

VIET MINH VIOLATIONS
OF THE
GENEVA ARMISTICE AGREEMENT

EMBASSY OF VIET NAM
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At the Geneva Conference the Delegation of the State of Viet Nam was forced to lodge a formal and solemn protest against the way in which the armistice agreement was concluded and against the clauses and conditions of that armistice.

The Vietnamese Delegation had actually presented a proposal directed toward obtaining an armistice without even provisional partition of Viet Nam, through disarmament of all the belligerent forces after their withdrawal into fixed zones of as reduced an area as possible and through the establishment of provisional United Nations control over the entire territory until the re-establishment of order and peace should permit the Vietnamese people to choose their destiny through free elections.

This proposal was rejected without discussion, precisely because no one wanted the responsibility of rejecting it; everybody, including the Viet Minh knew that it was the only proposal which answered the wishes of the Vietnamese people for an armistice without partition.

Further, the Vietnamese delegation realized that the Viet Minh would most certainly violate all the clauses and conditions of the Geneva Agreement, one after the other, and that it would restrain itself only, at least at the beginning, from a serious enough blow to risk American military intervention. An "agreement" with such an adversary could only be a fool's bargain.

The events subsequent to the signature of the agreement have proved that the fears of the Vietnamese Delegation were well founded. The violations of the armistice agreement by the Viet Minh are constant and serious. It would be impossible to list them all, but in general they fall into three categories.

Violation of Articles 1 and 15 relative to the Withdrawal of the Opposing Forces into their Respective Zones.

In execution of those clauses the French Union forces withdrew from North Viet Nam, except for the port of Haiphong, where they still have the right to stay.

But the Viet Minh had few regular troops south of the 17th parallel; they did not go in for large battles but concentrated on maintaining a constant insecurity through acts of terrorism and sabotage by their clandestine agents. And it is public knowledge that if the Viet Minh has withdrawn some regular troops from South Viet Nam, it has left its clandestine agents, who are now more active than ever. All journalists and correspondents agree on that point.

Violations of Articles 16, 17, and 18 forbidding Military Reinforcements

In the course of the Geneva Conference the Vietnamese in vain called attention

to the fact that the provision forbidding military reinforcements could work only against free Viet Nam, that the Viet Minh would most certainly violate it and that it would be materially impossible for the International Control Commission to prevent or even to discover the arrival of reinforcements of arms and munitions across the Sino-Tonkinese border.

And, in fact, we now learn that, in less than five months, the Viet Minh has equipped 4 to 6 new infantry divisions, indicating that it has been importing arms from the Soviet Bloc through Communist China in violation of the accords. This can only be interpreted as another example of the now familiar Communist disregard for written agreements and of their adoption of an offensive posture. The Viet Minh build-up in strength can in no wise be justified on defensive grounds, because the National Army of Viet Nam is being progressively reduced. In contrast to Viet Minh illegal activity, the free world powers have scrupulously adhered to the terms of that oppressive and limiting agreement.

That absence of scruple on the part of the Communist world and that excess of scruple on the part of the Free World could, if we are not careful, take us to the point where we would find it quite natural, a year from now, to offer to the Communists all that remains of Indo-China!....After that we would gradually resign ourselves without fighting (for the chances would be too unequal) to the loss of Burma, Thailand, etc..

Violation of the Promise not to Obstruct the Free Choice of the
Population of the Zone in which it Wishes to Live (Article 14)

Within the first weeks following the signing of the armistice, hundreds of thousands of people took advantage of the protection offered them by the continued presence of non-Communist civil and military authorities at Hanoi to ask to abandon their houses and possessions in order to flee the Communist regime.

Thanks to the devoted efforts of Vietnamese and French authorities, thanks also to the United States Navy and to an unwearying American generosity which Vietnamese will never forget, nearly half a million Vietnamese from the North were able, by leaving behind their every possession, to flee the Communist regime.

Thus most of the bourgeoisie and from seventy to eighty per cent of the intellectuals, students, and functionaries escaped south, including those who had been most favorably disposed to the Viet Minh because they feared its victory and hoped to remain in its good graces.

However, many of the poorest people remained behind for it was more difficult for them to find ways of getting from their villages to Hanoi or Haiphong, and because they felt that their very poverty would protect them from Communist tyranny.

Yet at the end of several weeks, the poorest among them understood the horror of a regime which threatened individual liberty and the human soul more than it did the material goods of this world. Thousands of inhabitants from the seacoast region of Phat Diem did not hesitate to risk death rather than to continue to live under the Viet Minh regime.

Escape by land had become too dangerous because of Viet Minh surveillance, and these people took advantage of their closeness to the sea to venture on it in frail boats or even rafts, in their effort to reach Haiphong. Many were drowned in the attempt. Some were shot by the pursuing Viet Minh. In their desperate attempt at flight, several thousand had reached a crumbling sandbank within the limits of territorial waters and would have perished if, in spite of the Viet Minh threat to fire on their rescuers, boats of the French Navy had not come to save them from the sea.

That dramatic flight and rescue were published in newspapers all over the world. It showed the indomitable courage of the Vietnamese people, and their love of liberty as well as the cruelty and dishonesty of the Communist chiefs of the Viet Minh.

It demonstrated the impossibility of an agreement and of a peaceful and decent coexistence with Communism, even for the poor, with little to lose materially.

