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Refugees Flocking Into the Hue Area

By FOX BUTTERFIELD
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HUE, South Vietnam, April 4 —South Vietnamese Boy and Girl Scouts and college students joined with social workers to day in an effort to aid the masses of refugees who have fled here to avoid the intensive North Vietnamese attacks around their homes in Quangtri Province.

As the refugees, estimated to number more than 50,000, poured into this ancient imperial capital, groups of youthful volunteers picked them up in trucks and took them to empty schools and Government offices in outlying villages.

Hundreds of Boy Scouts, dressed in the familiar khaki uniform and red scarf, helped elderly women carry the meager possessions they had been able to take with them—worn beddings, sacks of rice, electric fans.

Jewelry for a Ride

Girl Scouts distributed loaves of French bread contributed by the Government.

The program to help the refugees here has been organized by the chief of Thuanhien Province, Col. Ton That Khien, but the refugees complain that for the first three days after the attacks began there was no Government aid.

"We stood by the road and

asked for a ride," said Hoang Huu Kinh, a young carpenter from a village near Dongha that was obliterated by North Vietnamese artillery. "But Government officials and army officers were too busy moving their own families and pets."

Mr. Kinh, who said his house was destroyed by a direct hit from an enemy rocket, had to barter his wife's earrings to get a ride on a bus. His wife cried their month-old son; his face was covered with a red rash and he had not eaten for three days.

The Kinhs were taken by truck to a small six-room elementary school in Phunny, a village four miles south of Hue, where they will stay with about a thousand refugees. As Mr. Kinh looked at the green rice paddies and the battered ruins of an earlier school blown up by the Vietcong during the Tet offensive of 1968, he asked, "Is this place secure?"

Boy Scouts and security policemen questioned the refugees about their home villages and what had happened to their relatives. The Scouts are trying to compile a central list of refugees; the police are worried that the Communists will plant agents among the refugees.

A Loaf of Bread Apiece

A group of timid girls from Phunny arrived with a gift of firewood and straw brooms to

help the refugees keep their rooms clean. A lieutenant from the militia garrison said he hoped the villagers would bring more food for the refugees, but he was not sure they would.

So far the Government has been able to provide only a loaf of bread apiece for the refugees and a little United States surplus wheat.

"We are going to die, my children!" a woman who had become separated from some of them cried out. "I want to go back! I want to go back!" she said as she tried to get onto the truck that had brought her to the school.

Two youthful Boy Scouts tried to console her, but she quieted only after another woman yelled at her, "The whole province has suffered, not you alone!"

Although some refugees criticized the Government for failing to help them promptly enough, they seemed to blame the North Vietnamese for their plight.

"It was the Communists who shelled us, no doubt about that," said Nguyen Thanh, a disabled veteran who had served with the South Vietnamese Army. "It was the most intensive shelling I have ever seen. Everything was destroyed. I cannot blame the Government troops for retreating. They had no choice."



QUANGTRI CITY: A wounded child peers from beneath bandage as she and other children wait to be evacuated. Wounded child peers from beneath bandage as she and other children wait to be evacuated from Quangtri city.

United Press International

Though trucks made repeated trips, many refugees were still crowded together in a large open area between the old Hue Citadel and the Huong River as dusk fell. They had no shelter, and later, as artillery boomed in the distance, it began to rain.