

Fight Near Saigon

From News Dispatches *WP*

SAIGON, March 31 — The relentless Communist offensive continued its southward push Monday with the capture of Quinhon, South Vietnam's fourth largest city.

The city, 270 miles north of Saigon, was reported to have fallen in much the same way as Danang three days ago. Communist commandos within the city and a shock force attacking from the outside took advantage of the disarray of demoralized government troops, according to military sources.

Heavy fighting also was reported close to the capital as the Saigon military command said 12 Communist tanks were destroyed when government defenders successfully stopped an attack at Chonthan, a district capital 45 miles north of Saigon.

At Nhatrang, 100 miles to the south of Quinhon, South Vietnamese rangers were reported to have gone on a rampage of shooting, looting and raping, terrorizing civilians in scenes reminiscent of the last days of Danang.

The international effort to evacuate by sea the 1.5 million civilian and military refugees at Danang was suspended because of heavy Communist fire from the shore. The flotilla of 20 ships from six countries was said to be standing by, however, in hope the evacuation might be resumed.

According to American officials in Saigon, all Americans have been evacuated from Quinhon and from Tuyhoa, 50 miles to the south. American civilians were being evacuated from Nhatrang but the U.S. consul general there, Moncrieff J. Spear, was said to be remaining.

Informed sources said the U.S. embassy began the evacuation of staff members and their families from Saigon on a semi-official basis as a precaution. There is concern that there might soon be a spasm of political turmoil and anti-Americanism as well as an attack on the city.

The sources said that the embassy was not asking or ordering its personnel or their families to leave, but was paying for their travel if they chose to go.

U.S. officials estimate that there were about 6,000 Americans in Vietnam when the North Vietnamese and Vietcong offensive began a month ago. Most of them were in Saigon.

In Monday's action along the coast, North Vietnamese infantrymen and tanks were said to be pushing out of the Central Highlands surrendered to them two weeks ago and probing toward several of the larger towns on the coast, including Phanrang and Panthiet.

See FIGHTING, A10, Col. 7

Communists Drive on Coast

FIGHTING, From A1

Phucat, about 20 miles north of Quinhon, was attacked by Communist forces Monday, and military sources said heavy fighting was under way. Vietcong radio broadcasts said Phucat had been captured.

In announcing the suspension of the evacuation effort at Danang, the U.S. embassy said that the Communists, firing B-40 rocket-propelled grenades, had stopped the small boats that had been bringing the refugees from the shore to the larger ships standing off from the city.

The transfer operations were suspended at midnight Sunday night, the embassy said. Officials said ships would continue to stand by.

The embassy said a total of 30,000 refugees had been landed farther down the coast by U.S. ships and another 3,000 by a Philippine landing craft. Another 6,000 to 8,000 were reported still at sea.

An earlier American effort to bring the refugees out by plane collapsed Saturday because panicking South Vietnamese civilians and soldiers had created chaos at the Danang airfield.

[At the United Nations, Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim issued a general appeal Monday night for help to "relieve the plight of innocent persons, including those who have been displaced" in Indochina.]

[Waldheim said aid could be channeled through the U.N. high commissioner for refugees or UNICEF, "both of which have programs of humanitarian assistance on both sides of the conflict."]

A Vietcong spokesman in Saigon warned Monday, "any ship of any nation that violates the territorial waters of the Provisional Revolutionary Government will be punished."

The Vietcong mission also issued a statement Sunday describing the fall of Danang. It said the South Vietnamese army "fled in complete rout, and thousands of soldiers handed over their weapons and surrendered."

Hanoi Radio said the people of Danang poured into the streets to welcome the Vietcong. It said many gov-

ernment officers "mutinied, punished their die-hard commanders and came over to the revolution with weapons." Other Saigon troops were "seized with panic" and were wiped out or taken prisoner, Hanoi radio said.

In Saigon, a policeman who had managed to escape from Hue before the old imperial capital fell two weeks ago said that the Communist troops executed five high-ranking police officers and a young cadet in an apparent effort to terrorize the population into giving up hopes of fleeing.

The North Vietnamese News Agency distributed a statement by a member of the Vietcong mission in Saigon, saying that all foreigners living in territory controlled by the Provisional Revolutionary Government would be unreservedly helped and protected if they lead an "honest life, respect the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam and obey the laws of the revolutionary government."

The statement was said to have been given to Lewis King, described as a representative of the United States alliance of Christians and Missionaries.

The Vietcong official also reportedly said that foreigners were at complete liberty to leave the revolutionary government's zones if they wanted to.

A group of eight American missionaries were trapped by the fighting at Banmethuot two weeks ago. However, there are reports that several hundred individuals with French passports were caught in the Central Highlands and at Hue and Danang.

According to reports from Nhatrang, South Vietnamese rangers from three regiments driven from Banmethuot started brawling throughout the city Sunday night. Drunk on stolen liquor, they reportedly roamed the streets looking for women, fighting with air force men from a nearby base and answering requests for payment of their restaurant bills with bursts of machine-gun fire.

There were reports that some semblance of order was being restored in Nhatrang late Monday.

