

Americans in Saigon Now a Curiosity

By Alan Dawson

United Press International

SAIGON—Saigonese who consider themselves sophisticated gawk at an American walking down the city's main streets.

A Saigon airport worker stops an interpreter and asks if his boss is a Russian. No, the interpreter replies, the man is an American.

The worker scoffs, "The Americans have all gone home."

The few of us left in Saigon since the Communist Provisional Revolutionary Government took over the country April 30 have become curiosities.

We have met no harassment and surprisingly little hostility. From time to time I have detected a glare, but

I have exchanged no harsh words with anyone.

Perhaps the most frequent question I am asked by government officials and soldiers is whether I think the United States will establish diplomatic relations with South and North Vietnam. It is obvious they wish such relations.

In Saigon, I live where I want, how I want and travel where I want.

I have an apartment a block away from the Saigon River. A cook-housekeeper comes each day to clean and cook delicious meals.

I often visit Saigon's Chinese section to see my in-laws. This arouses little comment. The neighbors find it curious that I stayed when other Americans left.

My family has suffered no reprisals because of me. Life continues as always.

An American here might expect to be lectured and harangued — perhaps even brainwashed—but the opposite is true. It is difficult to gain admittance to public lectures where discussions on the history of the Indochina war take place.

My host was openly embarrassed at a dance depicting South Vietnamese women fighting American troops, clearly identified by huge false noses and spotted fatigues.

I think more people watched me than the dancers, and they were relieved when I applauded along with the rest of the audience.

Vietnamese under the

new PRG have lived up to past statements—that they fought not the American people, but what they considered a cruel American policy written by leaders and opposed by the people.

They express pride about the victory over American technology and war machinery, but they do not lord it over us.

Life in Saigon has changed, and will change more as the new government formulates new policies.

But so far, my sticking to the rules has produced a life that has no more hardships than anywhere else I have lived, and no more problems than I have had during the previous eight years in Vietnam.