

# Now Viets want the U.S. back

By Alan Dawson  
United Press International

BANGKOK, Thailand — Nearly five months after it took over South Vietnam, the Communist government badly wants American recognition, and some of the 50-odd Americans still there fear they will be held as hostages to force negotiations.

I was the only American allowed to leave the country since the United States vetoed South Vietnam's entry into the United Nations.

When I left on Wednesday, the main government campaign was to move people from the capital out to the farms. About 300,000 already have been moved out in the well-organized operation, and officials told UPI that 2 million of Saigon's 3.5 million would go as quickly as possible.

But unlike the Khmer Rouge in neighborhood Cambodia, the South Vietnamese Communists so far have used persuasion, not force.

Bands of anti-Communist former South Vietnamese soldiers still roam the Central Highlands and parts of the Mekong Delta, but as far as is known have not launched any significant attack in the past four months.

Government officials say they are confident Americans will again occupy the former U.S. Embassy, abandoned April 30 only hours before Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops entered Saigon. "We want normal relations with the United States," ranking spokesmen tell anyone who asks.

Washington's brushoff at the United Nations, therefore, has irritated the Provisional Revolutionary Government.

I was asked to leave, but was at first prevented from doing so by an airport gate guard who showed me an order barring all Americans from entering the Saigon airport to board outgoing flights.

Still flushed with victory but faced with the reality of a shattered economy, officials of the PRG have hinted they still have a couple of screws that could be tightened on the United States.

About a dozen Americans, most of them picked up outside Saigon during the last days of the war, are under loose detention somewhere in the country.

The others are free to roam around Saigon, living wherever they can afford; eating, drinking and — if possible — enjoying their time in Vietnam.

Intelligence officers assigned to monitor their movements covertly always are friendly when talking to the Americans, and stress that Communist Vietnamese harbor no ill feelings toward the American people.

Though no one in Vietnam's government would say just why relations with the United States were desirable, it is obvious Saigon would like U.S. aid money.

Saigon today shows little change from six months ago. The pictures of Ho Chi Minh and more "revolutionary" banners overhanging the streets are about the only surface change.

Captured U.S.-made planes and helicopters fly the skies of Vietnam. From the window of the UPI bureau, we saw daily test flights by UHI Huey

helicopters. They now have a yellow star on the tail.

For regular transportation, bicycles and public buses have replaced many of the motorcycles, because gasoline costs about \$6 a gallon and is getting scarcer.

At Tan Son Nhut Airbase, soldiers are slowly dismantling the charred wreckage of the former U.S. military headquarters, Pentagon East. It was almost the only useful thing destroyed in the panicky American withdrawal.

Soldiers roam the Saigon streets in their pith helmets, fatigues and even those famous black pajamas. Citizens no longer find them a curiosity.

On Sundays, the zoo is busy again. Popular restaurants are filled every night, but those which serve less than the best food are dying.

Tu Do Street — now renamed "Uprising Street" — sprouted cafes and Ho Chi Minh-sandal makers, but they have been closed down to allow pedestrians to move better.

Other streets have new names. A main drag is now called Nguyen Van Troi, for the "hero" who tried to kill former U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara on one of his visits to Saigon. Troi was later executed and is an official martyr.

The economy of South Vietnam was so battered by 30 years of war that the nation — already far behind other Southeast Asian countries in economic development — must now fall back even further.

"We must go backwards, however regrettable that is," said Deputy government advisor Trinh Dinh Thao. "We must establish self-sufficiency as the first priority to rebuilding the economy.

"To do that, our people must go back to the farms and the fishing boats."

There is no overt harassment or retaliation in

South Vietnam, but it is clear that the future rice farmers of Vietnam will be those who opposed the PRG in the past.

Many of the poor are happier than before,

although they still are poor. The Communists, organizers par excellence, include virtually every citizen on committees which discuss national and local policy.