It is to remind us of this that the Vietnamese government has just had published in France the testimony and letters which follow in translation and which are taken from the reports of the International Control Commission, the papers of the Liaison Mission of the Government of Viet Nam to the International Control Commission, official notes drawn up by local Vietnamese authorities, and the minutes and reports of the Commissariat for Refugees. It is to remind us of this that the National Catholic Welfare Conference has just published a booklet called "Terror in Viet Nam", which all Americans should read.

Daily thousands of Vietnamese from the North seek to flee the Viet Minh regime and escape to the South.

According to information furnished by local authorities and by the French command, from thirty to forty thousand inhabitants of Thai Binh, and around 10,000 at Phat Diem, are asking to escape southwards. From Bui Chu 7,000 left secretly despite Viet Minh opposition, but, according to their testimony, there are at least as many more who want to leave. In the provinces of Ha Tinh, Nghe An, and Thanh Hoa, under Viet Minh control since 1945, a goodly number of Catholics and non-Catholics seek the means to escape, but their situation is more difficult: on the one hand, they have not been informed of the Geneva Agreement, and, in addition, they are closely watched by Viet Minh cadres.

From September 30th to October 16th, 2,311 refugees arrived at Haiphong aboard light craft. From October 18th through November 6th, 19,499 more arrived aboard boats of the French Navy, which picked them up.

Why This Exodus?

The reasons for this massive exodus are the difficulties of life under the new regime, difficulties due primarily to economic, moral, political, and religious considerations.

Economic Considerations

Economic reasons include the very high tax assessment on crops; the exorbitant tax on business turnover which has reduced the small businessmen to a state of utter destitution; the restrictions on business and commerce (industrial firms, cooperatives, commercial syndicates must make over their profits to the government and to the Communist party); forced labor; and the establishment of an artificial exchange rate for the Indo-Chinese piaster in relation to the Ho-Chi-Minh piaster of one to thirty, instead of one to fifty, the actual rate on the open market.

Moral and Religious Considerations

The fundamental principles which govern family life are sapped; parental authority has been weakened, children who have become information agents don't hesitate to inform on their parents, daily meetings are intended to keep young people away from home.

There is a diminishing of religious feeling as a result of the organization of public festivals in or in front of pagodas and churches. The moral authority of priests is weakened. Noisy meetings are held to take away all solemnity from religious ceremonies.

Political Considerations

In spite of the artful propaganda campaign conducted by the Viet Minh, the desire for liberty is deep in the masses of people of North Viet Nam. Although for the moment the Viet Minh is not exercising a policy of outright terrorism, the inhabitants live in an atmosphere of fear and oppression as a result of the installation of the Communist regime. Further, most of the villages cadres are held in contempt, for they are recognized as among the lowest elements of the commune.

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OBSTACLES TO THE FREE CIRCULATION OF CIVILIANS AND THEIR FREE CHOICE OF RESIDENCE

The Viet Minh did all they could to prevent any evacuation southward. In so doing they violated provisions of the Geneva Agreement, most particularly those articles pertaining to the free choice of residence and the free movement of civilians.

Article 14, paragraph D, states: "in the period between the time when this agreement comes into effect and the completion of the transfer of troops, in the case of civilians residing in a region controlled by one party and desiring to live in the zone attributed to the other party, the authorities of the first region must authorize and help them to move."

Article 15, paragraph C, states: "The two parties must guarantee the execution of the evacuation and transfers of all forces in accordance with the goals set forth in the agreement. They must not admit any hostile act nor take any measure whatsoever which could create an obstacle to these evacuations and transfers. They must mutually help each other insofar as possible."

Viet Minh Violations of the Geneva Agreement

The following incidents show that these articles have not been respected, and that, in fact, the Viet Minh has forbidden ferrymen to transport the refugees, they have organized mobs, their cadres, and their troops to bar the route to the refugees, they have resorted to armed violence to oppose the exodus movement, they have put the coast from Lach-lac (Bui-chu) to the mouth of Tra-ly (Thai Binh) under military guard to stop the refugees from getting to Haiphong by sea.

Sept. 26, 1954: More than 2,000 inhabitants of the district of Hai Hau (Bui Chu) were moving toward Nam Dinh on their way to Hanoi. The Viet Minh forbade the Nam Dinh ferry to take them from one side of the river to the other. The refugees were forced to camp at the river's edge for seven or eight days at the end of which, their provisions exhausted, they were obliged to return home.

Sept. 26, 1954: More than 3,000 inhabitants of the Phat Diem and Bui Chu districts were evacuating toward Hanoi. At Phu-ly the Viet Minh mobilized a mob, their cadres and troops to bar the route to the refugees. In the ensuing encounter, poles and sticks of sugar cane were used as weapons, seven refugees and twenty Viet Minh were injured. But the refugees had to turn back.

Sept. 29, 1954: From two to three thousand inhabitants of Thai Binh province succeeded in the face of considerable difficulties in arriving at the Nam Giang ferry. The Viet Minh forbade the ferrymen to help the refugees across the river. At the end of a week, their provisions exhausted, they were forced to turn back.

