

VIET-NAM BULLETIN

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE EMBASSY OF VIET-NAM
2251 "R" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008 (Telephone: 234-4860)

October 19, 1970

Politics

STATEMENT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIET-NAM ON A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF THE WAR IN INDOCHINA.

October 8, 1970.

Toward a speedy negotiated settlement of the war which has caused already too many sufferings and destructions in Viet-Nam as well as throughout Indochina, after discussions with the U.S. Government and with the full support of the governments of Cambodia and Laos, we make the following proposals :

A.- Cease-fire in place throughout Indochina :

To that effect, we propose immediate discussions on an effective mechanism to supervise and control the cease-fire.

The cease-fire should not be used by either side to build up its strength by an increase in outside combat forces. It should lead promptly to the restoration of peace.

B.- An expanded Conference, including the Governments of Cambodia and Laos, to deal with the conflict in all three states of Indochina.

There has been, for many years, an intimate correlation between the war in Viet-Nam and the situation in Laos and Cambodia. We believe that the military aspects of the war should be discussed and settled in the framework of all of Indochina, on the basis of the essential elements of the Geneva Agreements of 1954 and 1962.

C.- An agreed timetable for withdrawals of all external forces as part of an overall settlement based on the principles our governments have previously outlined.

D.- On a reciprocity basis, immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of war held by both sides.

E.- For a political settlement in South Viet-Nam, the G.V.N. reiterates the of-

fer it made on March 25, 1969 for private conversations with the other side for the discussions of problems relating to national reconciliation.

On July 11, 1969, we made a most generous offer, which is also the most democratic solution in conformity with the principle of self-determination of the people of South Viet-Nam. We reiterate today this offer of free elections conducted under adequate guarantees. The G.V.N. has proposed a Mixed Electoral Commission, in which representatives of the other side can participate to assure equal opportunities to all candidates in the campaigning, and to see that people vote absolutely freely. We have also proposed the establishment of an international body to make sure that the elections are held under conditions fair to all.

We are prepared to discuss with the other side the various modalities under which free elections are to be held.

We also stand ready to discuss with the other side mutual problems pending reunification through peaceful and democratic means.

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When the Paris reunions started almost exactly two years ago, they aroused much hope and many expectations in Viet-Nam and throughout the world. Our side **unilaterally** deescalated the war with the understanding that serious and productive talks would follow and begin promptly, to bring back an early peace to Viet-Nam and stability to Southeast Asia.

The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam has been and is still ready to talk with the other side without preconditions. We hope that the other side would not continue to maintain its absurd and arrogant demands for preconditions to be fulfilled by our side, which are tantamount to our surrender, before actual negotiations could begin. The other side must know that these preconditions can never be accepted.

The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam hopes that the other side would begin soon serious discussions on the concrete items proposed above for a prompt restoration of peace.

PRES. THIEU ON ALLIED PROPOSAL AT PARIS TALKS

Saigon, October 9. - The Press Secretary to the President announces :

When queried about the negotiated settlement in Indochina which the Governments of the Republic of Vietnam and of the United States have proposed at the Paris talks on October 8, 1970, the President of the Republic answers as follows :

I think that the solution to restore peace in all of Indochina which the Governments of the Republic of Vietnam and of the United States have just proposed, as well as the previous offers, are very constructive and practical because we have the sincere desire to end the war and restore peace.

Since a long time, I conceive that a restored peace in Vietnam, if it is to be much more durable, should go together with the end of the Communist aggression in the two neighboring countries of Cambodia and Laos. Consequently, the solution proposed today is the solution which consolidates that peace.

I hope that with our sincere desire to end the war on both aspects, military for all Indochina and political in the Republic of Vietnam, the Communists, if they say that they also want peace, have no more reason to continue to be stubborn not to talk seriously.

The Communists should not **hope** for us to surrender because I will never surrender to them.

NO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN US-RVN PEACE
SOLUTIONS : MIN. TINH

Saigon, October II. - Information Minister Ngo Khac Tinh Friday asserted the peace solution put forth by U.S. President Nixon has nothing different from that proposed by the R.V.N. government.

The Information Minister made the remark when attending a reception given by Saigon Chamber of Commerce at the 1970 Industrial Agricultural Fair Ground. He added the peace solution recently put forth by the R.V.N. and U.S. governments reflected a "common goodwill" of the U.S.A., the three Indochinese countries : Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia.