Saigon Marines Reportedly Slay 25 Refugees Evacuating Danang

AP correspondent Peter O'Loughlin was aboard the U.S. cargo ship *Pioneer Contender* as it made the last rescue voyage out of Danang Sunday carrying thousands of refugees.

By Peter O'Loughlin
Associated Press

ABOARD THE PIONEER CONTENDER, Danang, South Vietnam—marauding South Vietnamese marines shot and killed about 25 Vietnamese refugees on an American evacuation ship during frantic attempts to escape fallen Danang, crew members said. The marines claimed that they were killing Vietcong suspects.

The troops fought sea battles to take over lighters and barges to reach the *Pioneer Contender* and its sister ship, the *Pioneer Commander*, ahead of evacuating civilians Sunday as

the Vietcong took control of Danang. Crewmen of the *Pioneer Commander* reported that the mass killing occurred on the fantail of their ship.

Two Vietnamese men were also shot to death aboard the *Pioneer Contender* and a woman was wounded by unknown assailants in the last rescue trip out of the fallen city where about 1.5 million refugees are trapped. There were no reports of any American deaths.

[UPI reported that marines also raped, robbed and beat passengers on an evacuation ship and forced its American crew to barricade itself in a cabin. The agency also reported that David Kennerly, the official White House photographer who is part of a group making a fact-finding tour for President Ford, said he and U.S. Consul General Moncrieff J.

Spear were fired on by other mutinous South Vietnamese troops while flying in a helicopter in the area.]

Refugees who had paid their life savings, abandoned their families and possessions for passage to safety, died by the scores on the barges in Danang harbor where they waited four days for ships to rescue them. I saw 15 corpses and was told of hundreds dead on other barges.

In Danang, troops shed their uniforms—but not their weapons—and went on the rampage looting rice stores, robbing warehouses of canned goods and soft drinks and setting fire to buildings.

Out in the harbor, children lost their footing or were knocked over the side of heaving barges. Some

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Saigon Marines Reportedly Slay 25

MARINES, From A1

mothers leaped after them and were lost. Bodies floated in the water.

The ship's seamen turned away their eyes and noses as a tug pulled one barge in close with its suffering cargo. The smell of urine, sweat and rot swept the *Contender*.

Maybe 4,000 people were jammed into the barge, about 200 feet long and 80 feet wide. Wet from rain, scorched by sun, the occupants had been without food and toilet facilities for four days.

About half were women and children of all ages. Some of the children had been born aboard the barge.

Two Americans of unknown affiliation stood guard over the barge, which also contained hundreds of armed rebellious South Vietnamese troops and, so they said, some Vietcong infiltrators.

One of the guards, a burly blond in rimless glasses, sat on top of the 12-foot fence encircling the barge, nonchalantly chewing a cigar and nursing a submachine gun.

On the bridge of the *Pioneer Contender*, the radio cracked.

"*Contender*, this is *Pioneer Commander*. We've had a report that underwater sappers are on their way out. You'll have to keep moving. We're loading but it's a mess."

Capt. Edward C. Flin of *Mussapequa*, N.Y., a 200-pound master mariner, reached for the mike.

"Yeah," he drawled. "We had it yesterday, *Contender* standing by."

Chief Mate Robert Hollock, 30, of *Fairfax*, Calif., in hard hat and oil-stained overalls, was organizing the lines and hawsers to secure the barge alongside, a tricky job in the wind, rain and swell.

On the first trip out of Danang there had been some U. S. Marine guards from the evacuated consulate to help keep order. They had driven panic-stricken people back, fired shots over their heads and searched soldiers for weapons. Now, there were only the 44 officers and crew of the ship.

"Hell, we can't do that" muttered Hollock. "We're merchant sailors. I don't even know how to fire a gun."

A gangway about 50 feet long, dropping at a 45 degree angle from the ship's

side to the barge, was slung into place by the cargo boom. The rush began.

A seaman positioned himself at the top of the latter and began hauling children and infants aboard as their mothers scrambled for a foothold. He handed the youngsters to shipmates on deck.

Seamen pushing back a soldier shouted profanely, "Go desert some place else."

The bos'n worked the controls of the cargo boom. He dropped the cargo net into the barge and hoisted loads of women and children over the ship's side and into the hold like cattle.

Purser Clifford R. Rogero, 61, Jacksonville, Fla., signaled the bos'n when to hoist the net, cursing, pushing and shoving people out of the way in case they were hit by the swinging cargo net.

Wails, shouts, the cries of children, pleas for water, food, a doctor filled the air. A woman in the hold held up a dead baby. She was hoisted back to the barge so she could leave the body there. It seemed better than dropping the body over the side. Half an hour after loading started, a woman gave birth in the hold. She brought the baby in a peas-

ant's traditional conical Vietnamese straw hat to Rogero, who took it to the sick bay, washed it and, as he put it, "got it going."

At least four more babies were born during the night, and the rest of the 17-hour voyage to Camranh Bay. Probably twice as many died and were slipped over the side with their mothers' tears for a requiem.

In the lower deck, the crew's cabins and companionways were turned into a hospital.

One beautiful little girl, white-faced and unconscious, her breath coming shallowly, lay on the bunk of electrician Philip J. Goodson, 35, of Manville, N.J.

