

1965-1967 : Fresh outburst of the anti-US-Saigon struggle. Hundreds of military operations were launched against outposts, even in Hue.

Tet 1968 : General offensives and uprisings against US-Saigon leading organs, bases and district capitals. The armed forces and population of Thua Thien seized the city of Hue and controlled it for 25 days.

1972 : During the general offensive, the armed forces and people of Thua Thien — Hue, in coordination with those of Quang Tri, smashed Saigon's strongest defensive belt close to the 17th parallel and threatened its defence system west of Hue.

Read : *Vietnamese Studies* No. 37  
Hue, Past and Present

### **QUANG NAM PROVINCE AND DA NANG PORT-CITY**

Quang Nam (including Da Nang) is about 870 kilometres north of Saigon ; it borders the sea in the east, Laos in the west, Quang Ngai and Kontum in the south, Thua Thien in the north. Total area : 12,000 sq. km.

It has a population of 1.8 million (1966 figure, not including Da Nang), mostly Kinh ; 50,000 are minority people : Ka Tu, Ve, Cor, Sedang...

The Saigon administration has divided it into two provinces and one municipality :

\* Province of Quang Nam in the North.

Area : 8,000 sq. km (including Da Nang) ;

8 districts :

Hoa Vang, Dai Loc, Duy Xuyen, Dien Ban, Hieu Dua, Hieu Nhon, Thuong Duc, Duc Duc.

Population : 1,400,000 (not including Da Nang).

Provincial capital : Hoi An.

\* Province of Quang Tin in the South.

Area : 4,000 sq. km.

Seven districts : Thang Binh, Que Son, Tam Ky, Tien Phuoc, Hiep Duc, Hau Duc, Ly Tin.

Population : 400,000.

Provincial capital : Tam Ky.

\* The port-city of Da Nang .

Located on the 16th parallel, 759 km from Hanoi, 979 km from Saigon, at the mouth of the Cam Le river, in the northeast of Quang Nam province.

— Two sectors : the inner city and the Son Tra peninsula.

Population : 600,000.

The Bay of Da Nang, also called Vung Thung, is 29 miles long ; it borders Mount Son Tra in the east, Mount Hai Sam in the northeast, Mount Cu De in the west, and is therefore well sheltered ; 10,000-ton ships can cast anchor 1.2 kilometres off shore. Since the 18th century Da Nang has been an important seaport. Under French rule, particularly during the resistance war (1945-1954), it was a supply base for the French forces with an airfield serving Central Indochina (including Lower and Central Laos).

Starting from 1954, the Americans transformed Da Nang into a big complex having a large airfield for jets and several smaller ones. Da Nang was the HQs of the puppet First Army corps and the First Tactical Area, and it is there that the first contingent of GIs landed in March 1965, at the start of the US war of aggression. Da Nang became a base for the US air, naval and marine forces.

A section of the Truong Son Range runs from the north to the south of the province with such peaks as A Tuat (2,500 metres) near the Viet Nam-Lao border, and Chua (1,400 metres). Thirty kilometres southwest of Da Nang is the Ba Na resort. Quang Nam province and Hue are separated by the Hai Van mountain which slopes to the sea and is crossed by the Hai Van pass.

The rivers rise on the Truong Son range and empty into the sea : Song Thuy Tu, Song Thu Bon, the biggest, flowing through Hoi An, formerly a bustling commercial centre, now the provincial capital of Quang Nam.

— The main communication lines include Highway I and the trans-Viet Nam railway which runs through the province from north to south.

— The section of Highway 14 which runs from Kontum to Hue crosses the hilly western region of Quang Nam and is linked to Da Nang by provincial Road 100.

Quang Nam is one of the richest provinces of Central Viet Nam :

\*Its plains, about 1500 square kilometres in area, have 117,000 hectares of cropland. Mulberry trees are grown on the banks of its rivers, from which a renowned silk fabric is produced. Cam Le tobacco is also much appreciated.

\* Its forests are full of high-quality timber : Kien Kien (*Hopea pierrei* Hance), sên (*Madhuca pasquieri*), iron wood (*Erythrophloeum fordii*) xoay (*Dialium cochinchinensis*). Cinnamon is grown in Tra Mi. A well-known local fruit tree is the *lon bon*.

\* Fishing is thriving. The region is known for the fish brine produced in Nam O, and the swallows' nests on its islands.

