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Vietcong Said to Want Links With Oil Giants

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PARIS, May 2 — The new Saigon government wants Western oil companies to continue offshore exploration and drilling, according to informed sources. The new government apparently realizes, they said, that despite a desire for self-sufficiency outside aid will be required for efficient reconstruction.

The concessions signed by the now-overthrown South Vietnamese government with Shell, Mobil and the French government-owned ELF will have to be renegotiated, the sources said. But the new arrangements are not expected to be any more unfavorable to the oil firms than recent deals worked out with major petroleum-exporting countries.

Shell Oil Co., one of 19 companies that had leased offshore drilling rights from South Vietnam, said it had not been approached by the new Saigon government. Shell had drilled four exploratory wells off the Vietnamese coast, then pulled its drilling rig back to Singapore three weeks before the surrender of Saigon.

[Any decision to resume drilling would have to be made in the light of the relationship that will be established between the United States and the new Vietnamese government," a Shell spokesman said.]

The Provisional Revolutionary Government's willingness to continue cooperation with the Western oil firms is believed to be dictated by the realization that only Western technology can bring the oil on stream quickly, and supply the hard currency badly needed for important reconstruction projects.

The sources stressed, however, that the Communists—both in Hanoi and in Saigon

—will tend to be extremely touchy about any foreign aid that might smack of infringing on Vietnamese independence and sovereignty.

Recent statements seen as bearing out the Communists' pragmatic approach include North Vietnamese Premier Pham Van Dong's May Day greetings to the American people and PRG leader Nguyen Huu Tho's recent assurance in Danang "not excluding" economic relations with the United States.

The source expected the new authorities to be on their good behavior in promoting the much-promised National Concord and Reconciliation during a transition period.

Such expected moderation is dictated by various problems, both political and practical.

Given the priority of winning a long and costly war, neither North Vietnam nor the PRG has enough trained personnel to administer South Vietnam by themselves.

South Vietnam is expected to be initially administered by a mixture of North Vietnamese personnel; PRG officials, many of whom went north after the end of the French Indochina war in 1954; and cooperative civil servants who worked for successive South Vietnamese administrations.

The use of the former government's personnel is expected to be especially widespread in technical skills—such as running the power plants and waterworks—where the new leadership has no pool of trained manpower to draw on.

These holdovers are not expected to be given positions of real authority and are likely to be shunted aside as the new government gradually produces its

own, ideologically safe, civil servants in sufficient quantity, the sources said. The practical problems and the new government's apparent desire to reassure the South's middle class lead the sources to expect a three-to-five-year transition period before North and South Vietnam are formally reunited under Northern leadership.

The North Vietnamese are expected to be consulted on all important political and economic choices, however, and Hanoi and the PRG are likely to coordinate efforts to solve many everyday problems.

Another sign of moderation, the sources noted, was the decision to maintain the use of the South Vietnamese piaster alongside the North Vietnamese dong rather than to impose the use of Hanoi's currency alone.

Despite such signs, the sources fully expect a harsher economic and social policy to be instituted even before formal reunification is carried out.

Communist governments traditionally have a penchant for rigorous autarchy, and after a 30-year struggle, the North and South Vietnamese Communists alike certainly want to reeducate, if not necessarily punish, the South Vietnamese middle class, which prospered under the French and American military presence.

Significantly, the sources reported that the PRG mission here was in the midst of taking a census of the large Vietnamese community in France. But they were said to be insisting on a rigorous selection to weed out only those skilled Vietnamese who could be expected to accept the new government without indulging in the kind of searching criticism equated with life in the West.