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Bank of America Left \$40 in Saigon

**Last Days Saw
Brisk Filming
of Records**

By ANDREW H. MALCOLM
Special to The New York Times

TAMUNING, Guam, May 15 —If the new Communist authorities in Saigon succeed in opening the vault in the Bank of America office there, they will find only \$40.

That was all the United States money left behind by fleeing bank officials, according to George Coronel, the manager of the Bank of America branch in Saigon.

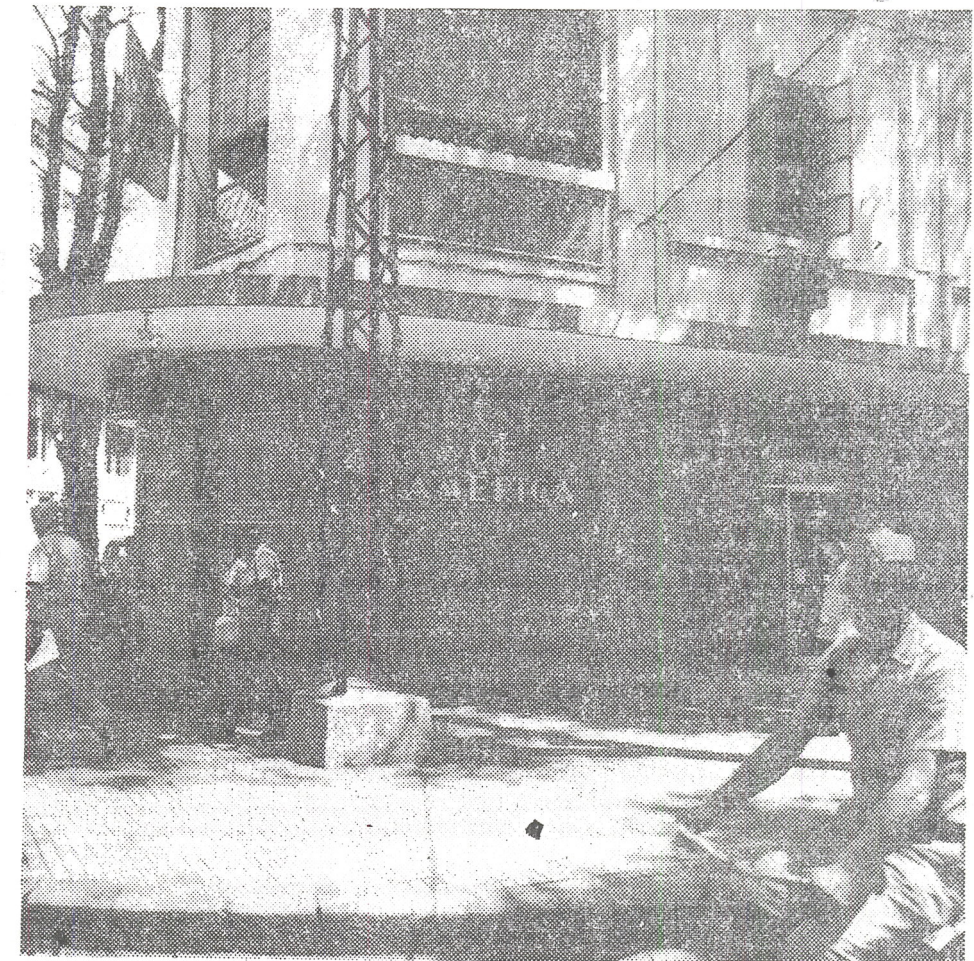
In the vault the new Saigon officials will find, however, an as yet undetermined number of South Vietnamese piasters, likely in the millions, Mr. Coronel said.

He was interviewed in his bank's regional office here during a break in his efforts to resettle 247 of the branch's South Vietnamese employes and their families. They were evacuated, along with hundreds of other employes of American companies, during the United States airlift from Saigon last month.

Voluminous Files

Like most other American enterprises in Vietnam, the Bank of America had voluminous files. Some groups, such as the Asia Foundation, burned their records for fear they would incriminate some citizens living under the new regime. Some shipped their records out of Vietnam long ago.

But others were caught by the swiftness of the North Vietnamese advance and the South Vietnamese retreat. On March 24, as Communist forces and anarchy closed in on the northern city of Danang, Mr. Coronel said he ordered the bank's standard



Saigon branch of the Bank of America when United States troops were in South Vietnam

emergency procedures into effect.

This involves round-the-clock photography of all bank records. Updating photographs of all transactions were taken at the close of business daily, he said. These films were regularly shipped out of the country and are now at Bank of America headquarters in San Francisco.

They cover more than 1,000 savings accounts from the Saigon branch, 100 time deposit savings accounts, about 500 piaster checking accounts and 200 dollar

checking accounts belonging to United States Embassy personnel or American contractors and their employes who were invited to South Vietnam by the former Government.

Only such individuals as these were allowed by South Vietnamese law to have dollar accounts, Mr. Coronel said.

The original files of these accounts were left for the Central Bank of South Vietnam when the Bank of America turned its facilities over to the former Government upon closing.

Although the new Communist Government in Saigon has proclaimed the piaster as its official currency, Mr. Coronel said he viewed the piaster accounts as worthless now.

Before the fall of the Thieu Government, the official exchange rate was 755 piasters to the dollar. But the rates on the black market had that currency up to 3,000 or more per dollar.

The piasters were not convertible in foreign-exchange money markets, Mr. Coronel

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said, so they were left behind. The bank had built up substantial piaster reserves, he said, because it anticipated a rush of withdrawals if the war went badly for the Government.

Although some depositors did withdraw money to buy gold and jewelry more easily convertible abroad, Mr. Coronel said, the rush did not develop as fully as expected.

There was, however, a large demand for dollars among foreigners who could show a need for the dollars such as exit visas and confirmed airplane tickets out of the country.

"Normally," said the 35-year-old Mr. Coronel, "we kept \$1,000 on hand for the needs of tourists. The rest we were required to sell to the Government bank. But so many people wanted so many dollars that we couldn't get enough, and we had only \$40 left at the end."

Foreign Accounts

He noted that South Vietnamese law forbade citizens to have foreign bank accounts.

"But realistically," he said, "a soldier or student or diplomat or anyone permitted abroad could open an account. For that matter they could even open one by mail. How would the Government have known?"

But he said Vietnamese Government officials could

not have had Saigon dollar accounts with his bank which they could now draw upon at United States branches.

The Saigon branch of the Bank of America had no safe deposit boxes to liquidate, Mr. Coronel said. So at the 3 P.M. closing time on Thursday, April 24, with most of his employes booked on refugee flights, Mr. Coronel locked the bank's doors on Phan Van Dat Street.

And, with the film of the last day's counter transactions in his briefcase, the bank manager boarded a plane for Guam.

Bolivia Demands Gulf Oil Name Recipients of Gifts

LA PAZ, Bolivia, May 18 (Reuters)—The Bolivian Government demanded today that the Gulf Oil Corporation identify "without delay or ambiguities" all the people here who received political contributions from the company.

It was the Government's third demand for an explanation. Last week the Government gave Gulf a 48-hour ultimatum to answer allegations that it might have bribed officials here.

The company then denied making bribes but before the Senate Friday admitted political contributions in Bolivia totalling \$460,000 dollars including a helicopter costing \$110,000 for the late president, René Barrientos, who died when it crashed in 1969.