\* The subsoil of the province contains such minerals as gold, coal, iron, lead, copper, zinc. Gold is mined at Bong Mieu, 100 kilometres southwest of Da Nang. The coalmine at Nong Son (Que Son district) south of Da Nang is the biggest colliery in South Viet Nam. Mining of zinc and copper at Duc Bo (Tam Ky) has only just begun.

#### Struggle against imperialism

\* August 31, 1858 : An attack on Da Nang by 14 French warships started the French invasion of Viet Nam.

\* The province became a powerful center of the Can Vuong and Van Than patriotic movements (1885-1888); the movement for progressive reform (1905-1908). Peasants protesting against heavy taxation besieged the provincial mandarin's office and five district offices (1908). An insurrection led by Viet Nam Quang Phuc Hoi broke out in 1916.

\* After 1930, there were in the province strong bases and a powerful movement led by the Indochinese Communist Party.

\* Seizure of power in the province in the general insurrection of 1945.

\* During the nine years of war (1945-1954) the French were able to occupy only one-third of the territory of the province (northern part) while the rest belonged to the free area of the 5th interzone.

#### Struggle against the Americans

\* Powerful popular movement against the Diem regime; armed insurrections in the highlands (1959-1960), in the plains (1960-1961); protest movements of the Buddhists and other sections of the population against Diem (1963).

\* Against the US "special war", big victories were won at Viet An, Dong Duong (1964); many strategic hamlets destroyed.

\* Struggle against the US, and secession from the Saigon administration by the population and the opposition factions in the puppet army and administration (1965-1966).

Annihilation of Nui Thanh post held by an American company, the first victory over the American troops (1965); repeated attacks against Da Nang airfield, Chu Lai base (1966-1967); destruction of many posts, successful countering of enemy raids. Uprising and occupation of a part of the city and the H.Q. of the First Army Corps (1968).

\* Fierce fighting against US "Vietnamization" of the war: victorious counter-raids southwest of Da Nang

(1969), popular movement against the Saigon troops' invasion of Southern Laos (1971), offensive and uprising in the countryside, shelling of Da Nang (1972).

\*After the signing of the Paris Agreement : countering of "pacification" and encroachment operations ; popular movements for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and for getting rice supplies to combat famine.

Annihilation of the military sub-sector and occupation of the district town of Thuong Duc and of the Nong Son-Trung Phuoc area (1974) wiping out of Tien Phuoc and Phuoc Long military subsectors, liberation of Tam Ky town, Quang Tin province, Hoi An town, and Quang Nam provincial capital (March 1975).

#### PROVINCE OF QUANG NGAI

Capital : Quang Ngai, 877km Northeast of Saigon.

Area : over 4,300 sq.km.

Quang Ngai comprises 10 districts : 6 in the delta plain (Binh Son, Son Tinh, Tu Nghia, Nghia Hanh, Mo Duc and Duc Pho) and 4 in the uplands (Tra Bong, Son Ha, Minh Long and Ba To), with a total of 122 villages and 319 hamlets.

720,000 inhabitants (Saigon administration's 1960 statistics) of whom 80,000 belong to ethnic minorities : Hre, Cor, Ca Dong.

Four rivers with their sources in the Truong Son Range : the Tra Bong, Tra Khuc (the longest, 120km) Ve and Tra Cau.

Along the 98-km coastline there are many sand dunes. Cape Ba Lang An is a summer resort. Five estuaries : Son Tra, Sa Ky, Co Luy, My A and Sa Huynh, the largest of all, accessible to big junks and even seagoing vessels.

Mountains and jungles cover two-thirds of the territory. The Truong Son Range runs along the province from North to South. Mountains : Ca Dam, Thach Bich, Xuan Thu (the last-named more than 1,500 metres high).

Principal communication routes :

Highway 1 and the railway traverse the province from North to South ; Highway 5 links Quang Ngai city to the capital of Kontum province in the Central Highlands ; the Binh Son — Tra Bong — Tra Mi (Quang Nam) road ; the Son Tinh — Gi Lang — Gia Vut road.

#### *Natural resources*

The province has 80,000 ha of arable land mostly under rice (2 or 3 crops annually) or sugar cane. Sugar cane is grown on 10,000 ha, giving 20,000 tons of sugar per annum.

