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SAIGON, SOUTH VIET NAM--A six-day visitor to North Vietnam said the austerity in the Communist-~~blac~~ country was "so depressing I felt like getting drunk when I returned to Saigon."

The visitor, who requested his identity and occupation not be revealed, traveled to the North Vietnamese capital of Hanoi on the French-owned and operated airways, Aigle Azure Extreme Orient, the only means of transport in the world ~~means~~ connecting North and South Viet Nam. It also makes intermediate stops in Vientiane, Laos, and Phnom Penh, Cambodia, under contract to the International Control Commission, a fact-finding body set up under the 1954 Geneva Agreement. *Se*

"The entire atmosphere in the North (Viet Nam) is impersonal and distressing," the highly informed source said. "You feel a sense of pity for the people and what they're in for. What life affords me, they can never have. They have no say in their own lives.

"There was not a smile on the face of anyone," he continued. "It seems as though they are going on ax in a machine-like manner--like you oil a machine and it works, but without human variations."

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Hanoi, the lively political and intellectual capital of Viet Nam under the French, was famous for its night spots and cultural attractions. "You should see the beautiful French buildings now," the informant said. "They're in terrible shape, having never been whitewashed. And in the old French villas, one whole family lives, eats and sleeps in only one room.

"On the streets, not one person was dressed in rich clothes," he said, "but not one was in ~~old~~ tatters either."

The ~~usually reliable~~ ^{TRAVELER} source reported he counted only five cars in ^{North} Viet Nam during his six-day stay. "You could sleep right in the middle of the street without fear of being disturbed," he said. "Buses, ^Atrams, bicycles and walking are the people's transport. There were no motorcycles and no cycles. Here in Saigon you can't even sleep in your own room without hearing all the traffic below."

He said he saw a few stray military vehicles, but no convoys, which he was told moved at night.

The informant ^{SAID} ~~told~~ of he and ^A ~~his~~ friend ^{WALKED} ~~walking~~ for an hour to find a small restaurant. "We finally found a small shop that was probably an elegant French restaurant in the old days," he said. "It was a very austere place with small wooden benches and stools, but it had Vietnamese music. The waitresses, who spoke French, put on four or five records for us of old French tunes and fast American music of the 1920's."

"We ordered cafe au lait, the most expensive drink listed, for seven-tenths of a dong (20 South Vietnamese piastres or about ~~three~~ cents U. S.). Tipping is not allowed, but I slipped one dong under the ashtray. The two waitresses who saw me giggled and held a conference in the back to decide if they should accept it. They did. And when we left, you should have seen the smile of gratification on their faces—all for one dong."

He said the girls who used to work in Hanoi's bars and night clubs "are now in the coal mines. You wouldn't dare try to make love ~~for~~ to a woman for the night in North Viet Nam. She'd just disappear. You would not ask what happened to her ~~or~~—or you would go to the same place she did."

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He said the women in the northern half of the former French colony were all dressed in black trousers and white blouses. They wore no cosmetics or fingernail polish, as is often seen on the Saigon woman-on-the-street. "I saw only one woman in a dress," he said, "and she was the wife of a government employee at an official social function. But the dress was very ordinary."

He described it as similar to the South Vietnamese female attire of long white pantallions covered by a flowing silk over-dress. He said he was told each North Vietnamese is issued only six meters of clothing material a year.

Despite the grimness, he reported, Hanoi still had ~~some~~ a little romance left in it. "I was surprised to find lovers sitting ~~pa~~ sitting on park benches late at night," he said. "It was rare, but it was there."

He told of the long working hours and rigid discipline of the North Vietnam Vietnamese, which he attributed to fear. Factory and office personnel begin work at 5:30 a.m. and stop at 7 p.m., with a lunch break from 11:30 to one each day, he said.

"The first day I was in Hanoi, I woke up at eight with shouts of not, Hai, BA. (one, two, three) coming over the loudspeaker. Everyone was lining up."

He asked his friend, "What is this--a rally?"

"No," his companion laughed. "It's physical training. They have it every morning."

The informant said "a common sight at any time of the day or night" was one to four young soldiers or students marching along the streets in khaki-colored cotton uniforms, wearing packs on their backs, but without weapons. He noticed this about six times a day, he said.

~~He~~ The only Chinese influence in the country he observed was that the North Vietnamese military uniforms of light-colored khaki resembled the style 2 those of Communist China. He said he was told Soviet aid was being used to help build facto factories and that one of the two main hotels in Hanoi was completely booked for Russian technicians.

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Little industrialization was noticed as he drove through the countryside from Hanoi to Haiphong, he said, except a "full-blooming cement factory in Haiphong" and some construction in Hanoi's suburbs, including "mass housing colonies."

In the 65-mile drive from Hanoi to Haiphong, he said "there were fields as far as I could see with lots of people working. But only human transport was used for getting the produce to market."

He said he caught a glimpse of the ^{North} Vietnamese ^{President}, Ho Chi Minh, who is reportedly a "very sick man, probably suffering from tuberculosis." The informant ~~not~~ attributed the poor health of the head of state not only to his years of age, but also to having lived ~~with~~ ⁱⁿ ~~simplicity~~ ^{the early 1940's.} for four years in a cave when he was leading a resistance movement in 1941-1944 before escaping to China.

He described Ho ~~Chi Minh~~ ^{EB} as a "very simple, thin, sickly and extremely austere man." He said he was told the North Vietnamese ^{EB} lead was paid from 250 to 300 dong a month, or about U. S. \$60 to \$80. He said ~~the~~ ^{Ho} is reportedly living in a small cottage within a well-protected compound near a palace used by former high French officials.

He said he believed the people of North Vietnam were convinced the division with ~~the~~ ^{the} southern portion of the country was only temporary.

"At an official social ~~gathering~~ ^{gathering}, one North Vietnamese told me her mother and sister were in Saigon, but that she never heard from them."

"The lady ^{said to me} ~~told me~~ ^{calmly} calmly: I don't know what's happened to them. But when we take Saigon, I'll see them again."