

Once-Ranking Vietnamese Make Way in U.S.

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WASHINGTON, Nov. 21—Some high-ranking South Vietnamese were more than ready for the collapse last April.

Gen. Trang Si Tan moved enough money abroad during his two years as Saigon's police chief to be able to consider several big business deals, including the purchase of an old aircraft carrier for scrap metal and of a Holiday Inn hotel at San Diego.

Others waited until the last minute.

A former army corps commander and chief of staff cleared his safe-deposit boxes just a few hours before he left Saigon. He arrived at Fort Chaffee, Ark., with a million dollars in large bills in a suitcase. But his young mistress ran off with the suitcase and a young lover, and the general spent a month in a military psychiatric ward while his friends tried unsuccessfully to get the money back.

Still others reacted too late.

Only \$40,000 in Cash

Several wealthy generals had invested heavily in property in Vietnam, among them the former Vice President and air chief, Nguyen Cao Ky, who lost five tractors and other farm machinery when the Communists overran his 2,500-acre property in the Central Highlands. Mr. Ky got out only \$40,000 in cash, he said, because he was unable to liquidate his farm holdings.

Then there were senior Vietnamese who arrived with nothing because they had nothing.

A three-star general, Dong Van Khuyen, the last chief of staff of the South Vietnamese Army, found work as a \$180-a-week waiter at a seafood restaurant in Yorktown, Va. He sometimes serves United States military officers who used to advise him on running the million-man army. His wife is a part-time salad maker in the kitchen and their modest life a reflection of the unusually simple way they lived in Saigon.

The quality of the lives of Vietnamese officials in exile in the United States has come

as no surprise to American officials familiar with the Vietnamese scene.

"The U. S. Embassy was always well aware about who was making big money in Saigon and who was relatively honest," said an official handling refugee resettlement. "We went along with Vietnamese corruption as the price we paid for their loyalty."

None are surprised that while the last President of Vietnam, Nguyen Van Thieu, flits between his handsome homes in Taipei, London and the south of France, the last President of Cambodia, Sanku Kroy, lives modestly with his son in Austin, Tex.

A former Deputy Prime Minister, Nguyen Luu Vien, a physician, struggles at the University of Oklahoma at Norman, Okla., to be licensed to practice in America. The former Prime Minister, Tran Thien Khiem, now a resident of Taipei, tries to decide which Western country to settle in to better manage his business enterprises; he would prefer the United States.

Some of the wealthier exiled generals—116 were evacuated from Saigon—are concerned about adverse publicity and are trying to maintain a low profile.

They were shocked by the case of Dang Van Quang, a former corps commander, who was ousted for blatant corruption in the late 1960's and then returned to power as one of Mr. Thieu's closest aides and reputed bag man. Mr. Quang, denied residence in the United States, is fighting a deportation order from Canada.

Wealth Shines Through

Some former generals linked with Mr. Quang are settling discreetly, but the wealth shines through. Cao Van Vien, formerly chief of the general staff headquarters in Saigon, whose wife was notorious in Saigon for her business dealings, purchased an \$80,000 house in Virginia for a quiet retirement. But his son, Cao Anh Dung, solicited gold from Vietnamese refugees, offering a higher price than Deak, the international money exchange, banking and investment concern. A brother-in-law, Tran Ngoc Tran, also living in Virginia, began driving a black Mercedes soon after arriving.

A close political adviser to Mr. Thieu, Hoang Duc Nha, has invested \$100,000 in a house and a store specializing in Oriental goods in Arlington, Va. Mr. Thieu had to remove Mr. Nha, his nephew, because of his unpopularity in Saigon, and Vietnamese living in the Washington area say they are

boycotting his store. Mr. Nha tells friends he does not care because his business is with Americans.

Others among those not living a life of luxury in the United States include Pham Van Dong, one-time commander of the capital military district and Minister for Veterans Affairs, who had two military aides, three maids for his wife and five children, a cook and three guards. Today, living in Arlington "on a little money I put away," he drives his children to school while his wife does the housework.

Running a Service Station

Another former corps commander, Nguyen Van Minh, lives rent-free in an apartment provided by a church group on West 99th Street in Manhattan and earns enough in the accounting department of a publisher "to live in dignity." His luxurious home in downtown Saigon had jade-inlaid lacquer paintings and mother-of-pearl-inlaid chairs and tables.

Other former generals who had power and influence are reduced to ordinary pursuits. The commander of the Vietna-

me Engineer Corps, Nguyen Van Chuc, is grateful, he says, to be running an automobile service station in Loomis, Calif.

Still others are unemployed. Tran Van Minh, the last commander of the South Vietnamese Air Force, who lives near Sacramento, Calif., will take "almost any job." Pha Hoa Hiep, a former tank commander who was Minister of Information shortly before Saigon fell, is living of food stamps at Ocala, Fla.

The last commander of the South Vietnamese Navy moved into the basement of the home of the retired Chief of United States Naval Operations, Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr.

Few of the former generals are willing to consider the waiter's job taken by Mr. Khuyen.

"If a Vietnamese general officer takes such a menial job, what hope is there for us to get adequate employment," said a former senior officer who envisaged himself in a managerial or public-relations post.

Mr. Khuyen does not agree. "For me, this is no comedown," he said at the end of a 10-hour day. "Any job is a good job."

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