Oct. 4, 1954: Around three thousand inhabitants of Bui-Chu, Phat-diem and Nam-Dinh met at Nam-Dinh to take the road into exile. The Viet Minh had them rounded up by their troops behind the cathedral and urged them to return to their homes. The refugees decided to continue but when they arrived at Can-ho (Phu-ly) they met a mob estimated at over 10,000 persons (among them troops) mobilized by the Viet Minh, who by taking their baggage, and delaying children and old people, prevented the refugees from continuing on their way. A riot took place in the course of which a four-year old child named Hoang Van Nghia from the Giao-thuy district and a pregnant woman of thirty-eight, Vu Thi Thu, from Nam-truc, lost their lives.

Oct. 6, 1954: From three to four hundred inhabitants of the province of Son Tay, carrying their children and their effects, were on route for Hanoi. The Viet Minh sent out troops against the refugees. These troops confiscated their baggage and forced them by violence to turn back.

Oct. 18, 1954: Around three thousand inhabitants from the provinces of Thai Binh and Bui-Chu, after walking for seven or eight days, arrived at the Ninh-giang ferry. For fifteen days the Viet Minh kept the ferry from operating and forbade the people living nearby to shelter the refugees or sell them anything whatsoever. By these tactics the refugees were dispersed.

Oct. 29, 1954: Viet Minh troops, making their rounds by boat, came upon Tran van By and his wife off the coast near the village of Zuong-diem. Since they could not oblige the refugees to turn back, they drew on them, wounding the man in the head, his wife in the arm. The couple nevertheless succeeded in reaching Haiphong, where they gave evidence before the International Control Commission. From November 1st on, the Viet Minh had the coast guarded by their troops from Lach-lach (Bui-Chu) to the mouth of Tra-ly (Thai-binh). Further, they confiscated all small craft, kept a watch on every family, threatened fishermen and took a certain number of local young men away to unknown destinations.

Nov. 6, 1954: Over one thousand people from the Tien-hai district (Thai Binh) having seen French ships five or six kilometers away, decided to swim, at the risk of their lives, to an island situated facing the administrative delegation of Tien-Hai. The Viet Minh set out after them, but in vain. The refugees were finally picked up by French ships, but three children were drowned.

Nov. 14, 1954: A telegram from the delegate of the national government in North Viet Nam stated that according to French authorities the Viet Minh did not authorize Catholics to come to Phat Diem to pick up the refugees. The Viet Minh then asserted that its launches would be responsible for transporting the refugees outside the territorial waters where they could be picked up by French ships. Evidence indicates that this was a maneuver destined to thwart the evacuation of the population of Phat Diem, for on the one hand, the people were unwilling to embark in the Viet Minh launches, and, on the other, the means of transport offered by the Viet Minh were ridiculously inadequate for the number of people to be evacuated. Mr. Desai, President of the International Control Commission, finally brought to light the bad faith shown by the Viet Minh and strongly reproved them for their dilatory tactics.

ANNEX I

TESTIMONY TAKEN FROM REFUGEES FROM
BUI-CHU (CAMPS OF VO-DONG AND DUC-MO
BIEN-HQA)

NOVEMBER 8 AND 9, 1954

M. Tran van Tru, 56 years old, from the village of Trieu Thong, district of Hai Hau, province of Bui-Chu, North Viet Nam. A catholic farmer and very simple in appearance.

"There are eight persons in my family; my wife, myself, and our six children, the eldest of whom is thirty-one, the youngest is three.

"We abandoned our house, our garden, our rice field (a house with 5 rooms, 3 sao of garden, 1 mau of rice field) to flee South. We arrived November 2, 1954, without having been able to bring anything with us.

"We had intended to leave for a long time, but our eldest son, employed aboard a transport at Nan Dinh, was arrested by the Viet Minh and we were obliged to wait for his liberation. He was liberated October 1, 1954, and we immediately constructed bamboo rafts and left the region at the same time as 500 others with their children. We went through the hamlet of Linh-Co to get to the village of Co-Le, but there we were detained by Viet Minh agents. Our son, Tran van Xugen, was again imprisoned on the charge of having organized the evacuation. Our convoy was dispersed. So our first try at evacuation failed.

"Two days later our son was freed and we began to prepare to leave again. This time we let him leave alone before we did. We set out October 26, 1954, at midnight. It was already daylight when we arrived at Cho-con. We went on to the village of Ha-Trait, then at nightfall we got in a boat which transported us to a ship anchored four or five kilometers off shore. We each had to pay ten thousand Ho Chi Minh piasters or three hundred Indo-Chinese piasters for the trip, and the children were charged half fare. A large crowd of our countrymen were already on board. We left at four o'clock in the morning and arrived at three in the afternoon at Haiphong, where we stayed two days before being transported to the South by steamer.

"Our village included about fifty families or a few more than 200 inhabitants. Almost all of them are already here.

"We were lucky, our trip wasn't rough and no one was sick.

"If we had to leave our country, it is because we couldn't stand the Communist regime; we are denied religious liberty; our children are conscripted for "people's labor details" (they always tell us that it's for three months, but it goes on a year without their being released), they tax us so heavily that they leave us almost nothing for our own subsistence. The Viet Minh lies in promising rice and clothes in abundance to the people; we have nothing of all that. Indirectly they prevent us from coming to mass on Sunday; Saturday evenings they get us together for a meeting which lasts late into the night, until one or two o'clock in the morning, so that once we get home we are all so exhausted that no one has enough energy to go to church the next morning.