Forest covers 100,000 ha, of which 40,000 can be developed. Cinnamon is grown in Tra Bong and oil-bearing trees in Ba To.

Mining deposits : lead at Son Tinh, kaolin at Son Ha, iron at Mo Duc. Salt-marshes : at Sa Huynh.

#### *Historical data*

After the conquest of the country by the French colonialists, the Can Vuong Resistance Movement was laun-

ched (1885-1888), followed by successive insurrections of the minority peoples (1900-1920).

1917-1925 : Struggle for progressive reforms.

From 1930, Quang Ngai became one of the main centres of activity of the Indochinese Communist Party.

March 11, 1945 : Launching of the Ba To insurrection

During the first Resistance (1945-1954) Quang Ngai was part of the liberated zone, supplying manpower and material resources to the resistance in Central and Southern Trung Bo.

- 1959 : Tra Bong uprising and resistance to the Ngo Dinh Diem fascist dictatorship in the Western part of the province leading to the collapse of the puppet administration, the establishment of revolutionary power and the setting up of the liberated zone ;

- 1961 : Chain uprisings in the plain dismantled strategic hamlets ;

- 1965 : Victory of Ba Gia where a whole mobile group of Saigon soldiers was destroyed ; at Van Tuong, the first major battle against US troops was fought in August.

1967 : Park Chung Hee's Blue Dragon Brigade put out of action in October.

1968 : Occupation of the province capital following the general offensive and uprisings at the beginning of the year ;

1972 : Liberation of Ba To district in September.

End of 1974 : Liberation of Nghia Hanh and Minh Long districts and Gia Vut base.

## PROVINCE OF BINH DINH — QUI NHON

### Binh Dinh

Second most important province of Trung Bo.

Area : 7,000 sq.km.

Population : 900,000 inhabitants.

The province comprises 7 delta districts : Hoai Nhon, Hoai An, Phu My, Phu Cat, An Nhon, Tuy Phuoc and Binh Khe, and 3 upland districts : An Lao (Hre ethnic minority), Vinh Thanh, Van Canh (Banar ethnic minority).

Capital : Qui Nhon.

Two spurs of the Truong Son Range, the province's backbone, jut out towards the sea, separating Binh Dinh from the neighbouring provinces.

Communication lines : 2 major rivers (Song Lai and Song Con) and several smaller ones ; National Route No 1 and the railway run through the province from North to South. A rice bowl of Central Trung Bo, Binh Dinh possesses 75,000 ha of cultivable plains. Phu Phong and An Thuong are famous for their silk-weaving.

The province has more coconut palms than any other in Trung Bo. Copra feeds a soap-making industry.

Binh Dinh still has many vestiges of *Cham* culture : Do Ban citadel, Vang, Bac, Canh Tien towers and the ancient citadel of An Nhon, formerly capital of the province.

## Qui Nhon

Built on a peninsula, Qui Nhon port is the fifth largest city of South Viet Nam.

Population : 215,000 inhabitants.

The military port, an important logistic base, catered for a major part of the needs of the US and Saigon troops in the Tay Nguyen Highlands.

Strategic Highway 19 links Qui Nhon to Pleiku and to Stung Treng in Northeastern Cambodia. A branch-line of the railway connects the city with the former Trans-Indochina Railway.

The city airfield, accessible to huge US transport planes, formed along with Phu Cat and Go Quanh, the base camp of the First, Second and Sixth Air Force of the Saigon Second Military Region.

### *Historical data*

At the end of the 18th century, the highlands of Binh Dinh served as the springboard of the Tay Son Movement led by the national hero Nguyen Hue. The port of Thi Nai (Qui Nhon) was the scene of famous naval battles.

1885-1888 : The Can Vuong Movement, conducted by Mai Xuan Thuong, mobilized the ethnic minorities against the French.

1908 : Peasant movement against taxes.

The revolutionary movement led by the Indochinese Communist Party which had broad support in the

province, culminated in the general insurrection of August 1945.

In the period 1945-1954, Binh Dinh which formed part of the liberated region of the 5th Interzone was an important reserve of human and material resources for the Resistance.

1959 : Popular uprising at Ta Loc and Ta Lec in the commune of Vinh Hiep, district of Vinh Thanh. The movement spread to every part of the province.

1964 : All strategic hamlets were demolished and 100,000 inhabitants liberated.

