

## American PX Whisky and Perfume

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HONG KONG, Jan. 12—Although the last American PX in Vietnam was closed in April, the impact of its bounty is still being felt—but now in North Vietnam.

According to recent travelers to Hanoi, Scotch whisky, perfume and Japanese radios that once lined the post exchange's shelves are being sold in markets in the North Vietnamese capital. They were apparently taken there by Northerners who snapped them up on the black market in Saigon. Such luxury items have not been seen in spartan Hanoi for years.

Incongruously, other relics of the American presence have turned up in Hanoi. Foreigners have sighted many of the Ford and Chevrolet sedans, still bearing South Vietnamese license plates, that were once driven by employees of the United States Embassy or the Agency for International Development.

In addition, the North Vietnamese in Saigon are reported to have packed up a well-equipped Seventh-day Adventist hospital—originally the United States Army Third Field Hospital—a textile mill and large quantities of South Vietnamese rice for shipment north.

Redistribution of property is only a small part of the reunification process that has been taking place over the last eight months, almost all of it apparently directed from Hanoi.

Le Thanh Nghi, a North Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister, told a meeting of the National Assembly recently that "tens of thousands" of North Vietnamese "have been dispatched to work in the provinces of South Vietnam." Among them are officials ranging

from Pham Hung, the fourth-ranking member of the North Vietnamese Politburo, through economic planners and security specialists to customs agents. A recent Western visitor to Saigon was surprised to recognize a customs inspector from Hanoi at Tan Son Nhut Airport.

Exactly why Hanoi has sent so many people south is a matter of conjecture. Perhaps, as American officials insisted during the war, the indigenous southern Communists were not so numerous after all and depended on the North. Or perhaps, in a continuation of traditional Vietnamese regional rivalries, the Northerners simply do not trust their southern compatriots.

An Asian businessman who left Saigon recently on a French-sponsored refugee flight reported that there were two types of policemen there: "Those with guns are Northerners, those without are Southerners." Moreover, he said, there are still eight to 10 North Vietnamese Army divisions in the Saigon area, exactly the same number as at the end of the war.

Another possible factor in North Vietnam's policy is that since the 1954 division of the country at Geneva, the Communist movement, by geographical accident, has been directed from Hanoi. Thus Mr. Hung, the senior Communist official in Saigon since the war, is a native of the Mekong Delta but a North Vietnamese party leader.

At a recent conference of delegates in Saigon called to approve a plan for reunification next spring, he was listed ahead of the president of the Provisional Revolutionary Government, Huynh Tan Phat, and the president of the National Liberation Front, Nguyen Huu Tho. Mr.

Hung was described as the secretary of the South Vietnam Committee of the Vietnam Workers Party.

Saigon and Hanoi have announced that political unification will follow National Assembly elections next April. The Assembly will draw up a constitution, and a government is to be formed by the end of June, with Hanoi apparently as the capital.

The National Liberation Front is to be subsumed then into the largely powerless Vietnam Fatherland Front, a broad North Vietnamese political organization. Last week it was disclosed at a meeting of the North Vietnamese National Assembly that Hue, Vietnam's one-time imperial capital, and the two northernmost provinces of South Vietnam had already been merged into North Vietnam's southernmost province.

The overwhelming fact of life in Saigon over the last eight months has apparently been the steady decline in its standard of living.

With the entire South Vietnamese Army and much of the former civil service disbanded, and with imported raw materials for the few factories in short supply, jobs have simply disappeared. The new Communist authorities have made such vital items as rice and milk available at state ration stores, but prices have continued to climb.

A Vietnamese woman who managed to settle in Hong Kong received a letter from her family in Saigon recently saying that her two brothers got up every morning at 5 to bicycle to work in a fertilizer factory in Bien Hoa, three hours away. They return home at 10 P.M. exhausted. However, the two men, former law students,

consider themselves lucky; at least they have jobs, which means they will not be told to resettle in the countryside.

Such economic difficulties may be one explanation for reports of continued armed resistance in South Vietnam. The reports, at best fragmentary and second-hand, indicate that it is concentrated in the Central Highlands around the montagnard center of Ban Me Thuot, in Darlac Province, and in the Mekong Delta.

Oddly, the Communists have lent credence to the reports by publicizing reports of military action against dissidents. In a broadcast last week the Hanoi radio announced that its troops in Darlac had carried out a mission "to search and sweep"—a phrase that recalled American search-and-destroy tactics during the war.

In another broadcast last week the Hanoi radio said that in the last six months its troops had rounded up "some 7,000 puppet soldiers and personnel still hiding in the jungles" in the highlands.

American intelligence specialists who still follow Vietnam reason that many of those continuing to resist the Communists may be desperate people who see little alternative, though in some cases they may be little more than bandits. In the highlands, where the montagnards have traditionally been hostile to the Vietnamese, there may also be an ethnic element.

Most analysts believe that the resistance, lacking guns and ammunition, has little chance of being anything more than an annoyance.

Another matter of conjecture is the continued, intense North Vietnamese propaganda barrage against Thailand. Over the last few months

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## *Flowing to Austere Hanoi*

the Hanoi radio has regularly accused Bangkok of everything from harboring Vietnamese and Laotian refugees to plotting to invade Laos. North Vietnam has also demanded that all American forces in Thailand be withdrawn, a demand that Bangkok says will be met by spring.

In the meantime, it is estimated, North Vietnam has maintained 30,000 troops in southern Laos near the Thai border. Recent intelligence

reports indicate that the North Vietnamese are training Thai Communist guerrillas in both Laos and Vietnam. There have also been reports that Hanoi has stepped up clandestine arms shipments to the Thai insurgents.

Whether Hanoi wants anything more than to keep Bangkok nervous is unclear. Some analysts think the North Vietnamese may be laying the groundwork for further activity.

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