

West Europeans See Fall of

Shift of Policy Expected To Bolster Role of NATO

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Special to The New York Times

BONN, April 30—Saigon's surrender after 30 years of struggle in Vietnam was seen in Europe today as a chastening defeat for American policy, but there were hopes that it might prove salutary.

Privately, many in the European community believe that the United States now will be able to turn from what they always considered a morbid preoccupation with Vietnam to more important issues of relations between the United States and Europe.

From London to the eastern Mediterranean there was a sense of a historic event, possibly a turning point. Even in Moscow, a day before the May Day celebration of the Communist ideals that Hanoi's troops fought for, there was a moderation, a sobriety to the tone of the news from Southeast Asia.

The news was commented upon and evaluated by bureaus of The New York Times in nine capitals of Europe and the Middle East, which gathered reactions through interviews and statements by officials, newspapers and individuals.

Almost exactly 21 years ago, Gen. Marcel Bigeard was commanding paratroops in Dien Bien Phu, the battlefield where France lost her colonial hold over Indochina.

Today, from the defense ministry in Paris, he said:

"This defeat was unavoidable. On the one side, people who lived in a sort of cocoon softly woven by the Americans. On the other, a young, tough North Vietnamese Army. You cannot do anything against a unanimous people Communist or not, the idea of patriotism is an incentive to which nobody has found the equal."

America's allies in Western Europe confined their official reactions to a hope that, now that the fighting was over, the Vietnamese people would be allowed to heal their wounds in peace.

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Saigon as Chastening Lesson for U.S.

France Defers Recognition

France, with the only embassy still functioning in Saigon, was understood to have decided to go slowly before shifting formal recognition to the new government, a step that neutral Sweden took today.

In West Germany, officials said relations with South Vietnam had not been broken even though its diplomats evacuated Saigon last week.

Among officials in London and Bonn, there was a sense of a strong need to overcome the shock of the American loss of face in Saigon with a demonstration in Europe of solidarity with the United States. A meeting of all leaders of members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization except President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing of France to be held in Brussels May 29 and 30, will fill this purpose.

The defeat of Saigon's Government, in a view often heard here, was not so much a sign of American weakness as it was of American illusions. The defeat did not come, West Germany's Social Democratic party declared a few days ago, because of insufficient American military aid. It was a product of an unpopular policy that failed to take account of the interests of "broad masses" of the South Vietnamese.

