

U.S. Analysts Find Austerity in Saigon

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Christian Science Monitor

Life has become increasingly austere in South Vietnam since the complete Communist take-over three months ago and Saigon's days as the bustling center of a consumer society are coming to an end. While there has been no blood-bath, suspicions are growing that there may have been selective executions.

This is the overall picture pieced together by U.S. analysts on the basis of information filtering out of South Vietnam.

One of the most extensive programs under way is directed at "thought reform" with up to 100,000 people being processed weekly.

It operates at three levels: • A 30-day course for former field-rank military officers and comparable civilian officials of the Thieu government. It includes such civilians as judges and former National Assembly members. Some reports say the course lasts 60 days.

• A two-week course for middle-rank military and ci-

vilian officials. This includes noncommissioned officers.

• A three-day course for others.

During these courses, those being processed are removed from their homes to such installations as former South Vietnamese army bases. The main features of the program are lectures, self-criticism, and confessions.

Each individual is asked to write out a full account of his life. The higher the rank of the individual, the longer the account is expected to be—up to 500 or 600 pages in the case of top-ranking persons.

Once this is produced, Communist officials are then likely to spring an ambush, saying, for example, that the individual has such a tainted past that it cannot be wiped out in a simple declaration. To prove reform, the individual must demonstrate his conversion by perhaps turning somebody in or informing on others.

When a 30-day course for 900 high-rank people ended

recently, 150 of the group failed to return to their homes. The families of 50 of these missing people then turned up at the office of Gen. Tra Van Tra, head of the Military Management Committee which controls Saigon, and said there were rumors the missing men had been executed. Gen. Tra refused to receive them but sent out word their relatives had not been executed.

If Gen. Tra's assertion is correct, U.S. analysts speculate that the missing men were considered "bad" enough to be sent to special labor camps.

Other features of life today in the South include:

• Widespread shortages of food due more to distribution problems than to the complete nonavailability of things to eat. There is none of the cruel starvation reported from neighboring Cambodia since the Communist take-over there.

Saigon authorities seem to want to avoid rice riots at all costs and when necessary, rice reserves have been arbitrarily seized from

wealthy Chinese rice merchants. In some cases groups of people have been shifted from places where food is scarce to where food is available.

• Disappearance of most private automobiles from the streets of Saigon and other cities. Gasoline when available costs \$8 a gallon, and priority is given to trucks and buses—most of which have been nationalized.

• Cutback of the electric-power supply in Saigon to three to four hours a day because of the shortage of fuel to generate electricity.

• A limit of \$50 a day on checks that an individual can cash at banks. Banks were closed for six weeks and the intention was to keep them closed indefinitely pending major financial reform including perhaps a change of currency. But Saigon's new rulers gradually discovered that what was still basically a capitalist economy could not operate when cash supplies dried up.

There was a spate of armed robberies and burglaries—not by common criminals but by people from well-to-do families who had run out of cash. The banks were then reopened.

• Indoctrinating and screening of elementary and high-school teachers during the summer vacation. By September, curricula will have been overhauled. Some books and records are being seized.

All universities—a potentially greater threat of trouble than high schools—will remain closed indefinitely, except for the medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy faculties of Saigon University.

• Scattered resistance to the new Communist rulers in both town and countryside—but not on a scale to pose a serious threat. Resistance takes the form of occasional firefights in outlying areas, occasional sabotage, refusal to register when ordered by the authorities, spreading of the false news, and the setting up of bogus "revolutionary" organizations. The controlled Saigon press has documented much of this.



Vehicles litter the beach at Vungtau, 40 miles from Saigon. The once-popular resort sees few visitors since the American departure.

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