

WXPost

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Bookstalls

Closed

In Saigon

SAIGON, May 22 (UPI)—A government order prohibiting sale or possession of any literature published "under the former regime" closed down virtually all bookstores and stalls in Saigon today.

Meanwhile, the new government continued to set out its policies one by one, including punishment of "wicked" persons employed by former Saigon regimes.

Sound trucks spread the announcement of the book ban late Wednesday, driving up and down main streets of Saigon and Cholon, its Chinese suburb, where magazines from Hong Kong and Singapore are popular.

Citizens rushed to the bookstalls and stores by the hundreds in a last effort to scoop up reading material, and sellers lowered their price to virtually nothing in a last effort to clear their stocks.

By Thursday morning, unsold books were locked securely behind steel doors of market shops and bookstores and the normally busy book-selling area at the intersection of Cong Ly and Le Loi Streets was almost deserted.

There was some indication that the application of the law would be slightly more liberal.

"We think this new law is only for books like politics and history," said the manager of the only bookstore open, the Saigon Library, which sells only French books.

But no sellers of books in Vietnamese or English took a chance.

The former government had banned all pro-Communist publications but had made no effort at censoring foreign publications or Vietnamese language novels.

The official Saigon Liberation Daily, meantime, reported two examples of villagers taking revenge against former officials who allegedly had harmed the people.

"In Tangnhouphu village, there is a former officer (who) was a truly wicked man, who made profit by plundering the wealth of the people and who had caused damage to the lives of many persons," the newspaper said.

"He was punished by the people May 14."

In Phuoclong province, which was captured by North

Vietnamese forces Jan. 7, the newspaper reported a similar campaign to "begin searching for a number of wicked persons who are in hiding and owe a blood debt to the people, (and) had worked for the U.S. and former (Saigon) governments during the past 30 years."

The article gave no indica-

tion of the fate of the "wicked" persons.

The newspaper said the government has begun a program to resettle war refugees, to return city dwellers to the countryside and to feed the poor. It said the government will provide transportation, land and farming tools to those returning to their villages as well as encourage light industry in order to provide jobs and consumer goods.

Associated Press special correspondent Peter Arnett reported the following from Saigon:

While the policy of South Vietnam's new leaders remains to be spelled out, a direction is becoming visible, and one aspect of it is to persuade some of the people in overcrowded cities to return to the countryside.

To many, the prospect of going back to the soil is not altogether unpleasant. The closing of banks has virtually halted the flow of money. Joblessness is at an alltime high in cities. These factors alone have prompted some to leave.

In block committees being formed in all Vietnamese cities, Communist cadres are putting out word-of-mouth suggestions that families are welcome back in their ancestral villages.

"The new authorities are more subtle than the Cambodians, who cleared Phnom Penh by telling the population the United States would bomb the city," said one Vietnamese.

Many families, however, are cautiously sending one member to test the climate in rural areas.

Cyclists wheel around Saigon. One spotted recently was a former general who had commanded South Vietnamese combat troops. Like thousands of other Saigon residents, he was evidently fighting the battle against the price of gasoline, now the equivalent of \$8 a gallon.

Former President Tran Van Huong, 71, preferred to walk to his destination Monday. He was seen hobbling past Saigon's Basilica through Peace Square, the new name for John F. Kennedy Square, shaking hands with passersby who recognized him.

Observers here express a belief that the new Communist authorities are moving cautiously but resolutely toward a massive transformation of urban and rural society.