

Chinese Area Of Saigon Retains Own Character

By ROBERT MOREFIELD
SAIGON (AP)—South of Saigon, and a continuing part of it, lies Cholon, the Chinese quarter of the Vietnamese capital. It is as different from Saigon itself as the green of April differs from the russet leaves of fall, yet the two have many things in common.

Each has wide, tree-shaded boulevards, many of which are littered with debris and strewn with garbage that grows sour in the hot, moist air. Each has sidewalks choked with life, and traffic jams are normal.

Each has a great deal of pleasant, air-conditioned homes, swank apartments, slums, sinister alleys, bars and brothels, restaurants good and bad, and architecture that here had three reflects French colonial influences as fading as the color of the structures themselves. In each there is the nervous immediacy of war.

And each has a large central market crowded with the press of humans by day and overrun at night by hordes of rats.

It is the market in Cholon that has given the Chinese quarter its name — cho (market) lon (large), now merged into the one Chinese word Cholon.

Beneath the surface, most of the similarities end. Saigon is Vietnamese to its core; Cholon remains indelibly Chinese.

QUICKENS DIFFERENCES

The war has not welded the Chinese and Vietnamese into any semblance of unity. Many believe, on the contrary, that the war has quickened the differences between the two main segments of Viet Nam.

Generations ago many Vietnamese were Chinese. At one time they used Chinese characters in their writings, and even today many elderly Vietnamese can read and speak Chinese. Old pagodas bear Chinese inscriptions in old cemeteries, headstones and tombs are marked in Chinese characters. Indeed, the Chinese once ruled the Vietnamese, from the second century B.C. to the 10th century A.D., and for hundreds of years the Chinese have immigrated to what now is Viet Nam.

Nowadays the Chinese make up the largest minority in Viet Nam, and most of them live in Cholon — roughly 660,000 compared with Saigon's 2,000,000 and the nation's 15,000,000.

As a whole the Chinese have resisted assimilation. They accepted Vietnamese citizenship because it was forced upon them.

The government requires that the Vietnamese language be

taught in all Chinese schools, and the Chinese comply, but out of school they emphasize their own language and the rich cultural and esthetic heritage of the Chinese people.

CHINESE MUST FIGHT

In 1962 the government of Ngo Dinh Diem ordered that the Chinese must fight shoulder to shoulder with the Vietnamese against the Viet Cong. The Chinese demonstrated against this decree, but never more than half-heartedly. Thousands of Vietnamese of Chinese extraction are serving in the army.

Any widespread allegiance to the Chinese in Viet Nam to the Communist-Peking government is scoffed at by leaders in Cholon.

"There is much talk of Chinese Communists in Saigon," said a leading Cholon merchant, "and there doubtless are some Communists here. But one can not say who they are or how many, or how few."

Then he added: "The main job in Viet Nam is to defeat the Viet Cong."

Peking's militant posture against South Viet Nam, some observers say, has found admirers among the Chinese here. The line has a strong appeal to some Chinese here who feel they are being oppressed.

CONTROL LARGE SHARE

The Chinese control a large share of the Vietnamese economy in banking, in exporting and importing. Estimates of this control begin at 50 per cent and go as high in some fields as 90 per cent. The Chinese have a leading role as rice brokers and

in retail trade. As money lenders, a role they share with prosperous Vietnamese, the Chinese do business throughout the country.

Their commercial influence long has been considered by many to be all out of proportion to their numbers.

Many Chinese businessmen say taxes are high and business would be better under a stable civilian government.

Government officials disclaim any discrimination against the Chinese minority, but still the Chinese are afraid.

"These people do not dislike the government," said one Chinese, "but they fear the trouble they believe the government can cause them."

Asked to list Chinese grievances, he replied: "The government is at war and we must not antagonize the government." His hands went out in a slow gesture of resignation.

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Pearson Has No Optimism On Viet Nam

OTTAWA (CP)—Prime Minister Pearson said Monday it is impossible to be optimistic at the moment about convening a peace conference on Viet Nam.

He made the comment in the Commons in answering Conservative leader Diefenbaker who asked whether there is any indication from North Viet Nam to lead the prime minister to believe there is hope for a peace conference.

Mr. Pearson said Canadian policy is unchanged from a May 1 speech he delivered. In that, he said the first concrete step to peace is a cease-fire as a prelude to no-condition negotiations.

Negotiations would be followed by a phased withdrawal of hostile forces including North Vietnamese troops from the battleground in South Viet Nam.

NDP Leader T. C. Douglas asked whether Canada would formally notify the U.S. government if it disapproved of the extension of U.S. bombing to the North Vietnamese cities of Hanoi and Halphong.

Mr. Pearson said Canada is trying to bring about negotiations and he did not think it desirable to comment on the policies of either side.

"We have already indicated our regret at the bombing extension and I prefer to leave it at that for the moment," Mr. Pearson said.

Gordon Churchill (PC—Windsor, South Centre) asked for a government rundown on the military situation in Viet Nam. Defence Minister Hillyer offered a private briefing, but said he cannot make public classified information, largely from the U.S.

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ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (CP)—A pillar of rough granite bearing a 500-pound bronze maple leaf plaque will be unveiled July 12 by Prime Minister Pearson 10 miles west of Grand Falls, Nfld. to mark the official opening of the province's Trans-Canada highway section.

Details of the opening ceremonies at the halfway point of the 35-mile route were released at a news conference here.

The prime minister will meet the parade on its three-day trip from here to Port aux Basques and is expected to be accompanied by Trade Minister, Winters and Works Minister George McElraith, officials said.

The cavalcade leaves here July 11.

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