"The Viet Minh say that the refugees in South Viet Nam are mistreated and abandoned by the National Government; some suffer from hunger, others fall ill and die. Nevertheless we left anyway, in spite of their threats, in spite of all sorts of difficulties created to detain us. When we finally were on board the boat which was to take us to Haiphong; we felt very happy to have escaped the Communist grip, although we had to leave our beloved village."

(2)

M. Vu Viet Ty, 62 years old, from the village of Ha-Trai, district of Hai-Hau, in the province of Bui-Chu, North Viet Nam. A salt-maker, still robust in appearance despite his white hair.

"We are a family of salt-makers. We have two stone houses, 4 sao of farmland and 5 sao of salt marsh.

"We have abandoned everything. We left with only 400 piasters to meet the needs of a family of 19 (13 adults and 6 children). My daughter-in-law, who just 5 days before had given birth to a boy, had to bring her baby along, too.

"If in spite of my great age I decided to leave the village where I was born, it is because the Viet Minh regime is too severe and their taxes excessive; our hard labor yields us annually 600 baskets of salt, of which we must pay 250 for the production tax. The Viet Minh forbids me to sell the other 350 baskets. If they should authorize the sale, I would have other taxes to pay on the transaction, so that in the end nothing would be left to support my family.

"My children are often forced to join "people's labor groups" for from six months to a year, even the girls of seventeen.

"For a long time I had been meaning to escape to the South, but my son-in-law had been imprisoned by the Viet Minh for two years. I had to wait for his liberation to prepare our escape.

"We left October 10th. Hundreds of boats and rafts carried the refugees to a ship anchored 5 or 6 kilometers off shore. The Viet Minh attempted to detain us but we were determined to leave in search of freedom. We went first to Haiphong where we stayed two days before embarking for the South. We landed in Saigon on All Saints' Day (November 1st) and on the 2nd we were in the camp of Doc-Mo.

"I don't regret having abandoned my fortune and my business. I have only one wish; that my family can live and work in peace and freedom. I can still work. Fatigue doesn't frighten me. I am firmly convinced that the Government will help the refugees to find work, so that each can provide for his needs."

(3)

M. Nguyen van Truc, forty two, from the village of Ha Trai, Hai-Hau district, Bui-Chu province. A fisherman, pale and sickly in appearance.

"I am a fisherman. I have a five-room wooden house with a straw roof and 7 sao of farmland. There are eight persons in our family: my wife, my six children (the oldest is fourteen, the youngest one) and myself.

"I had watched a large number of inhabitants of my village leave. For some time I had intended to follow in their footsteps, but others asked me to stay in the village in order to take them to the steamer, for I know how to steer rafts. I was able to help a number of families escape, which netted me bad treatment from the Viet Minh; they struck me with musket butts until I lost consciousness, then threw me in the water. Happily, someone pulled me out and saved me from certain death.

"The Viet Minh tried to prevent the departure of the refugees. They destroyed the rafts, gathered together all the small craft, and forbade the boatmen to transport those who wanted to flee South.

"I left first and my family joined me afterward with the help of our relatives. I left the night of October 26th. I stayed a week in Haiphong, then with the authorization of the Government, I was able to leave for the South. I arrived in Saigon November 6th and was admitted to a refugee camp the next day.

"Before my departure I heard many rumors spread by the Viet Minh: That many refugees die of hunger and sickness in the South, that some have had to sell their children at 100 piasters for three, that the cost of living is extremely high, five piasters for a cup of tea, etc...all this to discourage the evacuation movement.

"But personally I am convinced that if there were more liberty everyone would come south. Unhappily, the Viet Minh detains people and carries off their children. Actually, I still feel the effects of the beatings of the Viet Minh agents.

"We left our birthplace because the Viet Minh has trampled religious liberty under foot, forced the young people into "people's labor details" and created excessive taxes. Life has become unbearable in our village."

(4)

M. Pham van Thuyen, fifty-six years old, from the village of Ninh-Cuong, Hai-Hau district, Bui-Chu province. A farmer of robust constitution.

"There are nine in our family: three adults and six children. We arrived here November 2nd, 1954. We made an earlier attempt to leave on October 8th. There were twenty families forming a river convoy en route to Ha-Trai. We had no sooner gotten to the Giap-Nam canal than bad weather forced us to stop. Then because of Viet Minh threats, we had to cut the anchor rope and continue our way.

"At Ha-Trai the Viet Minh arrested three men of whom I was one. The other two were immediately released but I was detained for five days for having incited the people to leave and organized the convoy. During this time my family succeeded in getting on board a steamer anchored off shore. As soon as I was released (October 25th) I

rented a raft for 12,000 Ho chi Minh piasters to reach the steamer. The following night I arrived at Haiphong, where I found my family. Then we embarked for the South. One of our party fell ill during the trip but, thanks to the care given him by the ship personnel, he is nearly recovered.

"If we had to leave our home, it is because of the severity of the Viet Minh regime; excessive taxes, and though we work hard they don't leave us enough to live on, people's work groups, meetings, sessions of political instruction that take up most of our free time. No freedom.

"Our goal is to seek a country where we can live freely.

"If we dared to leave at the risk of great dangers, it is because we feared that when the troops evacuated Haiphong, it would no longer be possible to leave the country. There are many more who want to emigrate South, but the Viet Minh bends every effort to prevent them.

"Here we have once more found our neighbors. We live together under the protection and the assistance of the National Government, the Bishop and our priests. We have nothing more to fear."