"She's suffering from exposure, I gave her some sugar and water," he said. "She's a lot better now. Don't you think she's a lot better now?"

She died during the night.

A Vietnamese army doctor who came aboard from a barge in pressed uniform and polished shoes tended the sick in his undershorts. Perspiration streamed down his cheeks.

The crew, against orders, raided the pantry. They boiled two buckets of eggs and gave them, with their milk ration, to the sick children.

VC Calls for Talks Excluding Thieu

From News Dispatches

TOKYO, March 31—Declaring that a "new turning point" has been reached as a result of overwhelming military victories, the Vietcong said Monday that it is prepared to "quickly settle all the affairs of South Vietnam" in talks with a new Saigon government that excludes President Thieu and abides by the Paris cease-fire agreement.

The statement, broadcast by North Vietnam's official Vietnam News Agency, was in an appeal issued by the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government, which declared:

"The Nguyen Van Thieu junta—main obstacle to the settlement of the political questions in South Vietnam—must be overthrown, and an administration standing for peace, independence, democracy, national concord and strict appli-

cation of the Paris agreement must be established."

But it added, "Realities have proved that the U. S. imperialist still refuse to end their military involvement and interference in the internal affairs of South Vietnam."

The appeal said the Vietcong "will advance to new and still greater victories, whereas the Nguyen Van Thieu junta, lackeys of U. S. imperialism, will surely face complete disintegration and coapse."

From Hong Kong, the New China News Agency reported that the coalition government of Laos has decided to close the South Vietnamese and Cambodian embassies in Vientiane.

Laotian Vice Premier Phoumi Vongvichit said the fall of Cambodia and South Vietnam would bring peace and prosperity to Indochina.

Phoumi, a Pathet Lao member of the Cabinet, said in an interview that he believed that South Vietnam and Cambodia have the right to choose their own governments, suitable to their geopolitical location.

He said Laos will not become Communist, as feared by the rightist side of the coalition government.



Shaded areas indicate territory lost by Saigon. Stripes show provinces facing greatest risk of capture.

New Pullouts Seen

By Michael Getler

Washington Post Staff Writer

Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger said yesterday he expected still more withdrawals by South Vietnam's retreating armies and predicted that North Vietnamese troops, within a month or two, would launch major attacks toward Saigon.

Schlesinger's predictions, made in a television interview, reflect both an increasingly grim assessment within the Pentagon of South Vietnam's chances and bewilderment here over the speed with which Saigon's defenses are crumbling over wide areas, mostly without a fight.

In an effort to speed supplies to the remaining forces, the U.S. Air Force, it has been learned, has begun using huge C-5A transports to rush more artillery and supplies to Saigon. The Pentagon is using money still left in this year's aid account, but it was unclear yesterday how big the new airlift would be.

Schlesinger's remarks illustrate the speed with which the South Vietnamese retreat has put Hanoi in a position to attack the capital in force. Twelve days ago he told reporters it would probably be early next year before Hanoi would make a grab for Saigon.

Yesterday he said it was possible that Hanoi may decide to be more cautious in going for Saigon soon. But the principal objective of the North Vietnamese now seems to be to keep moving and not give the South Vietnamese time to recover and regroup from the stunning setbacks, he indicated.

Some military analysts believe that Hanoi may now decide not to wage the expected major battle at the provincial capital of Tayninh, but may save its forces for an attack on Saigon itself because of the unexpected collapse of the South's defenses.

[President Ford partially blames Congress for the military collapse in South Vietnam, White House press secretary Ron Nessen said in Palm Springs, Calif. Details on Page A2].

Schlesinger acknowledged that the South Vietnamese had lost a "goodly number of their better units" in the few battles and hasty retreats thus far, and that those stragglers that have been salvaged from these units are now "ill-equipped" to do battle, having lost huge amounts of hardware in the retreat.

Senior military officers say that four of South Vietnam's Army divisions—roughly

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Sihanouk Reaffirms

Stand Against Talks

4/1/75 From News Dispatches

Cambodia's former ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, said Monday that there would be no negotiations with Cambodian leaders in Phnom Penh even after President Lon Nol leaves.

The Khmer Rouge insurgents surrounding the city would not negotiate with "bandit So Kam Khoy" after "supertraitor" Lon Nol's departure, the prince declared in a handwritten statement sent to Agence France-Press's Peking bureau. So Kam Khoy is to take over as head of state after Lon Nol leaves.

"In no way, under no circumstances, neither in the near future or at a later date, will the Cambodian resistance agree to be reconciled with traitors," Sihanouk stated.

He said that "the impending withdrawal of quelling Lon Nol and his replacement by other super traitors" had been decided "under pressure from the U.S. and its Asian satellites."

According to The Associated Press, Lon Nol told a group of his top generals Monday, "I am leaving . . . to pave the way for a peace settlement."

For the first time in four days, rebel gunners fired rockets into Phnom Penh. Three of them hit in the area of the presidential residence and the U.S. embassy, injuring four persons.

Insurgent troops penetrated the capital's defense perimeter across the Tonle Sap River, just 1½ miles from the city. They also shelled the airport at Battambang, 180 miles northwest of Phnom Penh, for the first time in more than a year.

