

3 Weeks After Fall, Da Nang Seems a Calm City

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The following dispatch was written for Agence France-Presse by Roland-Pierre Parin-gaux, the only non-Communist Western journalist allowed to fly to Da Nang, South Vietnam, aboard a French aid flight yesterday.

DA NANG, South Vietnam, April 18—Da Nang, South Vietnam's second largest city, presented a picture of calm today, three weeks after it fell to Communist forces.

For a reporter who visited the city often when it was the site of a busy air base, landing among deserted runways and hangars provided a first shock.

A few Communist soldiers moved about among a small number of American C-123 and C-130 cargo planes. In the distance, a dozen helicopters were parked, out of service. A short time ago visitors arrived here in a beehive of military activity, with planes landing and taking off at the rate of one a minute.

Arrived From Hanoi

Western journalists arriving from Hanoi yesterday were welcomed by two soldiers who examined their visas, issued by the Provisional Revolutionary Government. A young woman checked their vaccination certificates.

Farther along the runway, as a company of soldiers carrying weapons and baggage debarked from a four-engine craft, the journalists were greeted by city officials under a smiling portrait of the late North Vietnamese leader, Ho Chi Minh.

There are still signs of the incidents that took place in the last days of March, when South Vietnamese soldiers and officers fought their way through refugees toward the last American civil aircraft to leave.

Reminders of those scenes line many runways: abandoned vehicles of every description, scattered household utensils and furniture,

looted huts and everywhere helmets, belts and uniforms stripped off in haste by fleeing soldiers trying to pose as civilians.

The city's streets are full of life, the military presence is inconspicuous and soldiers on patrol are indulgent, even after the 9 P.M. curfew, which is ignored by a few strollers and street merchants.

In the center of the city, which fell without resistance, a few signs of looting were visible. The former United States Consulate was sacked, according to foreigners who remained.

Urged to Surrender

Troops and officers of the South Vietnamese Army were called on by loudspeaker to surrender. Ordinary soldiers have been issued temporary papers and remain free to go where they will. Officers have been sent to re-education centers along with officials and teachers.

Schools, stores and markets have begun to open. Procurement of supplies, however, still poses some problems, as does medical organization, since some hospitals were looted.

The new authorities cleared the city of tens of thousands of refugees from neighboring provinces. Several sources said the refugees had been sent back to their villages.

A tour of the city and visits to schools and religious centers that were packed with people at the end of March made it clear that Da Nang's population was smaller than it was a year ago.

Foreigners who stayed in Da Nang were issued papers giving them freedom to move through the city. Among them were 120 French citizens, some 50 Indians, Chinese, and Canadian and American Roman Catholic priests.

Today, the red and blue flag with a gold star of the Provisional Revolutionary Government flies everywhere, sometimes beside Buddhist banners.



Pictorial Parade

Communist soldiers in Da Nang, South Vietnam. A French newspaper report said that life in the city was calmly returning to normal.