(5)

M. Pham van Khue, 18 years old, from the village of Ha-Trai, Hai-Hau district, Bui-Chu province. A fisherman of robust appearance.

"My family is made up of four people: my mother, my sister, my brother, and myself. We arrived here just recently. We belong to the well-to-do class of the village.

"My father was assassinated by the Viet Minh toward the end of 1952 for having organized an anti-Viet Minh Catholic youth group. After his death, I had to escape to a relative's house in the village of Con-Tron and for five days I had to hide in a hole in the ground. The Viet Minh arrested my mother, mistreated her and attempted to force her to summon me back. My aunt received the same treatment, although she was pregnant. As a result she had a miscarriage. Finally, my mother was at the end of her strength and had to call me back. One morning just after my arrival, I was fishing for shrimp in the rice fields when the Viet Minh arrested and imprisoned me. They beat me with a stick until I fainted, then they took me to the seat of the circumscription to be handed over to the zonal committee in charge of trying my case. I was in a concentration camp from 1952 until July 30, 1954, after the signing of the Geneva Agreement.

"When I arrived back home I discovered that the Viet Minh had confiscated all our possessions--rice fields, boats, even dishes and household tools.

"On August 8, 1954, we organized a general evacuation of six hundred people by river to Dong Quang (a two-day trip). The Viet Minh got together guerillas, women, and children to prevent our departure. The women cut the ropes on the boats, the children attempted to pick

holes in the caulking, the guerillas threw ropes across the river to stop us. Subsequently, we tried to leave the country in small groups. Still the Viet Minh succeeded in stopping four convoys.

"At last, on October 10th, we were able to get away aboard fishing vessels charging twenty thousand Ho Chi Minh piasters per passenger. For the four of us that cost eighty thousand piasters. I had only sixty thousand and had to borrow the rest from a relative. At Haiphong Father Khue gave me five hundred piasters to settle the debt.

"Six days later we were able to embark for the South."

(6)

Miss Dang thi Thoa, seventeen years old, from the village of Quan-Phuong-Ha, district of Hai-Hau, Bui-Chu province, North Viet Nam. She works on the land.

"My family arrived in the Refugee camp November 2nd. There are seven of us, my father, my mother, my brothers and sister, my nephew and me. We had relatives who had already come to South Viet Nam before we did. They informed us they had received help and protection from the National Government.

"We then went to Con-Tron on foot and stayed there a month. We bought an old raft and had it repaired at the cost of 100,000 Ho Chi Minh piasters. One night we set sail - the sea was heavy and all twenty of us on the raft were thoroughly soaked. But we got to the steamer.

"My family were able to bring with them only a few clothes and household tools and 20,000 Ho Chi Minh piasters which we later exchanged at Haiphong for 500 Indochinese piasters.

"The Viet Minh do their best to prevent the population from leaving - they keep our goods, for example, and detain children. But we went on anyway, for we knew perfectly well that if we stayed we would have no way to live."

(7)

Mr. Nguyen Huu Uyen, thirty years old, from the village of Con-Tron, district of Hai-Hau, province of Bui-Chu. A saltmaker, active and robust in appearance.

"There are twenty-one in my family, ten adults and eleven children. The whole family got here safely.

"Since I was part of the regular troops in the Bui-Chu region, I was arrested and detained four times by the Viet Minh. I belong to the well-to-do class in our village (a wooden house, two mau of salt marsh, seven square mau of rice fields, two water buffaloes, three pigs and an areca garden). In fleeing southward we had to abandon everything, houses, rice fields and animals. We brought no possessions with us.

"We left October 21st on a raft which cost us 14,000 Ho Chi Minh piasters to rent. The raft, made of fourteen bamboo canes, put out with three sails and three oars. But because of the load (twenty-one people) the craft sank. We were in water up to our chests and had to carry the children to save them from drowning.

"In spite of the risks of travel all the people in our village were determined to leave. Because of the rough sea we were seasick and worn out. Once on board the boat we were well taken care of.

"My father, who directed the communal police and looked after the maintenance of the dikes, was accused by the Viet Minh and detained for ten days for the sole reason that he was a landowner and an influential notable (village official). At first my parents did not want to leave, for they were largely self-sufficient in their work in the village. But because of the unreasonable demands of the Viet Minh - required attendance at meetings and courses, forced labor (and you have to bring your own food and money for any other needs with you), impossible to find any remunerative work - we decided to move South in our search for freedom

"On our departure we were lucky enough to take with us two taels of gold which we exchanged at Haiphong for 6,000 piasters. I do not regret anything in coming here, only I would have liked to bring my bicycle with me to move about more easily. When we got here we were somewhat bewildered - the women and the girls wept on our arrival in the refugee camp. But we have come to see that we are not at all unhappy, thanks to the help given us by the government, our bishop, and our priests.

"I should add that the 250 young men from our village have all come south, for the Viet Minh treated us as "reactionaries" and tried their best to oppress us. That is why all of us were resolved to quit the Viet Minh zone."

(8)

Mrs. Dinh Thi Thong, forty-five, from the village of Van-Ly, in the district of Hai-Hau, Bui-Chu province. A saltmaker of simple appearance.

"I am a widow. I have five children, the oldest twenty-two, the youngest sixteen. We all arrived at the refugee camp over a week ago.

