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Exiles From Past Vietnam Up

By Bernard Kaplan

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PARIS, April 25—The struggle for Vietnam has always been a tale of three cities: Saigon, Hanoi and Paris.

Many leaders on both sides were trained in Paris. A considerable number of the senior Communist cadres in South Vietnam got their grounding as Marxist revolutionaries in Sorbonne bull sessions and cafes on Paris's Left Bank. Thousands of other Vietnamese—wealthy refugees, disaffected intellectuals, disappointed politicians and just ordinary men and women looking for a quiet life—came here during the 30 years their country has been divided by civil war.

The largest and most politically sophisticated Vietnamese colony abroad, the Paris expatriates represent every shade of opinion, but, above all, the third force, the nondescript assemblage of Vietnamese who have sought to act—never with much success—as honest broker between the Communists and the Saigon government. Even a week or two ago, members of various third force groups operating here—Buddhists, Catholics, ex-servicemen, social democrats—still hoped to exert some influence on the last act of the war by playing a role in negotiations designed to blunt the impact of a Communist victory.

Now, even the most politically active—figures like

onetime Saigon Defense Minister Au Trong Thanh and Col. Tran Dinh Lan, who was once the regimental commander of a young captain named Nguyen Van Thieu—fear that things are moving too fast to be influenced by anything they or other expatriates can do.

"It is too late," said Tran Quan, a 35-year-old engineer who belongs to the ex-officers' organization which calls itself the Free Forces of Vietnam.

There is bitterness among many of the third force personalities toward the United States. They blame the Americans for depriving them of a useful role, forcing them to remain helpless on the sidelines.

"The United States gov-

ernment never believed the third force had genuine importance," Col. Lan said. "The Americans encouraged Thieu to ignore us. Now when they need us, they are victims of their own policy because we haven't the strength we could have had if it were not for their attitude."

In general, the inhabitants of what is sometimes called Vietnam Village—the little streets stretching out from the Latin quarter's Rue Montagne-Sainte-Genieve—are observing the denouement of their national drama with surprising calm.

There is little of the nervous excitement that was apparent when the Paris peace agreement was signed 27 months ago. Then, several

heavals Sit This One Out in Paris

leading figures quickly wound up their affairs here and booked flights to Saigon, expecting to resume political activity. One or two actually went. They returned here, thoroughly disillusioned by the realization that peace agreement or not, the war was continuing and political accommodation was not in sight.

Most have no intention of being twice burned.

"I expect to go back eventually," said former university professor Cao Huy Thuan. "There is no rush. Events are out of our control. It is best to wait and see."

The Vietnamese community here has not been shaken by a sharp influx of refugees since the South Vi-

etnamese collapse began two months ago. Only a trickle of Vietnamese has arrived on the four weekly flights here from Saigon.

A one-way ticket to Paris costs the equivalent of \$895. Most of the Vietnamese who can afford the price had already left the country. It is estimated that 400 or 500 refugees have come to France in the past two months, and a hundred or so orphans. There has been no clamor to adopt Vietnamese children by the French or by Vietnamese expatriates, and no official encouragement here for them to do it.

Many of the refugees have dual French and Vietnamese citizenship granted when France withdrew from Indochina in 1954. This is also

true of perhaps three-quarters of the estimated 30,000 Vietnamese living here.

No poll has been conducted to determine the expatriates' political sympathies. But it is clear that many, if not wildly enthusiastic about impending Vietcong victory, are far from despairing over it. No one was surprised by it.

"It was going to happen," said Nguyen Dang Bao, who owns a grocery store selling oriental products. "Thieu was probably the best man that the South could produce. He wasn't good enough."

Bao expects to go home one day, "at least to visit." His son, a television cameraman who is married to a French woman, said his home is here.

"I don't even remember Vietnam," he said. Like nearly all the other expatriates, was skeptical of reports that hundreds of thousands of refugees had fled before the advancing Communist troops.

"That is all propaganda," he insisted. "People are not running away in great numbers. They know they have no place to run to. No red terror will occur in the South. The Communists have learned a great deal over the ears. They are subtler than they used to be. They are also more self-confident, as why should they be? Hanoi's campaign against the Catholics in the 1950s was a big error and the Communists now realize it. Besides, many Catholics support them now."