

# Protest in Saigon Death

## Saigon

French Ambassador Jean Marie Merillon lodged a protest yesterday with the South Vietnamese government over the shooting death of correspondent Paul Leandri in the national police headquarters compound.

The envoy asked for an official investigation, prosecution of those, and responsible, and compensation to the family.

Merillon, acting on orders from Paris, filed protests both with the South Vietnamese Foreign Ministry and the office of the presidency.

Meanwhile, Major Nguyen Van Mai, chief of the national police immigration office, visited Leandri's widow to return the newsman's personal belongings.

Witnesses in the room said Mai apologized to Mrs. Leandri and expressed his deepest regrets over her husband's death. He asked her whether she would seek prosecution and, according to the witnesses, she replied: "Yes, for murder."

Leandri, 37, deputy bureau chief of Agence-France Presse, was shot and killed Friday night at the national police headquarters when he tried to leave the compound where he had been summoned for interrogation about a dispatch he had written, according to an offi-



AP Wirephoto

**PAUL LEANDRI**  
Slain newsman

cial police communique.

A single bullet struck him in the left side of the head

just above the ear. Police claimed that Leandri became belligerent when they tried to question him about the source of his dispatch on the battle for the central highlands city of Ban Me Thuot.

The story was about reported cooperation between Viet Cong forces and hill tribesmen in last week's Communist attack on the city.

Reliable sources said Leandri's death was discovered when a French consular official, who knew he had been under questioning and could not find him, went to the station.

Leandri had been questioned by authorities on at least one previous occasion after writing a report on alleged corruption among po-

lice and other officials.

Yesterday's communique claimed he jumped into his car and sped away after police threatened him with arrest for allegedly damaging office equipment when he became angered during interrogation.

The communique said two warning shots were fired in the air and three shots were fired at the tires of his car. Other sources said more than three shots were apparently fired at his car and that there were bullet holes in the front, rear and windows of the vehicle.

Sources said the only office damage observed after the incident was broken glass covering a desk. The police communique claimed that furniture and office equipment had been destroyed by Leandri.

Associated Press