December 1964 : Liberation of An Lao district.

1965-1966 : The PLAF defeated a US column in the 'Five-Arrow' counter-offensive of Westmoreland and inflicted serious losses on the First Air Cavalry Division and South Korean mercenaries.

Binh Dinh, one of the provinces on which the US-Saigon troops concentrated their main efforts, was never "pacified" by them.

1968 Tet offensive : a section of Qui Nhon city fell into PLAF hands.

1972 : Three districts were liberated : Hoai Nhon, Hoai An and Vinh Thanh.

## SAIGON TROOPS DEBACLE SEEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL PRESS

### **On the Highlands**

*Reuter* (Saigon, March 20) :

"The battle of Buôn Mê Thuôt, now emerging as one of the most crucial of the entire Viet Nam war, was the pivotal contest in the swift chain of events that have led to the Saigon government's loss of control in much of Central Viet Nam, according to several military analysts here.

"The decisive moment, says one professional observer, came when Saigon's commanders rushed the equivalent of an entire division — some 10,000 men — in a vain effort to drive back the communist thrust into Buôn Mê Thuôt".

*AFP* (Saigon, March 12) :

"The attack against the town during the night of Sunday to Monday was led by montagnard tribesmen claiming to be members of "FULRO" (United Front

for the Liberation of Oppressed Races) and by units of the South Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF)

"...At daybreak, the small armed FULRO groups were joined by Viet Cong units supported by tanks... all (the attackers) were FULRO and Viet Cong belonging to local regiments.

"It appears that the first to enter Buôn Mê Thuôt were the montagnards. They were the ones who opened the way for the local Vietnamese communists.

*AP* (Saigon, March 22, 1975) :

"The loss of the Central Highlands cities of Pleiku and Kontum was a particularly bitter pill because not a shot was fired for either of them."

*AFP*, Saigon, March 19.

"Only ten days after the attack of the communist forces against the small town of Buôn Mê Thuôt on the High Plateaus of Central Viet Nam, the map of the Second Military Region covering twelve provinces along a north-south axis over 400 kilometres long, has been upset.

"Apparently irreversible in the hinterland provinces of that Second Military Region, the situation of governmental troops in some coastal provinces is difficult...

"That unprecedented modification of the military map in Central Viet Nam has, in a few days, affected 500,000 inhabitants of the border provinces who

mostly lived either in the provincial capitals or in the immediate surrounding areas till then under government control."

#### **In Huê**

*UPI, Saigon, March 19*

"Government authorities urged more than 300,000 civilians to flee the former imperial capital of Hue and the residents of the city left Wednesday for safe haven to the south, field reports said."

*USIS, Washington, March 20*

"In what apparently is the worst setback in three decades of warfare in Viet Nam, the South Vietnamese city of Hue has been abandoned by government forces and civilians and communist troops have gained control of eight south Vietnamese provinces."

#### **At Da Nang**

*UPI Saigon, March 29*

"Government commanders and US officials Saturday evacuated Da Nang and the situation in South Viet Nam's second largest city is considered hopeless, military sources said.

"The sources said there had been a total breakdown of discipline among government troops at Da Nang and at least 100,000 soldiers, marines and rangers were in complete disarray.

"All communications — with the exception of a single civilian telex — were lost overnight with Da Nang.

"The loss of Da Nang would be the worst defeat of the Indochina war for the South Vietnamese" (the Saigon administration).

*UPI* Saigon, March 29

"Military sources in Saigon said the situation was hopeless.

"The loss of Da Nang would be the worst defeat for the government in the history of the Indochina war".

*Reuter*, Saigon March 30 :

"An enormous — but demoralized and disorganised — government force estimated at nearly 100,000 troops of all kinds was believed to have been cut off after resistance crumbled.

"They included some of the best units the government has — men from the marines, the rangers and the respected First Infantry Division among others."

*AFP*, Saigon March 30

One hundred thousand governmental troops thrown in complete disorganization, anarchy and panic have surrendered without resistance... with their arms and baggage, including armoured vehicles and artillery pieces."

*AFP*, March 30

"It was the indescribable frenzied panic which has caused the catastrophe of Da Nang."

*UPI*, March 20

"I am absolutely certain South Viet Nam will collapse, but it will not end there."

Robert Thompson, ex-military adviser of the White House, BBC radio interview.