Regarding the peace solution proposed by the R.V.N. government in particular, Min. Tinh said, although it did not deal with the P.O.W. issue we are always ready to release the prisoners of war, as we already did several times in the past.

Info. Min. Tinh stressed, we have always tried our best to show our goodwill despite the fact that we are the victims of aggression.

He added, we have to make greater efforts to effectively carry out the Pacification-Development program.

Peace will be restored when the enemy infrastructure installations are eliminated, he said.

LAW ON SETTING UP LIMITED PARALLEL EXCHANGE
MARKET PROMULGATED

Saigon, October 3, - President Nguyen Van Thieu Saturday promulgated Law No 10-70 prescribing the setting up of a limited parallel exchange market besides the official exchange market, sources from the Presidency's office announced.

According to the law, the official exchange rate of Vietnamese piaster remains unchanged and the limited parallel exchange market will not be adopted for a number of essential services such as the transfer of money for students making overseas studies.

The bill was endorsed by the National Assembly on September 29.

LIMITED PARALLEL EXCHANGE MARKET
BEGINS OPERATION OCT. 5.

Saigon, October 5. - By virtue of a decree signed by Prime Minister Tran Thieu Khiem last Saturday, the Limited Parallel Exchange Market began its operations at 00:00 hours Monday October 5.

The purchase and cession of foreign exchange through the parallel exchange market was fixed as follows.

CESSION OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE : Cessions of foreign exchange of persons, physical and juridical, including allied servicemen for personal use (except for cession of foreign exchange of agencies of the government of Vietnam or foreign governments) as well as all export operations.

PURCHASE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE : According to the Prime Minister's decree, the purchase of foreign exchange will be realized through the Limited Parallel Exchange Market for all operations of financial transfer from Vietnam to foreign countries (except for transfers of money for overseas students and transfers of the R.V.N. government, - for example expenditures for Vietnamese diplomatic missions abroad and expenses for civil servants and militarymen on training abroad.)

All imports of goods fixed by orders of the Finance and Economy ministries.

The purchase and sale prices of foreign exchange on the Limited Parallel Exchange Market are calculated on the base of V.N. \$ 275 for one U.S. dollar.

Based on these prices, the National Bank also fixed the purchase and sale prices for other foreign exchanges.

VICE PRESIDENT KY'S VISIT TO BRITAIN
REPORTED SUCCESSFUL.

Saigon, October 8. - Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky has won the sympathy of the British public opinion after his two day visit to the United Kingdom.

A press release of the Press Directorate at the Vice-President's Office issued Wednesday reported that Vice-President Ky left London for Paris at 11:10 p.m. Tuesday.

In the second day of his tour Vice-President Ky met with representatives of radio television systems and diplomatic circles in Britain.

During interviews granted to the B.B.C. and I.T.V., the Vice-President answered several question on the R.V.N. situation and on R.V.N. stand at Paris peace talks. Vice-President Ky presented the good-will and efforts of the R.V.N. people and government in the search for peace and denounced the Communist stubborn and warlike attitude.

Answering a question on a solution to end the Vietnam war he said that the war will end immediately when outside military forces including U.S. forces and North Vietnam Forces, withdraw from South Vietnam.

Dealing with the conception on victory of both sides Vice-President Ky remarked that to the Communist aggressors victory means to take-over South Vietnam, but to the R.V.N., which is fighting for self-defense, victory means to effectively stop Communist aggression. In this conception the R.V.N. has won and is determined to march toward victory.

In addition, Vice-President Ky attended a reception held by R.V.N. Ambassador to Britain Le Ngoc Chan.

Besides, Vice-President Ky gave a luncheon in honor of former Col. Douglas Bader of the British Royal Air Forces, a famous hero of the World War II.

The R.V.N. Vice-President also met with the British Prime Minister Mr. Edward Heath.

Foreign Relations

PRESIDENT THIEU GREETS KHMER REPUBLIC.

Saigon, October 9. - On the occasion of the proclamation of the Khmer Republic, President Nguyen Van Thieu sent to Mr. Cheng Heng, first President of the Khmer Republic, a greeting message expressing his congratulations and best wishes for a new era of democracy, happiness and prosperity of the Cambodian people.

In his message, President Nguyen Van Thieu asserted that the Republic of Vietnam will sincerely co-operate and actively support the Khmer Republic in its struggle against the common enemy to safeguard Justice and Freedom.

