

Foe Frees Four Priests in Vietnam



The Rev. Marcel Arnould



The Rev. Gabriel Brice



The Rev. Leon Dujon



Associated Press

The Rev. Paul Carat

SAIGON, South Vietnam, Aug. 27 (AP)—The North Vietnamese have freed four French priests captured in the Central Highlands in April. They seemed in good spirits and showed no signs of abuse, an informant said.

Roman Catholic missionaries said that the French Foreign Ministry had negotiated with the North Vietnamese and Vietcong for their release and that of a Belgian nun, Sister Helene, who disappeared about the same time that the priests did. There was no word on her fate.

The four priests had been working in Montagnard villages in the Dakto area April 21 when the villages were overrun by enemy forces. The area is about 25 miles north of Kontum city, which remains in South Vietnamese hands.

Officials of missionary orders in Saigon identified the priests as the Revs. Leon Dujon, Marcel Arnould, Gabriel Brice and Paul Carat.

Vann Statement Rejected

John Paul Vann, the late senior American adviser in

the region, said shortly after the priests disappeared there were reports that two of them had been crucified by the enemy. The reports were rejected as unfounded by local Catholic officials.

A Government observation plane spotted the four priests today as they walked along Route 14, north of Kontum. A jeep picked them up later and brought them to the residence of the Bishop of Kontum, the Most Rev. Paul Seitz.

"From their physical looks and spirits, I think they were treated well," one source who saw them said. "There was no sign of any abuse."

One other French priest has been missing since the start of the enemy offensive at the end of March. He is the Rev. Antoine Vitte who disappeared during fighting in the provincial capital of Anloc, 60 miles north of Saigon. French planters released by the North Vietnamese several weeks ago told mission officials that Father Vitte had been wounded but was being cared for by the North Vietnamese.

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