

deepe

taylor--1

Nov 28

SAIGON--Not long ago, American Ambassador Maxwell Davenport Taylor described life in this turbulent capital city as "a constant surprise" and a "a spicy way to live."

Saigonese often remark that things get even "spe spicier" when he leaves the country. They recall during his September absence from Viet Nam, tanks and troops marched through the streets in the September 13th "Hollo" "Hollywood coup." And as he only hours after departed Saigon last week, vicious street fighting between rockhurling schoolboys and teargas-tossing police and paratroopers broke out, causing tens of casualties.

As the soldier-diplomat continues his top-level policy review with President Lyndon B. Johnson, Saigonese are expecting even more changes--perhaps even bombing of North Viet Nam.

(More)

deepe

taylor--2

"It's one thing to be a frequent visitor," ~~Ambassador~~
Ambassador Taylor explained noting that he had in previous years watched Vietnamese developments in Washington, "and another thing to live here. My impressions are different in degree but not in kind. Life in Saigon is a constant surprise. There's nothing dull about it. If variety is the ~~spice~~ spice of life, this is a spicy way to live."

The 63-year-old Ambassador/ has been called ~~that~~ a rebel in the Pentagon during the 1950's when he sought to re-shape American military thinking away from predominant reliance of the "massive retaliation" of nuclear weaponry towards greater "flexible response" to meet many kinds of warfare.

He lost the battle and resigned, only to be re-appointed to ^A powerful post under President Kennedy in 1961.

Taylor himself, with a slight laugh, however refuted this and said "I wasn't the rebel. I was quite orthodox; the others were the heretics.

"We had had experience in guerrilla warfare in Greece...and I thought this kind of warfare was in the cards for the future. We saw it also in the Philippines and Malaysia, where I visited the British during their emergency. It was apparent to many this new kind of warfare was the war of the ~~far~~ future. We (Washington military and political leaders) did a considerable amount of work on guerrilla warfare before an involvement in South East Asia, but my regret is we didn't do more. At the outset, we didn't ^h have the sense of urgency about it that we do now."

deepe

taylor--3

Taylor's four-month tenure in the wooden-~~anel~~ paneled Ambassador's Office on the fifth floor of the American ~~emb~~ Embassy here has caused a mixed reaction among the Vietnamese and Americans ~~living~~ living here.

While ~~are~~ all are in common agreement that the political situation has plummeted downwards since his July arrival, some x say that Taylor would have had to be a "~~mirac~~ "miracle worker" to have salvaged any sort of ~~stabi~~ stability out of the massive in-fighting among Vietnamese ~~in~~ factions, some of which are suspected of being Communist penetrated.

Others have a lukewarm attitude to him. "He's done nothing to be congratulated for or reproached for," one Vietnamese captain laughed. "He tried to please everyone--the generals, the politicians, the Buddhists, the Catholics. No one can ~~succeed~~ succeed in that."

Many in the American community either ~~openly~~ blame ~~i~~ him for "stiffness and lack of imagination" during the prolonged state of crisis ~~over~~ the past several months. One called him "the original uncertain ~~trump~~ trumpet," a reference to his polemic book called "The Uncertain Trumphet," named after a Biblical quotation "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?"

(More)

deepe

taylor-4

Whatever the improab improbabilities ~~conama~~ of out-intriguing the Vietnamese in their course towards political self-desiric destruction, American observers here note two specific effects of Taylor's ~~tenre~~ brief tenure in office. One is that Taylor's tenure has practically nullified the tenure of his ~~predces~~ predecessor, Henry Cabot Lodge. Taylor's attempts to help ~~the~~ assist the stability of the current civilian government is viewed here as a ~~reversal~~ reversal when in late August of last year ~~when~~ Washington officials and Lodge in Saigon ~~wit~~ withdrew support ~~from~~ ~~American~~ ~~was~~ ~~backing~~ another civilian government headed by Ngo Dinh Diem. ~~The~~ It was under Lodge that Maj. Gen. Nguyen Khanh came to power in the ~~oil~~ ^{WERE} civilian government--and ~~four~~ five of Vietnam's most competent generals exiled in a mountain resort city on charges they were attempting to neutralize Viet Nam. Now, ^{at Taylor's suggestion} ten months later, these five generals have again been returned to powerful positions in the army. Under Lodge, the systematic program of ~~an~~ American economic aid to the provinces continued to flourish--despite two coup d'etats. Now, as even more political instability has diseased Viet Nam, this system is in the process of change and the traditional form of working through government ministries ~~with~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~government~~ is again slated to be re-instated.

The second ~~effort~~ effect of the Taylor tenure--which has also hindered Taylor--is that the current political instability on the Vietnamese ~~house~~ ^{MISSION} has been accompanied by a little-noticed "American coup" in the American house. There has been such a rapid turnover of American personnel--in the highest echelons--of each ~~key~~ key ~~if~~ American agency (More)

deepe

taylor--5

that a current American joke here is "If my boss calls, get his name."

In some key sections of the American Embassy, only one person has been there ~~for~~ in Viet Nam for more than two weeks. In the more than 50 American employees of the United States Information Agency, none ~~have been there~~ ^{WERE} in Viet Nam before the beginning of this year.

In the United States Agency for International Development (A (USAID) ^{THE POST OF THE} ~~say a w~~ saw simultaneous changes in the personnel of the director of the agency plus the ~~a~~ important associate director for rural operations—and they are now battling each other.

Some of these personnel changes were initiated under Lodge, but they peaked with the arrival of Taylor in ~~July~~ ² July, which has caused a lack of continuity in day-to-day ~~policy~~ ^{policy} details. implementation of policy.

Long-time specialists in foreign ~~embasi~~ ² embassies are ~~were~~ ² ~~aga~~ ^{ONE SAID} slightly less than ~~appale~~ ² appalled at the "lack of an institutional memory" and "everyone is now trying to solve the problems with the same solutions we tried three years ago—the solutions did not work then and will not work now."

Despite the pressures of his assignment, Taylor has been occasionally seen entering the Embassy whistling an incoherent tune with his jacket flopped over one shoulder. At home, he occasionally has a scotch-soda or gimlet before dinner. A safe has been installed in his home so that he can carry classified documents with him to read after work; on weekends he carries home three to five-inches worth of fat reports (in the Pentagon, he used to carry home a suitcase of material for the week-end).

deeps

taylor--6

He drives around Saigon in a Chrysler "that was dredged up" from a mission warehouse; his Cadillac "was falling apart with a broken transmission," an associate explained. He is covered by a minimum of security officials, though barbed wire barricades block off the street on which he lives. Unlike his predecessor, he does not carry a weapon. Occasional intelligence reports are received that the Viet Cong Communist terrorists will try to assassinate him, but he appears unconcerned and refuses to change his schedule of activities.

Taylor is still agile and handsome at 63--a young waitress at an American military installation reportedly told him once at lunch, "You No. 1 sexy." Despite a sprained knee, the tall Mississouian still enjoys swimming and aides regularly schedule tennis matches for him.

"He wins more games than he loses," one aide said, "but he does not win them all."