

MAR 28 1966

CPYRGHT

# U.S. Seeks Way to Free Hertz, Captive of Reds

The United States has been attempting to obtain the release of Gustave C. Hertz of Leesburg, Va., who was kidnaped by the Viet Cong nearly 14 months ago.

Hertz, 48, an official of the Agency for International Development, was kidnaped Feb. 2, 1965, while cycling in the suburbs of Saigon. Two months later, a communique broadcast from Hanoi said he was in the custody of the Viet Cong and would be executed if a Communist terrorist were put to death.

The death sentence imposed on the terrorist, Nguyen Van Hai, has not been carried out. Hai was arrested for participating in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Saigon.

Attempts to get Hertz released have revolved around proposals to swap him for Hai. Reportedly involved in the negotiations have been Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, D-N.Y., the Algerian government, and Sanford Gottlieb, political action director of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy.

The negotiations have been carried out in great secrecy. They became public over the weekend when the New York Daily News carried a story from Saigon reporting them. The Washington Post then printed a story in its later editions and the New York Herald Tribune carried a story this morning.

Whether the publicity given the attempts to free Hertz will hamper them cannot now be determined.

The effort to free Hertz, whose brother A. Burke Hertz lives in Falls Church, apparently began when members of his family approached Kennedy, who, with the consent of the White House, met with Algerian Ambassador Cherif Guelal. The ambassador promised to take



GUSTAV C. HERTZ

up the matter with President Ben Bella.

The National Liberation Front, political arm of the Viet Cong, had representatives in Algiers who were in regular contact with the Algerian government.

But Ben Bella was overthrown in a military coup last June 19 before he could begin serious negotiations with the Viet Cong. Later, the new Algerian president, Hourai Boumedienne, took up where Ben Bella had left off.

The Algerians reported the Viet Cong were willing to exchange Hertz for Hai, but an agreement was never concluded.

Later, sources in Saigon reported a \$20,000 ransom might bring Hertz' release. Under the direction of the Central Intelligence Agency, the money was made available, but Hertz was not released.

Gottlieb is understood also to have communicated with contacts in Algiers. He reportedly was informed the Viet Cong were still willing to exchange Hertz for Hai, but again nothing came of it.