More Vietnam Withdrawals Predicted by Schlesinger

DEFENSE, From A1

one-third of its entire force—are now “effectively lost.”

All this has happened without those lost divisions having inflicted any real damage on the North Vietnamese.

It is this combination of events — plus the enormous loss of guns, ammunition, trucks and other supplies by Saigon — that is feeding a sense of doom for the South among many senior military men here.

South Vietnam has six other divisions in the two Southern military regions including the Saigon area and the rice-rich Mekong Delta.

But now, rather than having at least a part of its very large Army tied down in the northern half of South Vietnam, Hanoi apparently will soon be able to have its entire and relatively undamaged Army in position for an attack on South Vietnam's heartland if it chooses.

Hanoi already has at least 15 divisions in the South, plus two of seven home-based reserve divisions that have moved in from the North and there are indications that elements of a third are now moving in.

“The force balance that was adverse to South Vietnam even at the start [of the new offensive] has now shifted far

more adversely against them,” Schlesinger said.

The Defense Secretary, interviewed on the Public Broadcasting Service's “Washington Straight Talk,” said he thought “it would be some time before the South Vietnamese government is able to stabilize the situation, so that we must expect some further withdrawals” beyond those which already have left about half the country in Hanoi's hands.

Under questioning, Schlesinger said the argument has always been that South Vietnam could survive in a stronghold defense drawn around Saigon and the delta. But, he added, “whether in fact that materializes depends on the ability of the government to stabilize the military situation.”

Military leaders here are baffled over who, if anybody, is ordering the steady retreat from Danang and provinces further south.

Schlesinger declined to comment on the wisdom of President Thieu's initial withdrawal strategy from the Central Highlands and the city of Hue. But he was critical of the tactical way it was carried out because of the losses of troops and equipment.

Historically, Schlesinger said, the tendency of retreat-

ing armies, unless they are very well led, is to disintegrate. The South Vietnamese army, after Thieu's decision, “became that kind of demoralized force,” he said.

Aside from the loss of regular army forces, the withdrawal strategy has also caused the loss of big portions of South Vietnam's regional and local forces.

Though he thought “there would be major actions directed toward Saigon in the next month or two,” Schlesinger added that if the military can hold “there is no reason to despair,” and that a smaller South Vietnam could survive as an economically viable country.

He made it clear that in his view, the long-term need for U. S. aid to the South extends well beyond the administration request for another \$300 million this year. As to what the United States will actually do, Schlesinger said much will depend on the recommendations of the Army chief of staff, Gen. Frederick C. Weyand, now on a fact-finding trip to Saigon.

“The U.S. has a continuing obligation to be helpful to South Vietnam but what particular form that takes remains to be seen,” Schlesinger said.

Speed of Collapse in South Surprises Hanoi's Leaders

By Jean Thoraval
Agence France-Presse

HANOI, March 31 — The breath-taking swiftness of the fall of entire South Vietnamese provinces in the past three weeks has been almost as big a surprise to North Vietnamese officials as to strategists in Saigon or Washington.

These officials share the astonishment over the way Hue and Danang and the Central Highlands were occupied almost as if the

troops were staging a victory parade, especially if one remembers the bitter fighting during the 1968 Tet offensive and the 1972 Easter offensive.

Even the most skeptical officials in Hanoi now admit that the demoralization of the South Vietnamese army was much greater than they expected. From the start of the latest thrusts; they had been predicting an eventual slowdown both in the advance of the victorious

troops and in the South Vietnamese retreat.

Paradoxically, it seems to many observers here that the "easy successes" are likely to be the main factor in halting—for now, at least—the latest offensive.

Replacing the South Vietnamese administration in a territory covering between 30,000 and 36,000 square miles poses a problem; administering, feeding, teaching and caring for the people of these provinces will be another problem.

Pressing forward at this time could risk political setbacks, and it seems that this factor is being taken into account both in Hanoi and by the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam.

Observers who remain convinced that the struggle in Vietnam resembles a game of chess, rather than a hand of poker, feel that a notoriously cautious and parsimonious North Vietnam would not have undertaken current reconstruction projects if the possibility of American reprisals similar to the B-52 bombing raids of 1972 still hung above their heads.

It is noteworthy that Hanoi and the Vietcong have stated recently that the last act in the Vietnamese drama would be a political settlement based on the 1973 Paris cease-fire agreements following the departure of President Thieu.

To some observers, the present situation brought back memories of the ending of the first Indochina war, in 1954, after the French defeat at Dienbienphu, as well as of the negotiations in 1968 and 1972.

On all three occasions there was serious bargaining around a conference table after one side had placed the other at a serious disadvantage.

Danang Still Haunts 'Last Man' to Flee

Agence France-Presse

SAIGON, March 31 — Sergeant Linh may have been the last man out of Danang, but he can't stop crying.

He cannot understand why he left his wife and six children behind in the panic when South Vietnam's second-largest city fell to the Communists.

He cannot sleep. If he closes his eyes, he sees the terror-stricken faces of his comrades who died hanging onto the landing gear as the last World Airways 727 climbed into the skies.

