



UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OPERATIONS MISSION
(Special Technical and Economic Mission)
TO CAMBODIA, LAOS AND VIETNAM

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AMERICAN EMBASSY
SAIGON, VIETNAM
February 3, 1955.

Report of Father Khue

In my telegram I requested the early removal of Father Khue from his work here in Haiphong. This was based on a growing conviction that his presence here was to the detriment of the operation. This conviction is shared by the Delegate for North Vietnam, the head of the Evacuation Committee, and the various American elements here in the area. The Minister in charge of Refugees has appraised the situation, and will take appropriate action upon his return to Saigon.

The situation is as follows: Father Khue was sent as an advisor to the Evacuation Committee. It is understood that he has the personal backing of the President, and as such, little opposition was raised to him when he took increasing command of the work here. In time, he displaced Mr. Ham, actual head of the committee, and proceeded to operate the program in his own way, disregarding the desires of the Committee. The situation developed to the point where personal dislike between Father Khue and Mr. Ham became manifest when Father Khue apparently influenced the refugees in Cement Camp to threaten bodily harm to Mr. Ham. Father Khue has, at times, discouraged refugees from moving south at this time, particularly in Cement Camp where he has his strongest following. It has even been rumored, and still unconfirmed, that he has gathered a group of young men into what might be termed a militia, and that he will take them south with him. I personally doubt this, but the rumor in itself, is an extremely undesirable thing. There is no doubt that Father Khue has injected himself into the center of the stage, has disregarded the wishes of the Committee, and has abused the utilization of supplies. Unquestionably, he has favored certain elements of the camp population. When a group did not receive the number of blankets they thought they needed, Father Khue went with this group to the warehouse and obtained the key from the caretaker, entered, and then handed out supplies to the group till they were satisfied.

There is the added factor which becomes increasingly important with each passing day - the trend away from refugees who are primarily coming out from the curtain because they are Catholics to those coming for economic reasons. It is desirable to have a reception committee be a citizen's group, and not have the spokesman and ever present person when a loudspeaker is available, be a Catholic Father. I have my staff doing daily interviews with the refugees, and not once in two months has a person said they came to Haiphong because of their religion. For propaganda purposes, if for no other reason, we should make this a citizen movement, not a church movement. The development in Saigon of advisors of each faith confirms that concept. I have confidence in Mr. Ham, feel that if he is permitted to operate, he can do a good job.

Father Khue's persistence in injecting himself into matters that are no concern of his continues to be annoying. For example, it is not uncommon that he will break into a meeting we are holding with Mr. Luat, not dealing with refugees, and disrupt the discussion. This in the comparative privacy of the Governor's office.

For these reasons, some confirmed, some rumored, I feel it to the best interests of the work here that Father Khue be invited by his Bishop south.

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I now have it confirmed that Father Khue is acting as a central recruiting office for the Militia, and reaffirmed that he has incited the refugees to riot.

You appreciate, I am sure, that when I make a report of this type I am presenting the situation as I see it, and the ideal solution as I see it. I am well aware that there are serious political implications to the removal of Father Khue, that the contact with the President appears to be a close one, and that the Catholic element is strong. Col. Croziat takes the stand that this country is such that you must accept this kind of a situation as part of the heritage. I am far too much of an idealist to agree. If the present government has any future at all, it must take steps to clean up and operate properly. I do not say you can effect a shift of the Father, but I do say it should be done.