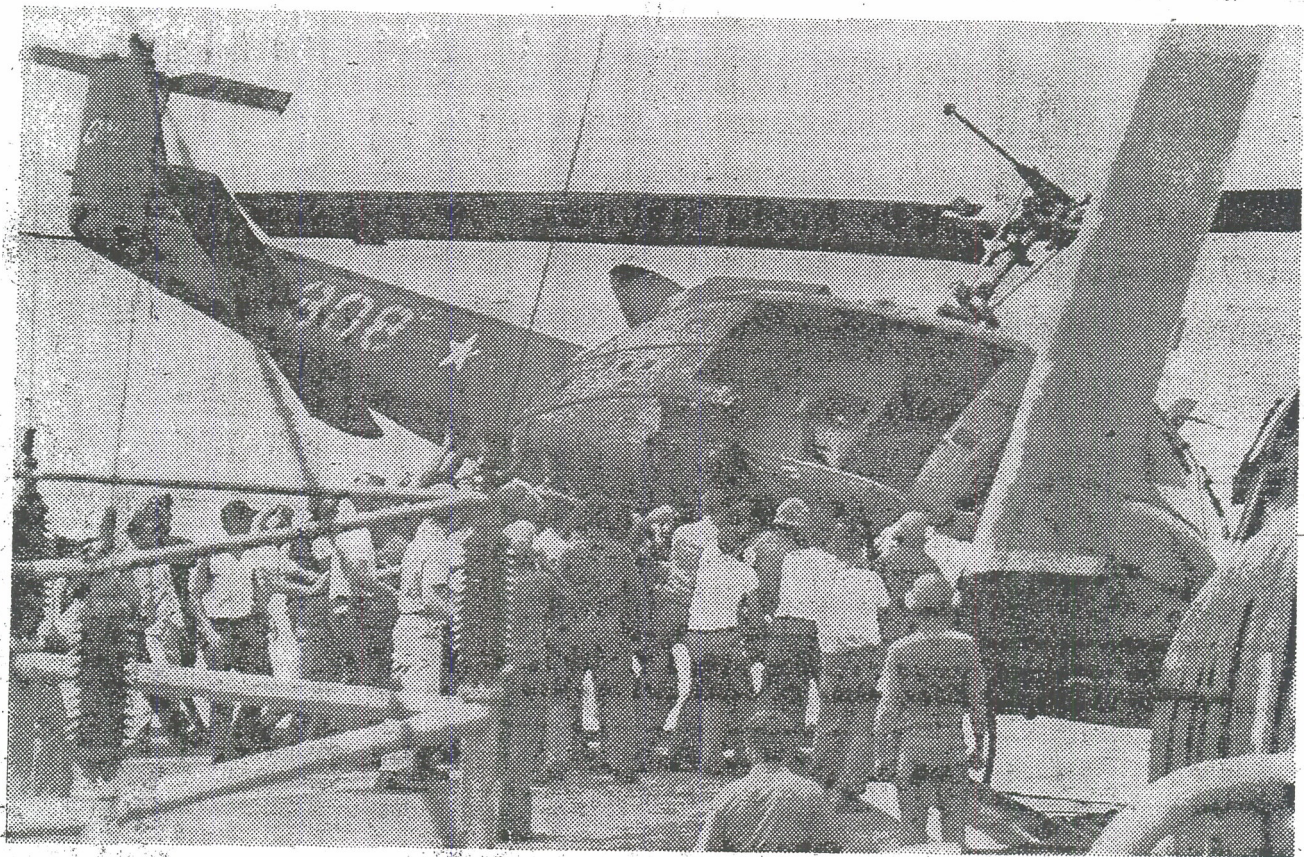
Little Gloating in Moscow

In Eastern Europe and in Moscow, those who have long supported Hanoi and the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam welcomed the victory. But today at least, there was little official Soviet gloating.

"The events in South Vietnam," commented Tass, the official Soviet press agency, "again confirm the truth that in the present time a regime that rests only on foreign bayonets is utterly nonviable."

Important and influential voices in West Germany, Britain and France seemed to agree with Moscow that the fundamental error of the United States was in trying to defend a country that would not defend itself.

But Moscow does not emerge in triumph from the humiliation that its allies inflicted on the United States. Officials and ordinary people in Western Europe believe, as the Conservative former Foreign Secretary, Alex Douglas-Horne, said in the British House of Lords today: "The free world has reached a point of insecurity where the democracies must require proof of Communist Russia's intentions and deeds which are compatible with cooperation and partnership."



Associated Press

A South Vietnamese helicopter that had been damaged as it landed on the U.S.S. Blue Ridge with refugees on Tuesday being pushed overboard by Americans, to clear the decks for the hurried evacuation operation.



Associated Press

Nguyen Cao Ky, former Vice President of South Vietnam, aboard the Blue Ridge, a command vessel of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, in the South China Sea.

Israelis Are Concerned

There is no country more dependent on United States military assistance for protection against aggression than Israel. There was some nervousness among Israelis today that the turn of events in Indochina could weaken the credibility of American support for Israel.

The Israeli newspaper Maariv commented, however: "The final sad chapter of the Vietnam struggle demonstrated once more the old savage truth that tools of war, no matter how powerful, are no substitute for spirit, without which an army

is nothing but a huge mass of panic-stricken people."

In Cairo, officials said privately that they thought the American "defeat" was a major blow for Secretary of State Kissinger and for President Anwar el-Sadat, who has been trying to use his "American connection" to ease the threat of another war with Israel.

The outcome in Vietnam, described by the Cairo radio as "a victory for all peace-loving people" will limit Mr. Kissinger's influence in Cairo, according to Egyptian diplomats and others.

The importance of the American commitment to the defense of Western Europe against aggression is especially stressed in West Germany, whose eastern border with East Germany is the dividing line between opposing social and political systems.

From the lowliest stoneworker in the Rhine Valley to Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, there seems to be little inclination towards equating Vietnam and any country in Europe.

"My friends and I used to talk about it a lot," said a worker in Cologne, "but even when you had 500,000 troops there, we said, 'The same thing will happen to them as happened to the French.' The peace treaties were just paper, and I think it's dumb to argue that only the Americans or the South Vietnamese were to blame for breaking them."

Brandt Emphasizes Ties

Former Chancellor Willy Brandt put some thoughts about Vietnam into a domestic political campaign speech in Dortmund last week.

"We will not allow ourselves to be separated from the United States," he said. "Our sympathy belongs to the victims of both sides and we should not deny our help to refugees and children. A European mercy mission is also called for because this war resulted from the heritage of the European colonial period."

In London, the new American Ambassador, Elliot L. Richardson, said that British officials had gone out of their way to tell him that the defeat in Vietnam should "not affect American commitments in Europe."

As in West Germany, some British newspapers have been less confident. The Daily Telegraph said today: "America has received a fearful jab in the face, from which it will take years to recover."

"It is world Communism's biggest victory, the free world's biggest defeat," it added.

Jacques Fauvet, editor of Le Monde in Paris, wrote today: "Contrary to the prophecies, the victory of Communism is not inevitable. The Western world must be more concerned to defend social justice. This justice which is often synonymous with independence, in

Asia as in Europe.

American diplomats in Bonn believe that recent visits to Europe by members of Congress have dispelled some of the concern in West Germany that the Congress might now be able to force the Administration to reduce the number of American troops in Europe.

"There is a vague fear," said one, "that there could be some lasting effect after Vietnam in the United States, a neoisolationism, but I think the overriding feeling is relief that the fighting is over."

Der Spiegel, the left-center West German news magazine, said:

"America bids farewell to Vietnam with a guilty conscience but glad the darkest hours of U.S. history are ending."

In Rome, Pope Paul VI issued a cautious statement through the Vatican spokesman, Federico Alessandrini, who said that the Pontiff shared the "anxiety and trepidation" of Roman Catholics in South Vietnam and hoped that real peace could now be brought about in Vietnam "in strict respect of civil and religious rights."