"We wanted to leave the Viet Minh zone for a long time, but we were poor and hadn't the means - it cost one-tenth of a gold tael to rent a boat. During the night of October 25, 1954 we took a sampan, thanks to money lent by my younger brother.

"We didn't want to stay, for already our work didn't net us enough to live on and in addition the Viet Minh overwhelmed us with their heavy taxes -- out of the five touques of salt we produced daily, we had to pay two for taxes, and the rest had to be sold to the Viet Minh. If not, you can't sell it to anybody; and if you do manage to get an authorization to sell on the free market, you have to pay an additional tax of one touque out of three. Working tools

are expensive and taxes are heavy. In those conditions, how can you expect us to make both ends met?

"Also the Viet Minh forced us to take courses of political instruction. I had to take a six-day course at Phu-Le, the Viet Minh capital of the province. I was obliged to walk all night and didn't arrive till dawn. I had to carry enough rice to last me through the course and naturally I did no work during that period. I don't remember a thing about it and, what's more, I had to take part in "folk dances" - maybe those are the so-called "peace dances" of the Viet Minh - but at my age it's ridiculous to dance like that.

"All this gave me strength to escape to the South. Many people would have liked to leave, but they were prevented by the Viet Minh. They are waiting for a good chance to go. I tell you, one can't live with the Viet Minh -- after the meetings there are those political courses, so that you have no time to give to your professional occupations.

"In the first days here I was unhappy and homesick for our village. But that passed quickly enough."

(9)

Mr. Nguyen Van Chuoc, thirty-two, from the village of Luc-Phuong, in the district of Hai-Hau, Bui-Chu province. A farmer of robust appearance.

"Seven of my family have come south - my wife and I, three children, and two younger brothers. My parents couldn't leave, for they wanted to arrange certain family affairs and will join us later.

When we learned that boats were anchored off shore to take us to Haiphong, two thirds of the young men of the village left, for they were afraid that, if they stayed, they would be drafted by the Viet Minh for labor details; only the old people still delayed to have the time to sell their possessions and try to get a little money before evacuating.

"I left on October 21st with the others, and we made the trip on foot from our village to Tan-Dien. The next day we arrived at the shore, where the Viet Minh barred the route. The argument degenerated into a fight between the Viet Minh troops and the fifty young men in our group. Finally, part of our group set out on a raft. We paid 10,000 Ho chi Minh piasters per person for the trip, and half that for the children. It took three hours to get to the boat. Afterward we were transferred to another boat which took us to Haiphong, then after a short stay we left for the South on October 29th.

"If we had to leave it's because the Viet Minh regime is unbearable - no freedom of belief, always some kind of supplementary tax to pay, compulsory attendance at meetings and political indoctrination courses - a worker has no time to take care of his own business. Add that to the heavy taxes and you see how discouraging it was, when we can barely eke out our living.

"We are happy to escape to the South and to get to know new parts of our country. And with help from the Government, we can still hope for a better future.

(10)

M. Nguyen van Thuyet, 56 years old, from the village of Trung Trai (circumscription of Hai Hau, Bui-Chu province), a farmer.

"My family includes ten persons; my wife and I and eight children. One of my sons and my son-in-law served in the Bao Chinh Doan (regional guerillas) of Bui-Chu.

"We have a house and three mao of rice field. We were determined to leave; to abandon our house, our gardens, and our rice field, because the Viet Minh region is impossible -- young men are subjected to forced labor, taxes are excessive, we cannot make a living with our work and religion is trampled under foot.

"The Viet Minh have forced me to attend frequent meetings, and when these continue late into the night we have to bring rice for our meal with us. During these meetings, they obliged me to state my views but when I told them that Vietnamese citizens are now free to choose their place of residence, whether in the South or in the North, they answered me that that is irrelevant and in error; they added that "to go South is to go over to the enemy," and that Vietnamese must stay in the North to fight (for the sake of the regime).

"I saw that liberty is banished, and I resolved to leave on October 24, 1954. The Viet Minh made known their opposition, but I told them that my family is very large, we cannot provide for our wants if we stay in the village, and therefore we have to evacuate. They followed us for two kilometers urging us to change our minds, but we were more than ever determined never to go back. We were able to leave by sampan. On our departure we were able to collect, by selling a number of things the sum of eleven thousand Ho Chi Minh piasters. The rent of the sampan was eighty thousand piasters, the rest was changed in Haiphong for five hundred Indochinese piasters, which we have used to cover our expenses here.

"During the trip all my family were sick, but the crew of the ship took care of us and gave us medicine.

"We arrived here on November 2, 1954."

(11)

Mr. Nguyen Van Sinh, 73 years old, from the village of Ha Trai, circumscription of Hai Hau, Bui-Chu province - a fisherman and salt maker. Looks simple and still robust despite his advanced age.

"We are a family of thirty persons, only fourteen of whom were able to come here. We were obliged to leave our native village

because we could not endure the Viet Minh Communist regime. Religious liberty is unknown. Taxes are excessive. Impossible to make a living through our work.

"We rented a raft for eight thousand Ho Chi Minh piasters. The fare for three or four children was equal to that for one adult (this fare is relatively smaller than that of other people who must pay ten thousand per person, because we aren't far from the ship).

