

WXPost

MAY 4 1975

# Hue-Danang Road Strewn

By Daniel De Luce  
Associated Press

HUE, South Vietnam, May 3—American military equipment estimated to be worth \$100 million is strewn like a gigantic junkpile along the Hue estuary, where Saigon's defeated armored and infantry forces tried to escape by sea in late March.

This was one of the sights to be seen after a trip to Hue from Danang, where a spokesman of the new Revolutionary Government said earlier that 103,000 of the enlisted men and noncommissioned officers of the old Army of the Republic of Vietnam who had been taken prisoner had already been released to return to their homes.

A woman doctor, speaking for a government official, said the 1,000-bed hospital was currently treating 300 to 400 outpatients daily.

Some former war prisoners were seen in the areas around Hue working in the rice fields.

From the watchtower of the former South Vietnamese army base here, about 600 burned-out vehicles can be seen in just one of the groups of abandoned equipment scattered for miles along the estuary and along the lateral highway connecting Hue with Tan My Harbor leading to the South China Sea.

Former drivers and mechanics of South Vietnamese armored regiments now are working under Revolutionary Government army officers' supervision in getting tanks, armored cars, trucks and other vehicles running again.

In Hue's central hospital, more than 40 Saigon government marines wounded in the war are under treatment in a large ward. An official of the Revolutionary Government indicated they

will be allowed to return to their homes and families when released from the hospital.

About a third of the doctors on the hospital staff have returned to duty since Hue's fall, officials said. Babies born on that date, March 26, were named Giai Phong—Liberation—whether boys or girls.

There former South Vietnamese army mechanics getting a fleet of diesel forklift trucks in operational order again were permitted a pause from work to answer the translated questions of visitors.

All said they worked as mechanics for the new revolutionary army by day and went home to their families in the neighborhood at night. When disaster befell the South Vietnamese army at Hue they had not tried to retreat but reported themselves to the authorities as soon as possible, they said.

Some captured M-48 tanks still have "United States Army" painted in white on the body of the tank above the tracks. The dirt should-ers of

In both Hue and Danang this week, on tours conducted by the press bureau of the Revolutionary Government's Foreign Ministry, normal life seemed to have resumed. Some said it was better than before.

"My impression is that people are getting along quite well with the new regime," said Thomas R. Hoskins, an American Quaker pediatrician who remained in Danang. In the first days, there was an obvious relaxation of tension. Security has been restored. There were no shootings, no robberies."

Hoskins said prices of food and other necessities have been stable in recent

weeks although the prices of luxury goods skyrocketed.

"Before the liberation, people felt insecure as to what the change might mean for them. The change has been one in the economy. So much of Danang had lived off American military spending. When you change that, it really frightens the people involved. But in terms of reality, of food to eat, places to sleep, medical care, the change has worked out very well. There are people who are pleased to fall back to a simpler way of life."

Dr. Hoskins expresses disbelief at atrocity stories spread in Saigon, Danang and other cities that fell to the PRG forces in the northern provinces of South Vietnam.

"A bloodbath in this region? Not in the least, Hoskins said. "I speak some Vietnamese, and I go to the market frequently, and I would have heard people who were afraid of liberation and would have spoken their fears.

Dr. Hoskins said the PRG has "a very strict and very highly thought of program" for the rehabilitation of professional criminals and prostitutes.

"They hold the strong conviction that they should deal with such classes not by physical torture or deprivations but by trying to change them through an understanding of what role they can play in society in the future. They are told they are needed individuals in a society which is going to be an agrarian society.

"Danang was a city that was notorious for prostitution. There are no prostitutes on the streets now."

Hoskins said he had witnessed the takeover of Dan-

ang on March 29 and the days before.

"The 27th and 28th were frightening days in Danang. I went to the main Buddhist pagoda and was given shelter. Those two days were, as one Vietnamese friend described them to me, 'like the Wild West.' The last of the (South Vietnamese Government) soldiers were engaged in looting and shooting."

