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French Reluctant to

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PARIS, May 2—The French government is deeply concerned that it might have to open its frontiers to an influx of unwanted refugees following the fall of Saigon to the Communists.

Interior Ministry officials say that about 9,000 persons from South Vietnam who hold French passports could settle in France without going through any formalities.

"But what about the others" one official asked. "We are not in a position to receive the refugees, and if they are without work they will be under the threat of expulsion."

With more than 700,000

unemployed at home, the French government is actively encouraging French nationals living in South Vietnam to stay put, whatever happens.

Officials here stressed that the situation of Vietnamese refugees was completely different from that which prevailed in 1954 when Vietnam was divided after the defeat of French forces by the Vietminh.

They said at least 11,000 Vietnamese now live in France, but were unable to give any approximate figure about people of Vietnamese origin who acquired French nationality and came here after 1954.

They said at least 350,000

Vietnamese, mostly Catholics, fled from the North to the South after the signature of the Geneva agreements. But only a few hundred of them left for France.

Ironically, the evacuation of these people was not organized by the French but almost entirely by the United States.

A former war veteran said, "I witnessed the exodus of thousands in 1954. France did little to help them. In fact, their evacuation was organized by the U.S. troops stationed in Vietnam."

"The refugees were gathered in U.S. camps north of Saigon, he said. "One day Cardinal Spellman came

Take Viet Refugees

and blessed them from aboard a helicopter."

Nguyen Van Khan, a Catholic who arrived in France in 1966, said it was the Vietnamese bishops who called on the population to leave the North.

French officials acknowledged that France did not face a massive influx of refugees in 1954 since they had the chance of settling in South Vietnam.

Some Vietnamese who had dual nationality left Indochina after the withdrawal of French forces, but well before World War II there was a strong community of French Asians here, the officials said.

Vietnamese who came to

France in the past 20 years have formed small communities around Paris, Bordeaux and Marseilles.

A minority of Vietnamese who live here, French nationals and aliens alike, have been able to live comfortably so far.

Tranh Van Dung, 51, an employee with a dispatching firm who arrived here in 1946, said, "I left Vietnam when I saw that the situation was deteriorating. But those who managed to leave the country after 1954 were mainly the Bourgeois."

"The Vietnamese who have settled in France were those who could afford it," he added. "The middle-aged opened restaurants in the Paris Latin Quarter, the

youths became students or worked in offices."

"Restaurants are perhaps the only places where Vietnamese would get together. Otherwise we can be described as individualists . . . except for those who belong to Communist organizations," restaurant owner Nguyen Van Ho said.

French officials are desperately trying to determine the number of Vietnamese who will seek refuge in France.

"There are some 10,000 French passport-holders in Vietnam at present, and it is expected that many of them will return to France in the near future," the officials say.