Linh is a native of Danang, where he lived with his family in Hoang Dieu Road while working as an air force mechanic at the airbase. He was on duty Saturday morning when his captain screeched to a halt in a civilian car, accompanied by his family and some other officers, and said it was time to abandon ship.

Linh and his comrades jumped into an American car that had been left at the entrance to the airport and followed their unit commander as he careened through refugees, corpses, and abandoned baggage.

A direct hit by a shell or rocket blew the captain's car to smithereens. Linh zig-zagged around the wreck onto a runway, racing with men on Honda motorcycles also headed for the Boeing 727.

As the jet began to roll, Linh scrambled into the wheel assembly, pushed from behind by his companions. Soldiers who could not clamber aboard were knocked down, and fired their carbines or threw grenades after the taxing airliner.

As the plane picked up speed and altitude, five or six men fell off. Boots and uniforms ripped off others who were only partially inside the wheel assembly. Then their faces began to swell like monstrous balloons and their skin shredded away in tatters.

Huddled right inside the assembly, Sergeant Linh was "saved."

Panic Begins to Grip City

By Philip A. McCombs
Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, March 31—A deadly panic is beginning to grip this city of despair.

Some foreigners are already preparing to leave. Vietnamese, many of whom worked for and with the Americans, wait fearfully for what may follow.

My friend of years, an astute Vietnamese who analyzes the political scene here, broke down with compulsive heaving sobs, grasping my hand.

"Nobody can believe in the government's ability to defend Saigon or in American help after the fall of Danang," he said.

As it has on almost all sophisticated Vietnamese, the agonized realization has dawned on my friend that in a short time, possibly in weeks, the Vietcong flag may be flying over Saigon.

"The best division we have, the 1st Infantry, evaporated at Danang," he said.

"There were four government divisions at Danang, and they're all finished. And what have we got protecting Saigon? The 18th, 5th, and 25th divisions and a brigade of airborne, which are not as good as the 1st.

"Our troops are terribly dispirited. The Communists will easily break through the line above Saigon, and then it will be like Danang, with mass hysteria and panic. It could happen any time now, it all depends on when the Communists are ready."

This is an assessment that the best Western intelligence is unable to contradict at this point, and it raises the stunning possibility that the second Indochina war may be nearing a rapid and—from the Unit

See MOOD, A12, Col. 1

MOOD, From A1

States point of view—terrible conclusion.

"No. 10! No. 10!" shouted a Vietnamese employee of the United States Information Service, using a Vietnamese expression that means, on a one-to-ten scale, that something is as bad as possible. He pounded one fist on the table and he shouted, and in the other hand he waved a wire-service report saying that the American embassy had begun to evacuate dependents.

Within minutes, the scare story had spread to virtually all Vietnamese employees. USIS director Alan Carter declined to give assurances that they would be evacuated in an emergency, according to Vietnamese sources.

The wire-service story is correct in that several embassy dependents are being evacuated—with all expenses paid by the U.S. government—at the specific request of the heads of their families. As yet there is no general evacuation of dependents, however, mainly because U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin fears that such a move would touch off mass panic in Saigon and trigger the immediate fall of the capital.

Martin is also reported by reliable sources to be censoring cables to Washington that fully reflect the desperate mood here—although to what end, at this point, nobody seems sure.

"It's obscene," said an American embassy official as he packed his household belongings, indicating the American radio station here playing soft love music.

"The other day they had a report that the American Woman's Association had canceled its fashion show for April 10. Does that mean the city is not going to be here April 10?"

According to American sources, only Martin and a few other top U.S. officials are privy to information on what is actually happening, and the hundreds of other American officials here are left in the dark, some of them nearing panic.

Wolfgang Lehmann, the deputy chief of the U.S. embassy, held two briefings for American businessmen, said an American businessman. "The first time, he tried to calm us down. The second time he outright lied to us to make the situation look good, and the next time he tries to pull any of that shit he's going to get mobbed."

This businessman, like many other private Americans here, is moving out—within days. The French business community here is also in a turmoil, with many sending their belongings back to France and many planning to leave.

Moving companies here, like Bekins Storage, report that business has skyrocketed during the past week. International flights out of Saigon are booked for days in advance.

The American postal system—limited to officials and some nonofficials such as journalists—is jammed now with hundreds of people trying to send out their belongings. The American consular section is mobbed with Americans marrying the Vietnamese girlfriends—to get them out of the country.

"This city has become a tinderbox," said one man with wide contacts in the Vietnamese community.

"Any one of a dozen things could touch it off, and it will mean mass hysteria and the end of Saigon. What you've got to remember is that Danang fell without a battle, fell of its own weight and mass public chaos."

"The really appalling thing," said an American official, "is that the government is doing nothing to prepare the

people of Saigon for what might come. When disaster hits, the people will panic and the government will be able to do nothing. Thieu hasn't even talked to the people in days, and I suspect he's probably sitting in the palace waiting for the results of Gen. (Frederick) Weyand's trip, waiting for those B-52s or for the marines to land." Gen. Weyand, the U.S. Army chief of staff, is visiting Vietnam at the request of President Ford to report on the situation here.