## AFTER LIBERATION

### IN LIBERATED BUON ME THUOT

Nobody in Buon Me Thuot could have believed in such a rapid transformation of the town.

The centre of the city, for about 1,5 kilometres on every side, was enclosed behind a cordon of posts and barracks. To the South was the headquarters of the 23rd Division adjoining the officers' residential area, the subsector of the provincial militia, and the prison. The military sector, with its air strip, stretched from North to East up to the command post of the 45th Regiment and its base camp. To the West : the barracks of the armoured regiment and the artillery battalion spreading over an area as large as that of the whole civilian quarter. The Mai Hac De munitions depot, situated in the South West of the city, can give some idea of the importance of Buon Me Thuot in the defensive system of the Central Highlands : it was 1.5 km long by 800m wide or half the area of the civilian quarter.

It only took a few dozen hours for all this powerful arrangement to collapse. Now, high in an azure sky, floats the liberation flag with its gold star in the centre, marking the historic day of 11 March 1975 when the armed forces and population of Buon Me Thuot became masters of the town.

By 14 March, the water supply was back to normal, its former workers having repaired the machine and pipe system.

On 16 March, after a meeting between the PRG representative, Mr. Nguyen Quang Chinh, the head and deputy heads of the Education Office and 200 teachers, the secondary and primary schools reopened. Teachers and students set to work to put their schools back in good order and to dig air-raid shelters.

The same day Mr. Dang Tran Thi, Vice-President of the Federation of Workers for the Liberation of South Viet Nam headed a delegation on a welcoming visit to workers' trade unions.

The headquarters of the Revolutionary Committee is always full of people. Intellectuals come to offer their services. Dr. Le Kim Son, with the help of health cadres, has got the hospitals working again; the consultation rooms are more numerous than before 10 March. The representatives of various religious beliefs welcome the revolutionary government's policy of religious freedom. Businessmen, managers of sawmills, transport companies, printing presses... come to ask to be supplied with raw materials and fuel. Some Frenchmen, working in rubber and coffee

plantations turn up to ask authorization to continue their activities.

On 16 March too, the markets are held as usual. The next day nearly all the shops reopen. Traffic is heavy along the streets. From the plantations people come to stock up on consumer goods. The population keeps away from the town centre as a safeguard against bombing raids.

Self-management committees — committees of the population's representatives — are set up. People flock there to put their names on the State lists, ask for allowances or simply to get information.

To avoid long queues, written statements are distributed to them. The young people and school-children form a crowd of willing volunteers. They explain the reconciliation policy of the PRG to the families of former soldiers and encourage them to recall their near ones. Numerous officers and men of the Saigon army hand over their arms; they are given a good reception by the Liberation security forces. Y Le-pinh, an Ede minority woman, has brought in her husband, formerly a soldier in the Saigon army. Those who have crossed over give active cooperation to the security forces in defending the city and searching out recalcitrant Saigon agents. Saboteurs have been punished before they were able to do any damage.

On 18 March, one week after liberation, the Revolutionary Committee of Darlac Province and the Military Administrative Committee of Buon Me Thuot made a public appearance before hundreds of representatives of the ethnic minorities and different social strata. Colonel Y Bloc Eban at their head,

proclaimed the establishment of revolutionary power, the beginning of a new order. He called on the population, made up of different minorities, to remain united so that life could go back to normal, to heighten their vigilance and determination to smash any attempt and act of sabotage and at the same time to develop production and the building of a new life.

It had been with emotion that, several days earlier, the inhabitants of Buon Me Thuot had learnt of the appointment of Colonel Y Bloc Eban, a son of Darlac. Today, seeing him mount the rostrum, many delegates from the ethnic minorities were unable to contain themselves and wept for joy. For, from today, under the revolutionary power, the equality of the ethnic minorities, in the great family of Viet Nam has become a reality.

*Quan Doi Nhan Dan* correspondent's  
cable from Buon Me Thuot

### HUE : A GARDEN OF FLAGS

I entered Hue with our troops. The liberated city was in a joyful mood. The streaming crowd mingled with the bicycles, hondas, cars, all along Tran Hung Dao, Nguyen Tri Phuong, Nguyen Hue Streets, on Trang Tien, Bach Ho and Cau Moc bridges. Everywhere, the red and blue flag with its golden star floated gaily in the breeze to welcome the 26 March, historic date

of the liberation of Hue and the province of Thua Thien.

