

Vietnamese War Doesn't Alter Siesta

By MALCOLM W. BROWNE
Of the Associated Press

SAIGON (AP) — The grinding, cruel war gripping South Viet Nam has changed many features of life in the republic but it has scarcely touched the mid-day siesta.

Soldiers still put down their arms for a snooze, farmers lay aside their watering pots, merchants close and streets are almost deserted as the nation goes to sleep more completely even than most Latin American countries.

The Communist Viet Cong itself apparently still believes in the healthful value of mid-day sleep.

A recent intelligence report on training activities of Unit company operating in the Mekong River delta showed, for example, that the rebels there turn in for a nap at 12:30 p.m.

Even Reds Rest

Austere in its training, the Communist unit takes only an hour for its siesta, and returns to work with a rousing half hour round of Communist songs. But the siesta itself is fundamental.

Essential services in Saigon and the other big towns continue, of course, and fighting men never completely relax. But between noon and 3 p. m. most of the nation is in suspended animation.

Part of the persistence of the siesta pattern here results from South Viet Nam's enervating, tropical climate.

This month, while most of the northern hemisphere was shivering under an unusually severe and general cold wave, midday temperatures in Saigon remained in the 80s and a blazing sun continued to blister the skins of the unwary.

But the siesta also is a matter of national tradition here, and almost as immutable as the conical straw hats worn in the fields here for centuries.

Often Annoyed

Newly-arrived foreigners, military men, government officials, businessmen, and tourists are often annoyed to find they can accomplish virtually nothing during siesta. Many complain that a valuable part of the working day is wasted.

A Vietnamese government worker said: "Work is impossible in the heat of the day. We work at other times. Besides, none of us would have energy to work in the afternoon without the refreshing siesta first. This is something your Western influence can never change nor should it."

Most citizens take to their beds, but when beds are not available, anything will do. Taxi and cycle drivers curl up on the seats of their vehicles, street peddlers stretch out on door steps, children sleep in their sleeping mothers' arms, and some citizens even sleep draped over the seats of their parked motor scooters. The sidewalks themselves are strewn with sleeping forms.

Even the most energetic foreigners who live and work in air conditioned rooms eventually give up fighting the big lull. Most admit they have grown to like the custom. A career diplomat from one of the bustling, cold weather countries put it this way:

"I used to hate this siesta thing myself, and resented the idea of working hard while everyone else was sleeping. It seemed especially pointless in a nation at war. But I learned that there are reasons for it, and I stopped carping. Then I got to like it. Frankly, I don't like the idea of having to give it up when I return home."

UO Faculty Plans Portland Concerts

Faculty members of the University of Oregon School of Music will present a series of four concerts in Portland in February and March.

The Faculty Artist Series is being sponsored by the University of Oregon and the Portland Center of the State System of Higher Education's General Extension Division.

The Portland programs will be given in the Lloyd Center auditorium at 4 p.m. on February 11 and 25 and March 11 and 25.

Among the university faculty members to be featured in the series are harpsichordist John Hamilton and violinist Joyce Maves.

Both musicians play with the Woodwind Baroque Players, the group presenting the Feb. 11 performance. Maves is also a member of the University Trio which performs on Feb. 25 and March 25. Hamilton is scheduled to handle the March 11 performance.

Further information on the series may be obtained from the Portland Center's information office, 1633 S.W. Park Portland.

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