On March 29, Hoskins said he was asked by Buddhist leaders to work at the Vietnamese German Hospital's emergency ward, which escaped destruction at the hands of South Vietnamese soldiers.

"The city general hospital was a sorry sight indeed," said Hoskins. "It had been extensively looted and vandalized in the last 48 hours. Medicine supplies had been broken open, strewn about, smashed, stolen. Catholic sisters were still on duty in three wards, but most of the hospital's patients had fled."

Hoskins said he worked in the emergency ward until about 8 p.m. that day of the takeover.

"I decided I needed a walk and went out," Hoskins said. "People were back on the streets. I could hear no shooting. All the Saigon government flags were gone from the store fronts and houses. But I noticed multi-colored Buddhist flags were being displayed. They have a variety of soft pastel colors.

"Then I saw a huge American-made (South Vietnamese army) tank. School children were clinging all over it, waving Buddhist flags. Suddenly it dawned on me: The city is liberated.

"At the foot of a flagpole I saw Vietnamese throwing their weapons on the



# With U.S. Arms

ground. The mound of weapons grew rapidly—carbines, rocket launchers. Then I saw 10 liberation cadres emerge from the shadows and lay arms on this pile. It was an awesome moment to see finally men laying down the tools of war . . .”

A younger government functionary in Hue who was fluent in English told me he felt much the same emotion when he heard on April 30 that Saigon had been won.

“It is over. But what a cost,” he said. “Thirty years of people being killed and our land destroyed. Now there is much to do.”

The work along the Hue estuary here is to salvage the war equipment left behind. Across the highway from the former South Vietnamese army supply base, the soldiers had crowded into boats to flee toward the ships waiting at sea. They left behind them three modern communications centers with high transmission antennae built by the Americans. They appear to be undamaged.

In Danang earlier, I had asked Hoskins why hundreds of thousands, not just soldiers, had fled Hue and Danang.

“It takes a lot to make Vietnamese flee because they have strong attachments to their own fields and villages,” he said. But in December, when the (South Vietnamese army) lost Phuocbinh, and in early March, when it lost Banmethuot, the response of the Saigon air force was a devastating bombing of the two cities. The people thought it would happen to them in other cities too.”

In the port here at Hue, Revolutionary Government forces are salvaging steel pontoons and steel bridging, equipment left behind seems to be in almost mint condition.

A revolutionary army officer at the captured supply

base said that of a total of 3,000 South Vietnamese military vehicles left along the estuary, more than 200 were sunk, most of them self-propelled guns and armored cars. He added that 60 of the M-48 tanks which fell into this army's hands have since been given a clean up and sent south with the National Liberation Forces.

Driving to Hue over Haivan pass from Danang, I noted that heavy south-bound military traffic was a formidable obstacle for most of the 60 miles on Highway I. Interspersed with Soviet-made armor were occasional tanks from the South Vietnamese army's American stores. In military truck convoys there was a unique mix of Soviet, Chinese and American vehicles.

Walking across the former base packed with blackened hulks of American-made armor, you stepped carefully. The concrete paving is littered with ammunition, rockets, grenades, some of it still live.

A fire engine is burned out but its fire hoses nozzles of stainless steel glisten brightly. Typewriters, portable radio transmitters, cans of turkey-loaf rations, bayonets, steel helmets, gas masks, mess kits, filing cabinets, shovels, machine guns, motorcycles, and even a television set lie in the ashes.

Between this scene and Hue itself, thousands of acres of rice are being harvested. Teams of seven or eight young men are cutting rice stalks and tying them in sheaves. The young men are dressed in green military tunics and shorts, the cheapest clothing available, they said.

Through an interpreter, the leader of one of these teams said he and his men came from a nearby village,

all having served at one time or another in the South Vietnamese army. Some had served until very recently, he added.

He said he was a driver in a unit of the army engineers for eight years, had been involved in a traffic accident with an army truck and was put in jail for it. He was in jail when the liberation forces arrived in Hue and, freed him, he said, so became a farmer again.