What joy, what emotion I felt to see again my compatriots of Hue, to read their happiness in their looks and their smiles. The Perfume River is no longer overflowing with tears, as the poets used to say ; its limpid waters are blazing with the red of the flags. Hue is bright under the spring sunshine. Walking along Tran Hung Dao Street, I was just in front of the Phu Van Lau pavilion when a detachment of the People's Armed Forces passed by. Seeing the PRG flags hoisted on the turrets of their tanks the people gathered around our fighters, calling out good wishes to them. An old woman, on her way to Dong Ba market, took me by the arm, on the verge of tears — "Oh my dear son, we have been longing for this day for years". My eyes, too, began to water.

The market was full of customers. Young women with flowing rose or violet robes were strolling around the food sellers displaying the traditional dishes of Hue. On Dong Ba bridge, lines of baskets of still wriggling shrimps and loads of fresh vegetables were coming from the outskirts. Like Dong Ba and An Cuu the other markets were crowded with joyful buyers from the first day.

Some districts still bore traces of the enemy's precipitate flight : military vehicles abandoned where they stood with stores of rice there hadn't been time to plunder.

The traffic was very heavy all along Nguyen Tri Phuong, Nguyen Hue, and Phan Boi Chau Avenues. A

student ahead of me turned to shake hands with me and we started talking. He spoke of the struggle carried on over the last few days, before the liberation of the town by the students and the population. The enemy were forcing the people to flee with them to Da Nang and rounding up students under Saigon's general mobilization order. Ly An Lien, a hairdresser in An Cuu quarter told me that the price of a bus ticket to Da Nang rose to 15,000 — 20,000 piastres. "Most of the workers and inhabitants of Hue would have rather died than be forced to evacuate. We struggled in different ways to stay in the town and wait for the arrival of the liberation troops."

These days there is an atmosphere of enthusiasm in my quarter, he went on. The young people are joining up in the self-defence units. Workers, Buddhists, students are eagerly taking part in public affairs.

On Trang Tien bridge, where we were, I saw cars passing flying PRG flags and banners. The pure voice of a woman announcer came over the loudspeaker. "On 26 March, the People's Revolutionary Committee of Hue city was formed. The representatives of the town's forces of peace and national reconciliation have also made their first public appearance."

Inside the old citadel I found the first newly-created self-defence units, going out on patrol and ensuring order and security in the streets. A new recruit, Nguyen Van Ban, a pupil at the Gia Hoi Secondary School, told me : "I am overjoyed to welcome in the revolution. Before I did not know what life would have in store

for me. My family was very poor. Now I am going to work my hardest to build this city and defend the revolutionary power."

TRAN MAI HUONG

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### DA NANG : THE FIRST DAYS OF FREEDOM

On 29 March, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Da Nang, second largest city of South Viet Nam, was liberated. By different arteries, Phuoc Tuong, Thanh Khe, Nguyen Truong To... the PLAF fighters entered the town to the cheers of hundreds of thousands of Da Nang citizens. A line of cars, the PRG colours streaming in the wind, crossed the Trinh Minh The bridge over the Han River, stopping every now and then in response to the cheering crowds of people. The old women had tears in their eyes.

"Stop a minute, my sons," one old man cried, "please let me just look at the flag of the Front !"

Too far away to come close to the convoy, he contented himself with gazing at this symbol of the revolution from a distance, and burst into fresh weeping.

At one street corner the fighters found themselves tightly surrounded by dozens and dozens of people offering rice, refreshments. Townspeople and children

flocked around them as though they were dear friends just returned from a long absence.

The affection and brotherhood expressed towards the combatants by the population is not a new growth. Da Nang — the home town of great patriots like Hoang Dieu and Thai Phien, where, a century ago, Ong Ich Khiem launched the first resistance against the French, has always been a revolutionary city. Just before the town was liberated, nearly 2,000 Saigon soldiers from the Hoa Cam training centre mutinied and joined the ranks of the Revolution. And in several quarters, An Hai South, An Hai North, Nang Thai, Nai Nghia, the population rose up in concert with the self-defence units and seized power even before the flight of the enemy. On the morning of the 29th, the American consulate in 60 Bach Dang Street was taken by assault by thousands of insurgents.