Economics and Finance

PRESIDENT THIEU OPENS 1970 INDUSTRIAL, AGRICULTURAL, CRAFT AND COMMERCIAL FAIR.

Saigon, October 3. - President Nguyen Van Thieu Saturday morning cut the traditional ribbon opening the Industrial, Agricultural, Craft and Commercial two-week Fair.

Addressing the audience on this occasion, President Thieu said through the successful organization of the Fair, the industrialists, craftmen and businessmen made proof of firm determination in the construction and development of the nation.

Such a determination to overpass obstacles does help build up a prosperous future for the nation.

Meanwhile, the President added, there is a few who forget such a posture and bring forward instead pessimist views on the path to progress of the nation.

To get deeper in the path to progresses in an effort to settle disturbances, even in the economic domain, we have an only one solution which is the settlement of the present war by our victory over the stubborn Communists, the Chief Executive said.

President Thieu laid stress on the fact that "we can not bring about prosperity and sufficiency when we accept the surrender to the Communists."

On this occasion, President Thieu dealt with the private circles initiatives, especially the role of craftmen and businessmen in the national economy when thanks to the government encouragement they are actively contributing to the development of the output of the agricultural products.

Earlier, Eng. Khuong Huu Dieu, Chief of the Fair Organization Committee expounded to the audience the significance and purpose and organization of the Fair.

According to Eng. Dieu, the success of the opening of the Fair largely results from the positive cooperation of industrialists, agricultural circles, craftmen and businessmen.

Prior to leaving, President Thieu along with his wife, Lower House Speaker Nguyen Ba Luong, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khiem and other guests toured various pavillions of the fair.

VIETNAMESE BUSINESSMEN ARE GAINING BIG SUCCESS - PRESIDENT THIEU

Saigon, October 4. - The Industrial, Agricultural, Craft and Commercial Fair is a significant achievement of the Vietnamese businessmen.

President Nguyen Van Thieu made the statement Saturday morning when he inaugurated the Fair, according to the Press Secretary at the President's Office.

"What we are doing our best to get at is to settle the war under whatever forms so as to restore a just and lasting peace" the President said, adding that "we can in no way settle the war in accordance with what the Communists want to reach. Instead we must build up a just peace for South Vietnam as well as a progressive and prosperous and powerful country."

The Chief Executive on this occasion stressed on the fact that as our national economy is basically agricultural, we have to increase exports as well as the production output at rural areas in an effort to boost the development of the national economy.

"Thanks to the improvement of the national security we are having all the opportunities to do this" the President said.

According to the Chief-Executive, the development of the national economy also results from private individuals' active contributions.

The President particularly placed much emphasis on the fact that the industrialists,

craftmen, farmers and commercial circles are deploying admirable efforts while the defeatists made haste to lose their confidence in the future of the nation and as a result, advocate the surrender to the enemy.

"The minority which is detrimental to the Nation, should be quelled down while all the people are doing their best to rebuilt the Fatherland and are winning over the enemy." the President said.

Later, President Thieu toured various pavillions of the Fair and during his tour the Chief Executive cut a traditional ribbon dedicating a student's club which was completed and is being operated by the Faculty of Pharmacy's students themselves.

On this occasion, the President chatted with the students and handed over V.N. \$100.00 as a contribution to the management of the newly-dedicated club.

President ended his tour of this Fair around noon of the same day.

Also present at the ceremony opening the Fair were Madame Nguyen Van Thieu, Prime Minister Tran Thien Khien, and his wife, the Chairman of the Inspectorate General, the Ministers of the State, Cabinet members and a number of members of diplomatic corps.

EXCHANGE RATE OF PARALLEL EXCHANGE MARKET
FIXED AT V.N. \$ 275 PER U.S. DOLLAR

Saigon, October 5. - Following the promulgation of the law on the establishment of the Limited Parallel Foreign Exchange Market, Finance Minister Nguyen Bich Hue officially announced that the exchange rate of this market is V.N. \$ 275 for one U.S. dollar besides the official exchange market of V.N. \$ 118 per dollar.