"I can see a week of utter terror here," said a Vietnamese-speaking American, "in which you won't be able to venture out into the street."

"The biggest danger to Americans will be the government soldiers, once they realize that it's lost and that the Americans have abandoned them."

A Vietnamese secretary said this afternoon, "People are terrorized, panicked." Then she broke into tears.

The fall of Danang brought a mood of profound fear and despair to Saigon. Before that people were afraid, but now they seem to feel that it is inevitable, that Saigon will fall. There is a sense here that things have gone beyond politics, that a military solution is inevitable.

"To me, the collapse of Danang so quickly was stunning and showed that Saigon cannot escape the same fate," said my friend. The question is when the Communists will launch attacks on Saigon.

"Twenty-one years ago, I left Hanoi for Saigon, which was completely strange for me, just because I wanted to live in freedom. Our country has suffered a lot of misery, and I have witnessed a great deal of unhappiness, but I think the most unhappy thing for Vietnam is that we don't have responsible and capable leaders. As a result of this, the collapse of the country is inevitable, unless there is a miracle."

Protests by Senators, Monks

By Don Oberdorfer

Washington Post Foreign Service

SAIGON, March 31—Thirty-eight of South Vietnam's 60 senators have approved a statement censuring President Thieu for failures of leadership, indicating that they hope that he will step aside, informed sources said Monday.

At the same time, militant Buddhist monks led by Thich Tri Quang, the bonze who led the struggle against President Ngo Dinh Diem, took to the streets for the first time in years with banners demanding Thieu's immediate resignation. After a short march, the monks were driven back into a pagoda by national police.

These and other developments signify rapidly mounting political trouble for the Vietnamese chief of state as battlefield disasters multiply. However, Thieu shows no sign of giving in to his critics — who are in-

creasing on both the right and the left, making his position less secure with each passing day.

Last Tuesday, Thieu announced that he was ordering the creation of a "combat Cabinet" to reorganize and reform his administration in view of "a critical situation." Since then the situation has become much worse on the battlefield and in the hearts and minds of many people—but Thieu has been unable to produce a new administration.

Several of those who have been asked to join Thieu's new regime have been unwilling to do so. Former Foreign Minister Tran Van Do in a meeting with high officials Saturday, said no capable and honest people will be willing to join unless they are given greater indi-

See THIEU, A11, Col. 1

THIEU, From A1

vidual responsibility than Thieu seems willing to delegate.

While Thieu's aides — notably Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem — struggle with the task of Cabinet-making, the government is immobilized even more than usual in the face of this country's gravest crisis. A vice minister, asked to make a small decision about the disposition of government property, replied, "I can't do it because I'm not really a vice minister and my boss is not really a minister any more." He explained that their resignations have been submitted due to the Cabinet shakeup.

The senatorial move against Thieu, which has been building during several days of backstage maneuvering, includes a number of legislators previously regarded as pro-Thieu. The president's lobbyists and some legislative leaders are said to be working to suppress a lengthy statement of Thieu's alleged failures now circulating in draft form among lawmakers.

Because the Vietnamese constitution provides an almost interminable procedure for impeachment, the statement is likely to be more of a political embarrassment than a legal obstacle to Thieu. But at this stage, he cannot afford many more difficulties.

The re-emergence of the militant Buddhists is another straw in the wind. Since his defeat and humiliation by the Thieu-Ky government in 1966, the monk Tri Quang has been in near-



THICH TRI QUANG
... asks Thieu's ouster

seclusion. But he reportedly told police Monday that if Thieu fails to resign, "We'll do like we did before"—evidently hinting at mass demonstrations.

Some of the most influential conservative leaders in the country—including Air Vice Marshal and former Premier Nguyen Cao Ky, former Foreign Minister Do, roving ambassador Bui Diem and labor leader Tran Quoc Buu—have said urgent changes in the Saigon administration are needed.

Do, Diem and Buu met with Thieu at Independence Palace March 15 — on the eve of the string of devastating military defeats—to say the time had come for a government with new policies. Subsequently Diem and Do met with former Premier Ky. This led in turn to a meeting of about 30 anti-Thieu figures at Ky's invitation March 26 and the arrest

of several of them that night on charges of plotting a coup.

According to a participant in the March 26 meeting, Ky said at the outset that he would have nothing to do with a military coup or any violent means of governmental change, in the belief that this would be disastrous to the country.

Ky declined to sign an organizing statement of the group on the ground that he is a military man. Former Foreign Minister Do and Dang Van Sung, publisher of the newspaper Chinh Luan also declined to sign, saying that they consider themselves intermediaries.

At Thieu's suggestion, Do and Sung sent a "scenario" for government changes to the palace on Friday. Do said this calls for a government of national union and immediate, visible changes in policy. Though it does not call explicitly for Thieu to give up some of his powers or step down, this is said to be its clear implication.

No word has been heard from Thieu, but Saturday morning Premier Khiem summoned Do, Sung, former Premier Phan Huy Quat—the last civilian Premier of South Vietnam and Nguyen Van Tho, a politically active dentist. Nothing was resolved in several hours of discussion, and South Vietnam appears no closer than before to a major political change.

