed to the murder, saying that they had been urged to do it by Lieut. Col. Ngo Quang Thi, the district chief, who had been the main target of Mr. Duyen's lonely campaign.

The colonel, the three militiamen and a fourth suspect were all charged with the crime by a civilian court in My Tho, but then the case was switched to the main delta military court in Can Tho.

About 60 people from Ben Tranh came down in trucks for the trial but were dismayed when the military prosecutor, instead of prosecuting, exculpated the colonel. "Such a handsome man could not be a killer," he said.

A five-man military panel headed by a civilian judge pronounced the defendants not guilty of the murder of "the saint of Ben Tranh," as Mr. Duyen is now known.

But Saigon newspapers, outraged and incredulous at the verdict, took up the case. To calm the uproar, the powers that be decided to retry the case in the principal military court in Saigon.

"We will be very happy to go to Saigon to witness another trial," said one Ben Tranh resident. "But we are afraid it will be the same thing again. It is a shame for Vietnam."

On Route 4 in Ben Tranh, local people have built a large concrete shrine in memory of Mr. Duyen. A street has been named after him and, a statue of the old man—in his peasant's white pajamas and conical hat—is planned.

In the shade of towering trees behind a pleasant pagoda in Cao Lanh, Ho Chi Minh's father, Nguyen Sanh Huy, lies buried.

Outside Cao Lanh, few know this. In the town itself not everyone knows. "Elderly revolutionary," says the inscription on his gray stone monument, which local people say was built by the Vietminh in 1954 just before their "re-groupment" to North Vietnam under the provisions of the Geneva accords.

Openly contemptuous of the French colonial authorities, Nguyen Sanh Huy was dismissed from a prefectural post in central Vietnam in the first decade of this century. He became a solitary wanderer—just as his son would.

An old man in Cao Lanh who has gathered a small oral history of the later years of the roaming Mandarin says that once—the year must have been 1911—father and son met in Saigon, where the man who was to become Ho Chi Minh was working in the Citroën garage on the Rue Despagne.

"BE A MAN"

The future leader of Vietnamese Communism wept when he saw the poverty of his father, the story goes. Angered, Nguyen Sanh Huy beat his son with a rattan stick, shouting, "You are a man, so be a man and don't shed tears like a girl."

Nguyen Sanh Huy came to Cao Lanh several years before his death in 1929. He practiced Chinese herbal medicine, lodging with his patients but never accepting money from them.

"He was well loved by all the people," said one 73-year-old man who remembers him. "He was very nice to children and would always pat them on the head."

Mr. Huy was originally buried in an unmarked grave. But after the Vietminh built the impressive monument, his fame began to spread.

Local people say that for many years at Tet, the lunar new year, someone stole into the graveyard and repainted the monument. Soldiers would wait in ambush for the mysterious Tet visitor but never trapped him.

Now, however, the grave has fallen into disrepair. Some people say that angry soldiers dislodged the stones at its base.

The coconut monk has piled up a bunch of firewood in the shape of a wide U and has threatened to incinerate himself if the police raid his island.

The problem is that the police, as part of a nationwide crackdown on draft dodging, have been checking the papers of the monk's 3,000 followers. Many are deserters.

Some people think that the coconut monk, who lives on an ornate floating pagoda off Phoenix Island in the middle of the Mekong River, is a little nuts.

"I have just sent another registered letter to President Thieu asking him to let me go abroad to visit Mao Tse-tung and Pham Van Dong to tell them to work for the peace of the country," bellowed the tiny, scrawny monk through an intercom that links the pagoda and the island. Pham Van Dong is Premier of North Vietnam.

The police do not seem to know what to do, although their paper-checking has already driven several hundred deserters to other havens.
WIN AND PEACE SIDE BY SIDE IN A MEKONG DELTA HAMLET

(BY JAMES F. CLARITY)

CAI LAY, SOUTH VIETNAM, NOVEMBER 4.—The people who live in the villages and hamlets of this lush, wet, green Mekong Delta area say their lot has not changed much since the signing of the cease-fire in Paris last January.

THE TALK OF CAI LAY

There seems to be less fighting now, say the people of Cai Lay, a district capital in Dinh Tuong Province about 40 miles southwest of Saigon. But only the brave or the foolish, they say, walk some roads after dusk.

Almost side by side are the harvesting of the rice crop and the shelling of suspected Communist positions a few miles away. A militiaman cleans his rifle carefully near where a farmer is equally diligent in putting a small shrimp on a hook to fish for his lunch in a rice paddy.

As kaleidoscopic and anomalous as the pattern of life in the area may seem to a foreigner, the people have accepted it because there is nothing else to do. Still, they are not without pride in their work—be it war or peace—and they are not without hope.

At the bunker that is the defense headquarters for the hamlet of Tay, an 18-year-old militiaman, Nguyen Tan Duc, cleaned his rifle and screwed it back together with the point of a sickle.

DIRT STOPS ROCKETS

His superior, a 47-year-old militiaman, proudly showed an automatic rifle and a machine gun he said his unit had captured while defending the bunker against Vietcong attack on Sept. 11. He said the walls of the bunker were made of dirt and that dirt stops Communist rockets better than concrete.

Where Route 4 is joined by the road to the town of Dam Giang, another district capital, a policeman warned that the side road was mined and that the town was being attacked by Vietcong mortars. This was confirmed by people farther down the road, who said that no one had been killed so far in the assault and that passenger buses had turned back. The policeman ordered visitors to turn back also and to report to the district chief.

Behind the sandbag walls of the headquarters of B Battery, 71st Artillery Battalion, of the South Vietnamese Army’s Seventh Division near Cai Lay, a 155-mm. cannon smoked after firing in the direction of the forest. “Tell them go away!” an officer shouted to the gate guard as three visitors approached.

At the Roman Catholic church in the village of Dong Hoa, the visiting priest, the Rev. Tran Van Huyen, said he had preached on “love among men” at morning mass. The collection from the 150 people who attended amounted, he said, to 300 or 400 piasters, the equivalent of 60 cents to 80 cents.

Father Huyen said that about 100 war orphans lived at the church now, and that some of them had become adults and still did not want to leave. One of these is Thai Thi Bach, a 23-year-old woman who said her right hand was sliced off by a fragment from a bomb dropped by an American plane nine years ago.

She said she had been given a new arm “with funny-looking hooks” and had thrown it away. She said she hoped to get another new arm someday, one that “looks like a real arm.” Such arms cost about $20, she added, but she did not know where to get that much money.

Father Huyen commented that “the miracles and deeds of God are very hard to explain to people.” One explanation, he said, is that Russians and Americans produce war materials and must find some place to use them. “Many of the people think that way,” he added.

A few miles from the church, traffic on Route 4 was halted as more than a dozen armored personnel carriers rolled through a rice field away from a wooded area and clanked up onto the main road, apparently after a sweep in the forest. Soldiers sat in the carriers, many of them smiling. An order from their captain snapped loudly over their radios as foreigners were noticed on the road: Tell your men not to speak to those guys and do not refer them to me!”

As the vehicles rumbled down the road, artillery fire sounded to the south and helicopters with machine guns swept over the woods. A mile or so along the road, away from the armored vehicles, a soldier said that the Government forces lost the nearby hamlet of Phu Qui a few days ago and had been trying to win it back.