In his televised address to the nation Saturday evening, the Finance Minister said the exchange rate of the Parallel Exchange Market will be applied for :

- export services.
- the purchase of Vietnamese piasters by foreigners visiting Vietnam or investing in the country.
- the purchase of Vietnamese piasters by Allied servicemen.
- such transfers of money as the transfer of interests of foreign firms, travel expenses of Vietnamese going abroad, and other transfers of money to which the government considers any support unnecessary.
- the import of a number of goods which were previously limited. This quantity of goods is about one-fifth of the total quantity of goods imported each year.

According to Minister Hue, the exchange rate of V.N. \$ 118 for one U.S. dollar has so far caused four main disadvantages.

It failed to collect the amount of foreign currency sold at the black market.

The import of goods with the exchange rate of V.N. \$ 118 per dollar failed to

meet people's needs resulting in speculation and hoarding;

- the official exchange rate caused damages to exporters because they have to cede their foreign exchange to the government at a very low rate. With the promulgation of the Parallel Exchange Market, importers will get V.N. \$ 275 for each dollar ceded to the government.

- the official exchange rate did not attract foreign investors since they had to disburse huge amount of foreign exchange to get enough capital in Vietnamese piasters for their investments.

The Finance Minister concluded that the limited parallel foreign exchange market, i.e. the application of a second exchange rate of V.N. \$ 275 per dollar, will help decrease the speculation of foreign currency and goods, encourage export and investment, attract more currency in circulation to lessen inflation pressure and increase incomes for the national budget.

SERVICEMEN, CIVIL SERVANTS GET PAY HIKE : Simultaneously with the promulgation of the parallel foreign exchange market Min. Hue announced that civil servants and militarymen will have their salary increased from 11 to 17 per cent in accordance with their rank. The pay-hike will be applied starting October 1.

Also enjoying salary increase were retired civil servants, ex-servicemen, disabled veterans and war-widows and orphans.

Besides, each civil servant or militaryman family will be distributed ration-cards to buy first necessities at official prices such as sugar, milk, cooking oil and rice.

FINANCE MIN. EXPLAINS "PARALLEL FOREIGN EXCHANGE MARKET"

Saigon, October 4. - At a meeting with newsmen Sunday morning, Finance Minister Nguyen Bich Hue expounded the two new measures recently promulgated by the government - the limited parallel exchange market and the increase of salary for civil-servants and militarymen.

Finance Min. Hue firstly made known that the new exchange rate (VN \$ 275 for a US dollar) will be applied to the transfer of money from foreign countries to Vietnam and vice-versa, and about one-fifth of the total of imported goods. For instance, of the total cost of US \$ 750 million of imported goods scheduled for the next year, only US \$ 150 million will be subjected to the parallel exchange market rate.

Foreign travellers who enter Vietnam will benefit from the new exchange rate of VN \$ 275 for one US dollar, instead VN \$ 118 per US dollar as previously.

Foreign investors in Vietnam will enjoy the new exchange rate, thus helping increase the foreign investment in Vietnam.

When US militarymen change their US dollars into Vietnamese piasters they will also enjoy the same new exchange rate, thus helping reduce the exchange of US dollars on the black market. Under these circumstances, the RVN government can attract approximately another US \$ 100 million per year.

In addition, the parallel exchange market will help the government save its foreign exchange, because foreign enterprises in Vietnam will have to transfer their interests to their native countries with the new exchange rate of VN \$ 275 for one US dollar.

Vietnamese and foreign residents in Vietnam going abroad have to buy each U.S. dollar at V.N. \$ 275.

Saving funds of foreign nationals in Vietnam will be also transferred at the new exchange rate.

The official exchange rate (V.N. \$ 118 for one U.S. dollar) will be applied only for government transfers and for the transfer of money for overseas student.

The official exchange rate will be also applied for all expenditures in Vietnam of the foreign government services, especially of the U.S.. In the coming year, the R.V.N. will get approximately U.S. \$ 300 million from U.S. expenditures in Vietnam.

Asked whether or not the foreign exchange rate of V.N. \$ 275 per one dollar could attract the foreign exchange of American troops and foreign workers and officials in Vietnam when the exchange rate at the black market is over V.N. \$ 400 for one U.S. dollar, Minister Hue disclosed that many supplementary measures will be adopted. One important measure, a large part of salary of U.S. soldiers and foreign workers here will be paid with Vietnamese piasters.

Besides, with the new rate of foreign exchange, the U.S. government may compel its troops to change U.S. currency into piasters on the Limited Parallel Foreign Exchange market with the R.V.N. government instead of getting them at black market rates with private individuals inside or outside Vietnam.