Some say the replacement of Thieu is essential to make way for negotiations with the Communists before a final round of bloodshed. The Communist-backed Pro-

visional Revolutionary Government has said it will negotiate if Thieu is overthrown, a stand it repeated in a communique broadcast Sunday over Liberation Radio.

In the current state of military peril, it is doubtful that the Communists would settle for anything other than a negotiated surrender. This might save lives in a final showdown. So far the South Vietnamese power structure—such as it is—is not ready to go this far. But it is becoming increasingly impatient with Thieu, whose removal is seen as a precondition to any major change.

Rockets Breed Insecurity, But

By Jacques Leslie
The Los Angeles Times

PHNOM PENH—A Chinese-made 107-mm rocket makes a shrill whistle as it sails overhead.

By now most people in Phnom Penh are familiar with the sound, for the Cambodian insurgents have fired about 1,500 rockets into the capital and nearby Pochentong Airport over the past three months. Almost 200 persons, including many civilians, have been killed and more than 900 wounded. Perhaps a quarter of the wounded died later.

Rocket attacks on the city resumed Monday after a five-day lull.

The insurgents apparently hope that the rockets will become intolerable to people here and motivate them to rebel against the government. But except for Western residents and Phnom Penh's tiny educated elite, few people here seem to view the rocketing in a political context. Instead, it has taken its place as one more unsettling element adding to the instability of life here. Given Phnom Penh's population of 2 million, the odds of being hit by a rocket are considerably below one in a thousand, but even that consoling statistic does not eliminate anxiety.

"We live in an environment of permanent insecurity because of the rockets," said a Cambodian doctor. "Death could come at any moment. People have become fatalistic.

"But I don't think there is a panic. Some people are superstitious—they wear Buddhas or magic signs, things like that, but that's all.

"People in the United States normally drive cars with joy and gaiety, even though there are many accidents. The people here are not gay, but life goes on all the same."

The failure to provoke internal rebellion or collapse may be why the insurgents have recently fired most of their rockets at Pochentong Airport, apparently in an attempt to curtail the American airlift of ammunition and rice.

The places where people congregate change depending on the focus of recent rocket attacks. Phnom Penh's central market, for example was deserted after rockets hit it. *But now that no rockets have landed there for some weeks, business in the market has revived.* In contrast, Pochentong town near the airport is still considered a dangerous area and remains empty.

More recently the southern part of Phnom Penh—a region that includes the U.S. embassy—has been hit frequently. Embassy officials have become accustomed to hearing a warning siren when a rocket exploded nearby, then gathering in a ground-floor room until the danger is past.

Meanwhile, the fatalism of Buddhism seems much more dominant than anger.

Little Anger, in Phnom Penh

My Vo, a 29-year-old office assistant in a government ministry, was sitting at a table in his house one recent morning when a rocket exploded near him. It knocked him to the floor and killed his 13-year-old nephew.

A day later, My Vo lay on a cot in a hallway of Phnom Penh's Khet Maea hospital. His hand and back, which was still laced with shrapnel, were heavily bandaged.

My Vo said he had dug a bunker under his house as a precaution against rocket attacks, but the rocket that hit him was the first in a volley, and he had no warning.

"I thought the house was safe, but I never heard anything before the rocket came," he said.

Asked whether his being wounded made him angry, My Vo said, "I am angry, but I am a civilian. I don't know what to do. I'm angry that the other side fires rockets at civilians who don't know anything at all. The rockets hit only refugees and poor people, not the rich. Rich people have concrete houses, so it's harder to hit them."

Yet the experience does not seem to have influenced My Vo's view of the war.

"I have no ideas about politics," he said. "I am just a man in the middle. Whichever side wins the war, I can't become a Cabinet minister. If this side wins, I'll be an

office assistant. If the other side wins, I'll be an office assistant. I don't care which side wins."

When the war began in 1970, My Vo fled his home in Mondulakiri, an eastern province that fell to the insurgents. He settled in Prek Tateng, a town north of Phnom Penh, but in 1973 the war reached there and he was forced to move again, this time to the capital.

"The war has chased me from Mondulakiri to Prek Tateng to Phnom Penh," he said. "Now in Phnom Penh I am hit by a rocket . . . When I was in Mondulakiri I had all kinds of animals to eat. Now I come here and I'm very poor."

The government has ordered all schools closed, partly in response to the rocket threat. Some parents already had refused to let their children attend school. They reasoned that their homes might be no safer than school buildings, but at least someone could look after the children if they were rocketed at home.

Foreign residents, many of whom have the option of leaving, seem particularly upset by the rockets. When a Phnom Penh market vender who sells illegally obtained military flak jackets to civilians was asked by a foreigner who most of her customers were, she laughed and said: "People like you." The flak jackets go for \$10 apiece.

Lon Nol Exit May Lead to Army Cave-In

By Lewis M. Simons
Washington Post Foreign Service

PHNOM PENH, April 1 (Tuesday) — President Lon Nol left Cambodia Tuesday morning amid fears on the part of senior Cambodian military officers that the will of their troops to fight will dissolve with his departure.

Two Communist rockets were fired into Pochentong airport as a helicopter with Lon Nol and his party landed there—a last reminder of the desperate military position of the Cambodian government.