Arriving in the city in the first hours after liberation I was carried away by the general exhilaration. PRG flags were everywhere, from Phuoc Tuong base to Non Nuoc strongpoint, from the airport at Thai Binh beach to the Son Tra peninsula. Along Thanh Khê, Hung Vuong, Dong Khanh Streets... a flood of people was streaming into National Road No 1. They had come from Hue and Quang Tri, forced to follow the enemy in his flight to Da Nang. Now they were heading back to their homes. On the Han River rows of motor boats with a multitude of waving red pennants. The electricity and water supply was normal. In front of the City Hall, in Bach Dang Street, not far from the still burning American Consulate, a young militia woman carrying a rifle was standing guard. At her feet were dozens of

torn up portraits of Nguyen Van Thieu, scattered in the mud.

A man shouted over to the fighters — "We are so happy to see you ! I've suffered so much for so long ! But now, thanks to the Revolution, thanks to Uncle Ho !"

He was a fisherman, living near the An Chanh dunes. How many others were repeating the same words at that time !

Life rapidly returned to normal. People's Revolutionary Committees were set up in town quarters and districts. Markets reopened. Hundreds of people joined the city self defence units. The Cathedral bells sounded the noontime angelus. The murmur of prayers to the beat of the tocsin rose again from the Pho Da pagoda.

In liberated Da Nang the workers once more became masters of their life. In the harbour two welders, Cu and Vo, red bands on their arms and rifles over their shoulders, were going the rounds. A native of Hue, Cu has been settled in Da Nang for a long time, and readily tells all he has endured under the US-Thieu yoke. He had just been admitted, at his own request, into a self-defence unit.

A driver, Le Duc Loc, also talked about the past. "I paid a hundred thousand piastres to escape forcible conscription into the Thieu army. We have longed for you day and night. I went at once to the Revolutionary Committee to offer my services as driver."

In his car, Loc took us on a tour of "his" town.

For many Da Nang is also a "rediscovery". Lam Dong, the press photographer who accompanied me,

had, 29 years ago, spent five years in Da Nang prison. Today, he was recording the images of the liberated town with his heart as much as with his camera. Vinh An, too, a young girl, had grown up in Da Nang's first district and gone to Da Nang girls' Secondary School, before leaving for the resistance. Now she was back as a cadre of the Propaganda Commission. She could not hold back her joy. Dressed in her best clothes — black trousers, black robe and beige overcoat — she was going round the city carrying the Giai Phong press photographer on the back of her family moped. From time to time she had to stop to say hello to some old acquaintance.

"It's like a dream", she told me. "For thirty years we've been dreaming of this moment. It's the happiest day of my life."



Da Nang still bore many traces of the enemy's rapid flight. Everywhere you could see abandoned arms, ammunition, tanks, and jeeps. Many aircraft painted with US or Saigon emblems were still parked on the vast airfield. In 1965, on 8 March, the first GIs had disembarked on the Son Tra peninsula. On 29 March 1973, without any fanfare, the last GI quitted our country. This year in the month of March tens of thousands of Thieu troops from the First and Third Infantry Divisions, the "Marines" and the "Rangers" were wiped out or forced to surrender. The sight of some young PLAF fighters chatting cheerfully in front of the Nguyen Tri Phuong barracks came to my eyes. Here had been the Headquarters of Army Corps I, where General Ngo

Quang Truong had ordered his men to hold Da Nang to the end. (By the time this breath-taking declaration had appeared in the Saigon papers, Ngo Quang Truong had already taken flight). Following a liberation fighter, I entered the General's former office, on the first floor of the right wing. Everything gave an impression of panic. The floor was strewn with operational maps, documents, books, photos... The pennant with its three stars (Truong was a three-star general) was upside-down on the ground ; under the table lay his portrait, dirty and crumpled. The young combatant, his eyes gleaming with malice, seated himself down in the chair, with its three stars. I picked up a book at random : *Bao Lut mien Trung* (Tempest over Central Viet Nam). What an appropriate title !

For Da Nang the tempest is over and the day has dawned. This morning the sun is shining over the town and port with a special light. A new life is beginning.

TRAN MAI

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- US Policy in Viet Nam since 1973
- The Rout of the Saigon Troops:
  - Why?
  - How?
- The Importance of the Areas Liberated by the PRG in March 1975