

# French Stay, Seek Former Influence

By Bernard Kaplan

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PARIS, April 30—One large group of Westerners did not join the exodus from fallen South Vietnam. More than 10,000 French businessmen, planters and officials stayed behind, encouraged by their government to do so.

These French citizens, about 8,000 of whom are ethnic Vietnamese, represent France's hope of again becoming the main Western influence in the country that was a French colony for nearly a century.

Foreign Minister Jean Sauvagnargues, speaking in the French National Assembly today, said the French ambassador in Saigon was confident that the large French colony "had nothing to fear." The French embassy in Saigon has remained open, unlike most other western embassies. It is expected here that France will be one of the first non-Communist countries to recognize the Vietcong's Provisional Revolutionary Government as the legitimate rulers of South Vietnam.

In its first policy statement since the South Vietnamese government surrendered, the PRG delegation here promised that foreign lives and property will be "protected" so long as for-

eigners "respect the independence and sovereignty of Vietnam and conform to the policies of the revolutionary power."

The PRG declaration also said that it would adopt a neutralist, nonaligned position in international affairs and accept foreign economic and technical aid for the war-ravaged country. The statement said the new government would soon declare a nationwide amnesty and would consider diplomatic relations with all nations.

[Scors of Vietnamese besieged the South Vietnamese embassy to get their passports and other travel documents revalidated before it was taken over by the PRG, AP reported.]

Since the 1973 Vietnam cease-fire accord, the PRG has maintained a diplomatic mission in Paris. France and North Vietnam have full diplomatic relations.

France's interest in resuming a leading economic and even political role in Vietnam has been especially evident since the United States ended its direct military role in the war and it became increasingly clear that American interest in South Vietnam was waning.

The French base their aspirations on the deep French cultural interest still

existing in Vietnam and a surprisingly solid network of economic ties that held up even after French colonial rule ended in 1954.

By comparison, American influence in Vietnam was short lived and relatively superficial.

After the start of what turned out to be the final Communist military offensive, France became deeply involved in diplomatic maneuvers to bring about the resignation of South Vietnam's President Thieu. French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing openly called for Thieu to quit.

French officials accepted Communist assurances that Thieu's disappearance would open the way to a negotiated end to the war. France had a national interest in a negotiated peace, hoping that this would allow South Vietnam to retain nominal independence, even if under the Vietcong's domination—thus delaying the South's complete absorption by Hanoi.

As the French saw it, this would also provide greater opportunity for French economic interest. In recent years, French trade with North Vietnam has developed much more slowly than with the South.

Also to be considered were French investments in

## Pentagon Identifies 2 Missing Marines

The Pentagon yesterday identified the two Marine helicopter pilots listed as missing after their CH-46 went down in the South China Sea near the Carrier Hancock during Tuesday's evacuation from Saigon.

Two other Marines aboard the helicopter were rescued.

The missing men were identified as Capt. William Craig Nystul, whose wife, Carol, lives in Okinawa where Nystul was based and 1st Lt. Michael John Shea, whose wife, Jennifer, lives in El Paso, Tex.

South Vietnam, valued at more than \$275 million.

Several French officials reportedly feel that Hanoi and the PRG manipulated them to mislead both the South Vietnamese and the U.S. government as to prospects for a negotiated end to the fighting. This has left something of a bitter aftertaste at the French Foreign Ministry.

The French must also face the fact that, with the war ending by capitulation rather than negotiation, South Vietnam's prospect of holding onto some form of separate identity has been reduced.

But the 10,000 French citizens in South Vietnam have been urged by Giscard to maintain the French "presence." For the time being, they are following his wishes.

The French are confident that they possess the secret of how to survive and prosper in Vietnam. They are prepared to put that secret to the test, even in a Communist Vietnam.