The 61-year-old Marshal Lon Nol then left in an Air Cambodge jet in what is billed as an "official" visit to Indonesia, but Cabinet associates have made it clear that they do not expect him to return.

The high command is concerned that government forces, already near total defeat at the hands of Communist Khmer insurgents, will view Lon Nol's departure as an immediate prelude to peace and therefore lay down their arms.

Lt. Gen. Sak Suth Sakhah, army commander in chief, and chief of naval operations Adm. Vong Sarendi met with Premier Long Boret, who himself is to fly to Jakarta, Indonesia, with Lon Nol.

According to a highly informed military source, the three discussed the need to maintain order and discipline among officers and men, particularly if the U.S. arms flow dries up. "No soldier wants to be the last to die in a war," this officer said. The Cambodian army "is no exception. The men will consider Lon Nol's departure tantamount to surrender, and many of them are likely to strip off their uniforms, change into sarongs, throw away their rifles and blend back into the local population."

[State Department spokesman Robert Anderson said Monday that if Lon Nol
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came to the United States, "He would be welcome."

[Un Sim, the Cambodian ambassador in Washington, said Lon Nol has no plans to visit Washington, Reuter said. The ambassador said, however, that Lon Nol will spend some time in Hawaii after he leaves Cambodia.]

Although Lon Nol's departure, which is being billed here as an "official visit" at the invitation of Indonesian President Suharto, is intended in large part to pave the way to peace talks with the Communists, there seems to be little good reason for the Communists to negotiate.

Although "marked improvement" was reported today in the government's bid to drive Communist forces out of a stronghold seven miles northwest of Pochentong Airport, the Communists launched new offensives in other locations south of the capital as well as in outlying provinces.

"They are 90 per cent en route to victory," said a foreign military observer. "Why should they negotiate?"

[Prince Norodom Sihanouk, titular leader of the insurgent forces, told Agency France-Presse in Peking that his movement had no intention of negotiating with the Phnom Penh government after Lon Nol leaves. Sihanouk denounced the man who will succeed Lon Nol as interim president, retired Maj Gen. So Sam Khoy, as a "bandit."]

The only chance the Phnom Penh government has of hanging on long enough to convince the Communists that there is some good reason to negotiate is if the U.S. Congress votes next week to continue military aid to Cambodia until the end of the fiscal year that ends June 30.

Some observers here are hopeful that legislators like Democratic Sens. Hubert Humphrey and Mike Mansfield, who have called repeatedly for Lon Nol to step down, will be induced by his leaving to vote in favor of a few more months of arms aid.

There is also some hope among those here who think negotiations could evolve that Congress will be influenced by the sweeping Communist onslaught in South Vietnam to give the Phnom Penh forces a last chance to defend themselves.

But the combination of Lon Nol's departure and a negative congressional vote could be devastating. At that point, which could come within a week, most of the handful of diplomatic observers remaining in this beleaguered city believe that the Cambodian army would simply dissolve.

So far, the one thing that has kept the army going, not to mention kept the civilian population of this capital from starving, has been the continuing U. S. airlift of ammunition and rice.

Sunday, a record 55 planes flying out of Thailand penetrated the sporadic rocket barrage on the airport. The airlift continued Monday.

Diplomats assume that in the event of a government surrender, or the slight chance of government forces fighting to the bloody end, the United States would resume its deliveries of food, on a humanitarian basis, although the shipments would probably be channeled through such organizations as the all-Swiss International Committee of the Red Cross or the United Nations.

Although by now a number of Phnom Penh residents have learned through the grapevine that Lon Nol is leaving the country, it was still difficult to assess their genuine reactions.

Newsmen speaking to shopkeepers, pedicab drivers and

civil servants got widely varying opinions.

Several, like the owner of a small sawmill not far from Lon Nol's private residence, said the sooner Lon Nol left the better off everyone would be.

"He is a murderer," the mill-owner said as he watched Lon Nol drive by in his slate-blue Rolls-Royce to visit his home for the last time. "When he leaves, peace will finally come to Cambodia."

Others were not so sure. "What is to become of us without the Marshal?" said a young secretary in a government ministry office. "Cambodian people must have a leader. Who will lead us?"

But just as they did when Lon Nol toppled Prince Norodom Sihanouk five years ago, most Cambodians will probably adjust very quickly to the idea that for a short time they are to be led by retired Maj. Gen. So Kam Khoy, and that in time there is almost certain to be Communist leadership in Cambodia.

Lon Nol himself—from the distant glimpses newsmen caught of him through the gates of Chamcar Mon (Mulberry Field) Palace and during his 15-minute sentimental visit to his home—seemed calm and resigned to an inglorious end.

After driving to his rather simple two-story cement house, set in a shady courtyard, the semi-paralyzed marshal, 61, walked slowly around the grounds and through the house. He gestured occasionally with the cane he has used ever since suffering a stroke in 1971. But his face remained virtually immobile; he showed no emotion as members of his household, family and military officers knelt before him and kissed his hand.

According to the latest information available, So Kam Khoy will be sworn in Wednesday, the day after Lon Nol leaves Phnom Penh.