

Big Gain

Viet Reds Seize A Key Valley

Saigon North Vietnam has scored its biggest gain since May 1, overrunning the strategic Que Son Valley and laying bare to attack a populous 50-mile stretch of Highway 1 from Da Nang southward, field reports said yesterday.

Da Nang is South Vietnam's second largest city.

The North Vietnamese capture of Que Son was the

first time in the entire war that the valley had fallen.

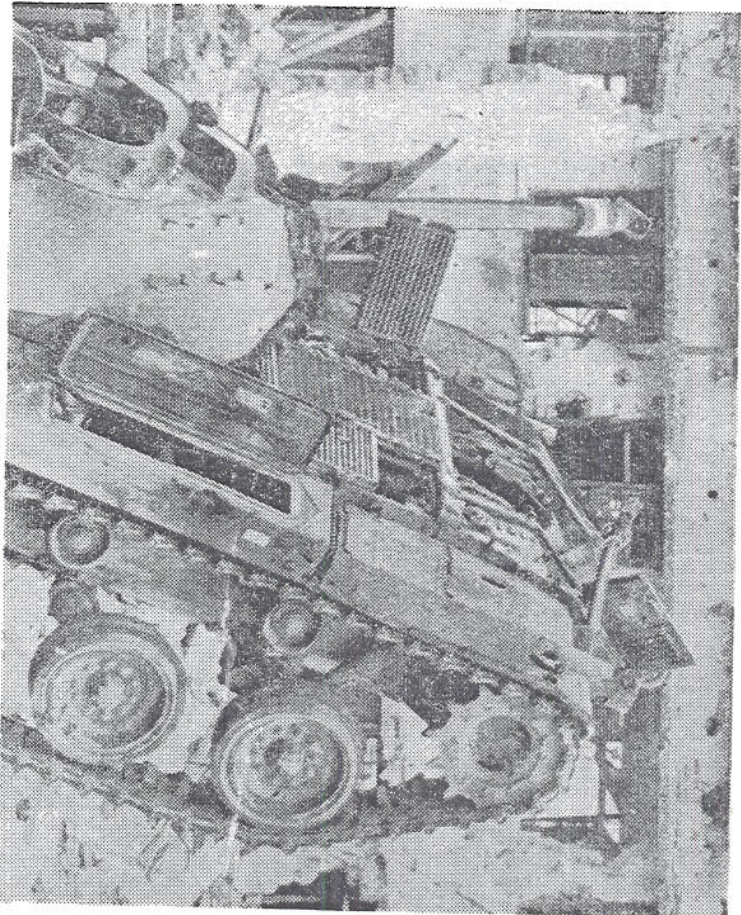
LOSSES

The battle for the valley, 40 miles south of Da Nang, cost the South Vietnamese heavy losses in men and equipment.

The Saigon command acknowledged that 22 troops were killed and about 130 wounded, but claimed that 159 North Vietnamese were killed although only 13 weapons were captured.

The Saigon command made no mention of the American-supplied equipment that was abandoned. Field reports said 21 artillery pieces, both 105-mm. and 155-mm. howitzers, 12 armored personnel carriers and six tanks were left behind.

The personnel carriers and tanks were destroyed by the retreating South Vietnamese. American B-52 bombers attacked the valley's former South Vietnamese stronghold, a base called Bross, dropping hundreds of tons of explosives on the rest of the abandoned equipment and sus-



AP Wirephoto
A South Vietnamese tank fell into a bomb crater at Quang Tri and was abandoned

pected North Vietnamese troop concentrations.

REFUGEES

Field reports said hundreds of refugees from the valley fled with soldiers to another base called Baldy near Highway 1 about ten miles east of Que Son in the coastal strip. There was no count of civilian casualties caught in the crossfire, and many South Vietnamese soldiers were reported still missing.

Que Son district has a population of 72,000. The mountains near the Lao-tian border across Highway

1 almost to the South China Sea. It is a natural infiltration route.

At Quang Tri, Associated Press correspondent Michael Putzel reported that a South Vietnamese marine relief force was trying to clear North Vietnamese from Highway 1 to reach isolated Saigon militiamen.

SAIGON

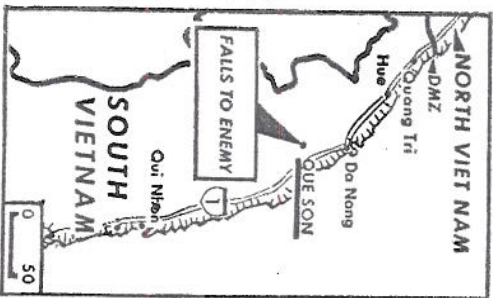
In the Saigon region, fighting ended Saturday along Highway 1 at the Trang Bom rubber plantation, 25 miles east of the capital. AP correspondent Richard Pyle reported that South Vietnamese rangers moved off

to the north of the reopened roadway in pursuit of a Communist force which withdrew into rubber trees.

Highway 4, south of Saigon, and Highway 15, about 45 miles to the southeast, also were reopened.

Highway 13 above the big Lai Khe base camp, 35 miles north of Saigon remained cut.

The United States command reported that Air Force, Navy and Marine fighter-bombers carried out more than 320 raids across North Vietnam on Saturday, concentrating on the Hanoi-Haiphong corridor.



AP Wirephoto
The location of the Que Son Valley