The Finance Minister emphasized that the establishment of the limited parallel foreign exchange market was not a new initiative since it was similar to the "free market" prevailing in V.N. in 1955-1966.

Many other countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines also apply two foreign exchange rates at the same time, he added.

According to Minister Hue, new prices of several kinds of goods fixed in accordance with the parallel market rate continue to be lower than those on the black market.

He also assured the people that although the new official prices are higher, black market prices will not increase accordingly. Conversely, black market prices may be reduced for many reasons : goods will be imported in large quantities, traders will not dare to indulge in speculation and hoarding since they would have to pay huge amounts for their bank deposits.

To another question, Minister Hue said the foreign exchange rate fixed at V.N. \$ 275 per dollar, was based on many factors, particularly the foreign exchange rate on Hong Kong market usually varied from V.N. \$ 270 to V.N. \$ 280 for one U.S. dollar.

He stressed that the setting up of the limited parallel foreign exchange market will help the government release unlimited foreign exchange for goods imports as well as enable various transfers which were previously prohibited for the shortage of foreign exchange

To ease the goods import and transfer of currency Minister Hue added, will prevent speculation and hoarding as well as foreign currency smuggling. Consequently, the black market exchange rate will decrease.

He also asserted that the increase of salary for militarymen and civil servants will

not strengthen the inflation pressure, because the parallel market will provide sufficient resources.

In other words, Minister Hue said this is only an effort to help equally share out income amongst the population, because the parallel exchange market will increase the contributions of large income circles for redistribution to low-income classes.

VIETNAM WELCOMES ALL FOREIGN INVESTMENTS
OFFICIAL SAYS

Saigon, October 9. -"Vietnam is now in its full swing of development therefore it warmly welcomes all kinds of aids and investments from foreign businessmen in the Free World to boost its national economy."

Vice Economy Minister Pham Minh Duong, head of the R.V.N. delegation made the above statement at the Vietnam Japan Economy Conference held at the Economy Ministry conference hall Thursday morning.

The Japanese economic delegation including 11 specialists and headed by Mr. Isao Abe, former Japanese Ambassador to the United Nations arrived in Saigon Tuesday to make a first-hand observation of the economic situation and development prospect in Vietnam so as to promote Japanese investments in the industrial development here.

To a question on the quantity of fertilizer which Vietnamese peasants will need every year for their crop cultivation Vice Minister Duong said, the acreage of cultivated land growingly increased thanks to the R.V.N. government's Pacification Development policy. Therefore the Vietnamese peasants are also in need of larger quantities of imported fertilizer.

On this occasion, the Vice Economy Minister in charge of Craft and Industry said that most of the craft and industrial agricultural and commercial branches in Vietnam are now developing accordance with the R.V.N. government's policy.

However he expressed the hope that Vietnam will receive more assistances and investments from outside to reach a prosperous postwar economy as Japan has achieved.

The Japanese Economic delegation is scheduled to make a tour of Western provinces Friday for a first-hand study of various construction projects including production industrial facilities, commercial ports and the My Thuan Bridge.

NATIONWIDE SEMINAR ON AGRICULTURE, FISHERY
DEVELOPMENT OPENS.

Saigon, October 5. - Land reform, Agriculture and Fishery development Minister Cao Van Than when presiding over a ceremony opening the nationwide seminar on the Agriculture and Fishery Development Monday morning, urged peasants and fishermen to increase their production so that home-produced rice can meet the people's demand and no import of rice will be need in 1971.

At the ceremony, held at the Land Reform Ministry, Minister Than also set forth three main objectives for the coming days : to grow more species of agricultural products to thoroughly use cultivated land and to modernize the agricultural fishing tech-

niques.

He also appealed for the peasants' efforts to increase the production about half the required quantity of meat, fish, eggs, vegetables and other secondary crops so as to save U.S. \$ 15 million of foreign exchange for foodstuffs imports every year.

The seminar gathering Agriculture Sector chiefs and service chiefs, and hydraulic cooperative directors from throughout the country, will last four days.

On this occasion, the Land Reform Minister emphasized the improvement of peasants and fishers' living standards which, according to him, constituted one of the purposes of the seminar.

The seminar program will cover themes on objectives of the agriculture and fishery development, methods for the setting up of agriculture and fishery development projects in the provinces and the importance of agricultural organizations, agricultural development banks, statistics and the mechanization of agriculture.