"The Viet Minh tried to prevent us from leaving by taking our oars away from us, but we were determined to weigh anchor even at considerable risk. We were warned by the Viet Minh that the refugees would be sent to Hongay and Campha to starve to death. We realized that the Viet Minh traitors were continually deceiving us and that their propaganda had never been in accord with their actions. We did not want to stay with them because we did not want to be forced to do things we did not wish to.

"We left on October 22, 1954, for Haiphong where we stayed for a few days before embarking for the South. We felt lost for the first few days after our arrival in Saigon. Now the coming of our compatriots from the North and the help and protection given us by the Government, our Bishop and our priests, who have found us a place to live as well as the means through which we can make our living, we feel as though we were being looked after. We do not regret the steps we have taken."

(12)

Nguyen Van Dien, 56 years old, a resident of the village of Thuong Trai, Hai-Hau district, Bui-Chu province - a farmer.

"Our family is composed of four people. My oldest child, who is thirty, was imprisoned by the Viet Minh for two months (July-August 1953); he is now a driver for the 19th Battalion of the National Army. I have not seen him yet, but I hope I will soon.

"We have had enough of the Viet Minh policy which crushes the people with heavy taxes. As farmers, for every sixty touques of paddy we produce, we have to turn over twenty-six in taxes to the Viet Minh Government. My wife, who sells fish and shrimp, had to pay a tax of eight hundred Ho chi Minh piasters for every ten thousand piasters she took in as receipts. We realized we could barely make a living that way. It was as though the Viet Minh took the polished rice for themselves and left us the husks.

"We left on October 26, 1954. At Ha Trai we took a raft to reach the ship. The trip cost us ten thousand Ho chi Minh piasters per person.

"When we left, we brought with us 50 thousand Ho chi Minh piasters. After paying for the raft we had ten thousand piasters left which we exchanged for two hundred Indochinese piasters. We spent that sum for our daily needs.

"While aboard the ship we got medicine, milk, and food from the crew. We have no complaints about our trip to the South.

"We arrived at the camp of Vo Dong on November 7, 1954."

Mr. Do Van Ly, 54 years old, from the village of Trung Thai, Hai-Hau district, Bui-Chu province - a farmer, feeble in appearance, with eye disease, he wears dark glasses.

"There are eleven persons in my family, which has now been evacuated to the South. Leaving on October 24, 1954, we first went by boat through the main canal, then we rented a raft for 80,000 Ho Chi Minh piasters. The sea was rough that day; our raft sank, but we lost only part of our goods.

"Once on the ship we were well taken care of by the crew who gave us medicine.

"The eldest of my children, 35 years old, had served in the Surete at Bui-Chu. He was imprisoned by the Viet Minh for a time. Once released, he signed up in the regional militia and was imprisoned again by the Viet Minh. Released a second time, he was able to follow us into exile.

"We could not stay in the village because the Viet Minh are over-severe - what with their heavy taxes we were unable to make both ends meet; our young people were subject to forced labor; meetings and courses for political indoctrination took all our time, freedom of belief is trampled under foot.

"We were somewhat bewildered when we arrived, but now we have stopped worrying about the future."

ANNEX II

LETTERS, REQUESTS AND COMPLAINTS ADDRESSED TO THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION
BY PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS

(1)

Letter from Mr. Tran Van Vy (40 years old) and his wife Tran Thi Lim (36 years old):

"After the partition of Viet Nam, the population is free to choose the government it prefers. As we could no longer stand the harsh Viet Minh Communist regime, we set out on October 10, 1954 toward Lach Lac in route to Haiphong where we could be under the protection of the National Government. Near Tang-diem beach, we met two Vietminh patrol boats. They fired at our boat to force us to turn back; I suffered a head wound, my wife a fracture of her left arm, and my boat was destroyed.

"We request the International Control Commission to ask the Viet Minh authorities to pay our expenses for medicine and hospitalization, to pay us indemnities for the destruction of our boat and to let my parents leave for the free zone."

(Haiphong, Nov. 29, 1954)

(2)

Request by Mr. Lam Van Cung of the Moc-Duc Village, delegation of Giao-thuy, province of Bui-Chu:

"Listed below are the procedures employed by the Viet Minh to prevent us from fleeing the Communist zone, to get to the free zone:

- "1. The Viet Minh uses regular troops of women to watch us.
- "2. The Viet Minh forbids the owners of boats to furnish us transportation.
- "3. Viet Minh soldiers stationed near the shore take all Indo-China currency away from us.
- "4. Viet Minh women try to seize our children and our goods.
- "5. When we move toward the free zone the Viet Minh says we are going over to the enemy.
- "6. Propaganda is being carried on by the Viet Minh to persuade the ferrymen to refuse to use their boats to transport the refugees.
- "7. Propaganda is being carried on by disguised Viet Minh cadres to persuade the population to remain.
- "8. The Viet Minh forbids the use of large-size boats for the transportation of refugees. We are obliged therefore to rent rafts at exorbitant fees.

"We ask the International Control Commission to be good enough to furnish us with means and facilities to enable our parents and friends to flee the Communist zone."

(Haiphong, Nov. 7, 1954)

ANNEX II (Cont.)

