

After 30 Years of Revolution,

By Martin Woollacott
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SAIGON—The elderly couple stood almost at attention in front of the dais where South Vietnam's new leaders had earlier reviewed the great victory parade of soldiers, students and workers and they waited for a Saigon street photographer to line them up for a Polaroid photo.

They had insisted that the photograph clearly show the big portrait of Ho Chi Minh above the dais and the slogan, "There is nothing better than independence and freedom." They examined the resulting black and white photographs with care, paid for them with money the wife took from a black and purple handkerchief and wrapped the photographs up in another clean handkerchief.

The parade with its pha-

lanxes of 20-year-old troops, its black-clad contingents of young women soldiers, its students and schoolchildren had been a celebration of youth as well as victory. But this pair was part of the old revolution.

"I have served the liberation ever since 1945," the old man said. "I have been waiting for this day all my life. I have worked for it. I have gone to prison for it. Now, finally, I can live like other men."

His wife, dressed in a very smart black outfit—a sort of Sunday best of black pajamas—and a brand new black jungle hat, chipped in: "It is not only he who has worked for the liberation. All our family, the whole family. His brother came home this week and he is a doctor in the liberation forces."

So, finally, the couple was able to get on the bus from

Rachgia in the southern delta and come to Saigon to have their photograph taken under the portrait of Ho Chi Minh.

But an entire family dedicated to the revolution is the rarity. Much more common is the split family which had members at least ostensibly on both sides, as numerous stories circulating in Saigon these days bear witness.

Loi, a Saigon law student, was in his father's shoe store when they heard the announcement of the surrender by President Duong Van (Big) Minh. To Loi's amazement, his father shouted with joy, walked over to a cupboard and after much fumbling brought out a large and rather good photograph of Ho Chi Minh. He also told his son, a member of the city's militia, to get rid of his American-made

gun. Then his father rushed out to welcome the troops. Loi, more cautious, stayed inside.

Shortly afterward, there was a knock on the door. Loi opened it and outside stood an officer with a pith helmet and map case who asked for his father. "I told him my father was out and anyway why did he want to know," Loi said. He replied, "because I'm your uncle."

Loi's uncle turned out to be a North Vietnamese scientist who had studied in the Soviet Union and he left soon afterward for Dalat where he had some job to do in connection with the nuclear reactor there.

While waiting to go, he lived at his brother's house and what he liked to do best, his nephew said, was to sit eating bananas while listening to Vietnamese love songs.

Divided Viet Families Reunite

He also gave Loi some advice. It was to keep his hair short and not wear multicolored shirts or ridiculous shoes. He also suggested he change his course to medicine. Loi's father whether on his brother's advice or not, told the factory which supplies his shop to cut down on the heel heights of platform shoes and to use only brown, black and red leather.

There also is the now well known story of reunion between a brother and sister. The sister, brought to Saigon as a small child by an uncle, sat next to a soldier on a bus and they fell into conversation. They soon discovered they were from the same village and then to their astonishment that he was her younger brother born after her departure. The pair wandered about for hours holding hands un-

til they were spotted by an enterprising Saigon journalist who spread their story.

It is the human links within and between families that represent the real resources of this changed society and presumably, there will be fresh links soon. It is impossible to put thousands of young, unmarried soldiers into a city like Saigon without the inevitable happening. There are even rumors that marriages may be officially encouraged, with special meetings arranged for young soldiers and women to get to know each other.

"Saigon girls are pretty but they shouldn't put that stuff (cosmetics) on their faces," said one soldier.

Among the population of Saigon, it often was a surprise to discover who were Vietcong supporters. Often those thought most likely to

be with the Communists left for America.

One middle-aged man, who was Loi's platoon leader and often spoke of the need for Vietnamese unity and the achievements of the North, left for an evacuation zone the night before the communist troops entered Saigon. He was last seen on the back of an American jeep weeping and crying "I'll never see you again."

A South Vietnamese officer told of his amazement at seeing a friend, with whom he had often gone drinking, a few days after the takeover. The friend called him over and patted the revolver—the badge of officer status—that he was now wearing. Then he roared with laughter at the expression on the former officer's face and patted him reassuringly on the arm.

Foreigners certainly were amazed at the ranks of blue-clad girls who went by in Thursday's victory parade. The black-clad girls who had gone before were quite a sight but they were from the countryside. The girls in blue were, it was explained, "Saigon ranger girls from the city whose job was to guide the troops through the streets."

As these people emerge South Vietnam's society is taking on a new face. Families with Provisional Revolutionary Government connections naturally rise in importance. North Vietnamese relatives become an object of public pride and friends in the communist forces are cultivated.

South Vietnam was always a society with a dual personality. Now the coin has been flipped and the other side is emerging.