Special Feature

PRISONER OF THE VIET CONG

(Viet-Nam Council on Foreign Relations), October 8, 1970.

Since the Second Indochina Conflict started in the late fifties, many South Vietnamese combatants have been reported "missing in action" (M.I.A.), probably captured by enemy troops in conditions entitling them to the status of prisoner of war (P.O.W.).

Countless other members of the regular army and the territorial forces are also known to have been caught by the Viet Cong while traveling on the roads and highways of the nation or living in relatively insecure areas open to Communist penetration at night time.

How many are they ? Where are they detained ? In what conditions are they living ? How are they treated by their captors ? These are only a few of many questions for which an answer is not to be found easily, but which should not draw less public attention, specially at this stage of the Paris talks.

Indeed, as the icy affair appears to be moving in the direction of a dégel on the P.O.W. problem, questions should be asked about those a local pundit has called "the forgotten ones". The response of friends and foes is a good indicator whether there is any common ground among the belligerents.

According to official South Vietnamese and American sources in Saigon, some 3,327 government soldiers are known to be in North Vietnamese and Viet Cong hands. There may be also many others for whom South Vietnam may claim P.O.W. status but the circumstances of their disappearances are not so very clear and their Communist captors may turn a deaf ear to whatever allied delegates may say in their behalf.

The number of U.S. servicemen now detained by the enemy is more accurate, though. There are at present just over 1,500 American troops reported missing in action, of whom exactly 457 are known to be imprisoned in North Vietnam. Little is known of them, too, but even less is known of about 1,000 American P.O.W.s believed to be in Viet Cong hands and detained in jungle camps somewhere in South Vietnam.

For each South Vietnamese and American prisoner of war, there are at least seven North Vietnamese and Viet Cong in government P.O.W. camps. Indeed, official figures reveal that some 36.5 thousand Communist P.O.W.s are now living in detention camps scattered throughout the Republic, the largest of which is located on the island of Phu Quoc just a few miles south of the golden sands of Cambodia's Kampot province.

I.R.C. SUPERVISION : Whether living at Qui Nhon, Bien Hoa or Phu Quoc, Communist P.O.W.s have few reasons for complaint. There, under the supervision of International Red Cross officials, they are given a life of relative ease with plenty to eat and little to do. According to a recent visitor to these camps "the prisoners are so well fed that they can think of rebellion all the time."

At the Phu Quoc Camp, more particularly, P.O.W.s are "so free that they can afford to do anything within camp," according to the same witness. And this, in the view of the man, "is at the origin of the half-dozen rebellion cases reported last year. Nhan cu vi bat thien, if you stay idle you are bound to indulge in mischiefs." And he suggested to use the prisoners in such undertakings as jungle clearing and road-building.

The man's reasoning may be one ab absurdo but it does prove a correct one. And its reverse is equally true. For allied prisoners of the Viet Cong are kept so badly off, both mentally and physically, that their only concern is how to survive. This is made evident to whoever has been confronted with the sight of inmates of Communist P.O.W. camps looking exactly like Jewish prisoners at Dachau and Buchenwald at the end of World War II.

WORSE THAN DACHAU : There is one difference, though. Dachau and Buchenwald inmates were reduced to the state of walking skeletons after years of detention while **prisoners** of the Viet Cong become "creatures of bones and skin" after only a few months in captivity.

The treatment reserved for South Vietnamese officers held prisoners by the Viet Cong is particularly harsh, according to most survivors of Communist P.O.W. camps. Through the hundreds of documents made available to this column, it appears to be a combination of subtle brain-washing techniques and miserable living conditions.

On being taken prisoner, a government soldier - let's call him Nguyen - is taken to district headquarters, where he would be asked at first to only give his name, that of his unit, his serial number, and a short synopsis of what he has done all his life up to the moment he came to be in enemy hands.

Enlisted men are then confined to a local prison, where they would make the best out of a difficult situation. But as an officer, Nguyen is taken to provincial headquarters where his life as a P.O.W. really begins. On his way there, however, Nguyen is to go through so many difficult moments "at the hands of the angry people" that he would feel somewhat relieved at seeing his goalers.

QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS : The sense of relief may turn into a "good" i.e. cooperative element, especially when he is asked to fill out a new questionnaire, only an ex-

panded version fo what he had to answer when first captured. But he will have to do it so many times that conflicting differences would be bound to come up and for which he would be charged with trying to hide the truth.