(3)

Letter from Mr. Vu Cong Truc, a resident of Sa Chau Village, Giao-thuy prefecture, Nam-dinh province:

"For a long while, I was forced to live under the Communist regime. After the Geneva agreements, I wished to go to South Viet Nam. However, contrary to the spirit of those agreements, the Viet Minh has prevented us from going to the provinces of the South. On August 8, 1954, with a few friends, I wanted to flee to the free zone despite the difficulties. But the Communist agents and army multiplied the obstacles in our way by destroying bridges, and requisitioning boats and personal effects. Fortunately, thanks to a series of coincidences, I succeeded in getting on a French ship and arrived at Haiphong. Now, my family and friends who are still in the zone under Communist control, are asking me to help them flee to South Viet Nam."

(Haiphong, November 6, 1954)

(4)

Request by Mr. Phan Riec (48 years old), a resident of Than-Thuong, Kien Xuong, Thai Binh:

"I was unable to bring all my family with me, because the Viet Minh has set up all kinds of obstacles to detain us (pressure on the part of the local population, orders to boats and cars not to transport refugees, etc.). For my part, I was able to escape only by disguising myself as a merchant and fleeing at night.

"I solicit your powerful intervention to oblige the Viet Minh to respect Article 8 of the Geneva Agreements and allow my family, composed of six persons, to come join me in South Viet Nam."

(Thuong-ly, November 6, 1954)

(5)

Letter from Mr. Pham Thach Luyen, a resident of the village of Du-Hieu, prefecture of Du Hieu, province of Bui-Chu:

"Violations of Article 8 of the Geneva Agreements are as follows --

- "1. The Viet Minh forbids citizens desiring to evacuate to sell their possessions. Goods that are bought and sold will be confiscated.
- "2. Those who express their desire to evacuate will find their village surrounded and themselves threatened with punishment.
- "3. Those who move are detained and searched. The piasters issued by the Bank of Issue which are in the possession of refugees are confiscated. My own brother, Pham Van Dang, was imprisoned for wanting to go South, and all of his money was confiscated.

ANNEX II (Cont.)

"4. I, myself, was dangerously surrounded, but succeeded in escaping. All my family, five persons, still remain in the hands of the Viet Minh Communists."

(Haiphong, November 5, 1954)

(6)

Request by Mr. Vu Khanh Hoi (27 years old), a resident of Ta-Huu Village, delegation of Hau-Hau, province of Bui-Chu:

"As merchants, we can no longer stand the Viet Minh Communist regime which burdens us with heavy taxes. The Geneva Agreements give us the right to move to South Viet Nam, and every Vietnamese is allowed to move freely. However, the Viet Minh has sought to hamper movement and imprison those who wish to flee the Communist zone, thus violating the Geneva Agreements.

"Fortunately, after innumerable difficulties, I was able to get to Haiphong. My family, however, is still in the hands of the Viet Minh Communists."

(Bui-Chu, November 2, 1954)

(7)

Request by Mr. Pham **Dat**, a resident of Phuong Viem, delegation of Tien-hai, province of Thai-binh:

"According to the Geneva Agreements, Viet Nam is divided into two zones. The population is free to choose whatever zone it pleases. I decided with my family to go and live in South Viet Nam, but on our departure, the Viet Minh barred our way. They took one of my children, bound my uncle, Pham Xuam Trung, and condemned by brother, Pham Ngoc Diem, to one year of imprisonment. I succeeded in escaping and getting to the free zone, but my wife, my three children, and my parents still remain in the village under pressure from Viet Minh, who forbid any departure from the Communist zone.

"I ask the International Control Commission to send a ship to the port of Noi-Lang to enable my family, as well as those of the local population who choose freedom, to get to the free zone."

(Haiphong, November 8, 1954)

(8)

Request by Mr. Bui Quang Phuong, a resident of Quoc Lam-Han, delegation of Giao-thuy, province of Bui-chu:

"According to the Geneva Agreements, the Vietnamese people have the right to move freely within Viet Nam or to take refuge in whatever part of the country they choose to ensure their livelihood. Actually, the Viet Minh does not respect the Geneva Agreements and tries by every means to hinder or make difficult any movement. They do not hesitate to arrest innocent people who try to flee the regions under Communist control. I am an unfortunate citizen living under the Communist regime, exploited at

ANNEX II (Cont.)

"every turn and overwhelmed with taxes, who asks nothing but to be able to evacuate with my family to a place where one can live in freedom."

(Haiphong, October 5, 1954)

(9)

Communication from Mr. Bui Quang Thanh (27 years old), village of Van Don, canton of Quang-Nap, delegation of Thuy-An (Vinh-Minh):

"Like everybody, I wanted to leave my village; but there were always obstacles to my moving. I thought to facilitate my evacuation by asking for a moving permit. To this end I went to Thai-binh. I discovered there was a plot which had been worked out for the occasion of the visit in the region by the Control Commission entrusted with carrying out the Geneva Agreements.

"Substantially, this plot is as follows:

- "1. The receiving centers for the Commission will be located far from the regions whose inhabitants desire to be evacuated, especially from religious areas. In these receiving centers, imposters will ask for permission to leave, whereas those who really desire to go will be prevented from making contact with the Control Commission.
- "2. An organization will be set up to protest against the forcible evacuation imposed by the Ngo Dinh Diem Government.
- "3. The citizens who have contacted the Commission and obtained the papers required for evacuation, will be moved to other areas whence they will be brought back after the departure of the Commission.
- "4. Upon the arrival of the Commission in a given region, boats filled with false evacuees (actually Communist agents) will move back and forth to give a false impression to the Commission."

(Vinh Ninh, October, 1954)