Nguyen's goalers will then break all velleities of resistance in him. His ration of 200 grams of rice per day will be reduced and he will be kept chained day and night in a "dog's house" along with some other "recalcitrant enemies of the people". After a few weeks of this, Nguyen is allowed out and given a chance to "redeem" himself.

For this, Nguyen will have to convince his interrogators of his honesty. Except for anyone but the strongest-willed, complete isolation and utter privation will have turned Nguyen into a puppet ready to do whatever he may be asked to. Only then, is the metamorphosed Nguyen turned back to the group of "repentant" prisoners with whom he was initially.

This, however, is not the end of Nguyen's predicament. To earn his "people's rice", he will have to work 12 hours each day, carrying rice, planting secondary crops, and felling trees. "Manual work is the best reformation process", the Communists have always proclaimed.

MENTAL LETHARGY : But manual work is to be supplemented by "study sessions", some of which go on for days. Following an initial lecture on such topics as "the U.S. aggression against our country" and "the Puppet regime is an instrument of imperialism", Nguyen and his friends are divided into debating cells under a leader more or less acquired to the Communist cause.

Just in order to continue to be fed with "the people's rice" and clad with "the people's clothes" - 200 grammes of rice daily, one pair of black pyjamas per year, and some 20 piasters (U.S. \$ 0.2) of pocket money per month - Nguyen will have to prove a "positive" element by embracing the official Viet Cong line in these study sessions.

Two cases will then happen. If Nguyen should be considered "repentant" enough he may be freed on some Communist anniversaries. Otherwise, continuous hard work, inadequate food and medecine, and other terrible living conditions in "Liberated" areas would speedly result in an end for the long suffering man.

For prisoners of the Viet Cong, however nothing is worse than total isolation. As there are, of course, no communications with family and friends, this more often than not has proven a most destructive factor contributing to the inevitable collapse of a prisoner's morale. Even without being sick, Nguyen probably will fade away within a year after his capture.

70 PER CENT : The death toll among P.O.W.s , thus, is very high. Although no official figures exist on the percentage of survivors of Communist detention camps, statements by those who succeeded in escaping, were freed by allied troops, or were released indicate a full two-thirds of prisoners have died in jail.

It might be impossible even guess the number of these unsung heroes, whose behavior in general has been described by a survivor as the "most eloquent evidence of the rightness of our cause and the indomitable character of soldiers of the Republic".

But by suggesting to tackle the problem of their fate, the South Vietnamese delegation in Paris has unmistakably made it clear they are not a group of serial numbers easily thrown into the drain when the moment should come to agree on an exchange of military personnel detained by both parties to the present conflict.

President Nguyen Van Thieu, it was learned last week, has instructed Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky to raise the problem of prisoners of war. According to Press Secretary Hoang Duc Nha, South Vietnam is ready "to discuss the P.O.W. issue in the context of the 1949 Geneva Convention, including an exchange of information, letters and medical supplies" conducive to their release.

DISTURBED CONSCIENCES : South Vietnam's position on this matter is unassailable. As soon as Communist soldiers are taken prisoners, they come under the patronage of I.R.C. officials. Some of them even have been repatriated to North Vietnam and the others are all living in relatively comfortable conditions under the surveillance of their South Vietnamese guards.

None of this can be said of government soldiers captured by the enemy. Nothing is known of their fate, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese having never said how many they are detaining, where they keep their P.O.W.s, and in what conditions they are holding them.

Against this context, it appears unlikely that the Viet Cong delegates in Paris will never agree to discuss the P.O.W. problem. Even for the sake of principles this should not be allowed to continue for ever. There must be some disturbed consciences among friends and foes of South Vietnam, who some day will turn to the Communists and ask them :

"What have you done of allied soldiers captured on the battlefields of South Vietnam? Where are they? How many are still alive and how many have died in your hands?"



The end of a long road for these North Vietnamese prisoners - They are lucky to be alive.

VIET-NAM BULLETIN is a weekly publication of the Embassy of Viet-Nam, provided free of charge to all persons and organizations interested in VN. All inquiries and requests should be directed to VIET-NAM BULLETIN, Embassy of Viet-Nam, 2251 "R" Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008. Tel: 234-4860.

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2251 "R" Street, Washington D.C. 20008
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Vol. IV, No. 33
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