

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NGUYEN VAN COI,¹ FORMER PROVINCIAL REPRESENTATIVE
OF QUANG DUC PROVINCE, VIETNAM

Honorable Gentlemen

First of all I want to express my sincere appreciation and respect to you for my appearance today. I am appreciative because the American congress recognizes the suffering of millions of Vietnamese people, and at the same time we also dream of your appropriate decisions to better the life and future of Vietnam.

As a former representative, I realize the importance of the body gathered here today. With all my respect to you as US representatives, I feel I have the responsibility of telling the truth. I sincerely ask your pardon if I do not speak eloquently, but I'd like to ask you to participate with me in seeking the truth. I hope you understand that I can not articulate my feelings as well as I intend to, but with all my heart I want to speak the truth in a polite manner and with appreciation to the USA in helping us.

My name is Nguyen Van Coi. I am a member of the Hoa Hao religion, am 31 years old, was born, and raised in a poor farmer family in the Mekong Delta. I was:

- President of Quang Duc Central Province Committee,
- responsible for charitable social events: Veterans Clubs,
and free Nguyen Trung Truc Hospital,
- participated in legislative activities such as: chairman
of the elected Hoa Hao party which included senators,
representatives, province and village government committees,

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- in the education program as: Chairman of the University, High School Youth Education Party and of the Hoa Hao University.

During the last few months of Vietnam's second republic, the three million people of Hoa Hao religion recognized the serious changes in the world but South Vietnam President Nguyen Van Thieu continued his blind, greedy policies and was not concerned with important events.

I also used to join in the Central Fighting Committee to create conditions for making the Paris agreement workable. In April 1975, the South Vietnam government completely fell into Communist hands because of the mistakes and selfishness of the dishonest government during a few decades of fighting. All the parties, people, religions, and groups were totally repressed, and unable to act freely.

In the isolated situations which followed: the Americans' presence and offices did not exist, and the leaders of the party against the communist regime escaped to other countries while the Duong Van Minh's presidency declared surrender without any conditions. Our Hoa Hao religions, like a person who is drowning, tried to hold on to a tiny life that is the Paris agreement, and recently submitted a document related to the conciliation to the new government. The Hoa Hao religion also contacted other religions in order to carry out activities for the above purpose. I was a representative for the Hoa Hao Buddhist for this matter. When the Communist entered Saigon, they immediately declared their 10 point policy including the national reconciliation and concord, the freedom of ownership, generosity and clemency, use

of the qualified people from the old regime, free religion, and all other basic human rights which were guaranteed and promised to follow.

This was an extreme lie which was never carried out. Numerous political, educational, military, economic, religions, and party leaders in South Vietnam were trapped by the Communists. Whether they were Hoa Hao Buddhist or government leaders, local or national level, they were all arrested and terrorized.

Even though working under greater pressure than any others, the Hoa Hao Buddhist's suffer in a terribly tight atmosphere which affects everybody, party, and religion in South Vietnam.

In the Hoa Hao's name, I was arrested at 7 a.m. on August 2, 1975, at Ba The, Nui Sap, An Giang Province because of contacting other religious parties.

I was imprisoned at different places, different locations and at different times. In these movements from one place to another, I was always blind-folded, placed down at the dark cargo compartment of the boat, handcuffed, and chained with others. I was obligated to study, made a statement, and was forced to declare that I was a CIA agent for America. I was compelled to labor as well as some senators, representatives, ministers and religious leaders. We never had enough rice to eat, even cold rice with salt, and also never had enough water to drink, even purified lake water. We were forced to work, eat, and sleep. Our conditions were worse than a cow's. In our labor group, we had a few old, sick people who were walking in the mud up to their chest. They couldn't bear the work so there were some young people in the group who

wanted to help or assist in carrying a big tree but the Cong San soldiers severely punished all these who offered assistance. At U Minh farm, we worked more than an animal, from 5 a.m. to 8 p.m., cut trees, dug holes, and everything according to Cong San soldiers' orders. We had only two meals a day, 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. Every meal was limited to two bowls of small rice grain and a little salt. When we were permitted to go back to the camp to sleep, we couldn't lift our feet or hands. We just fell down on the pile of leaves to rest and were waken up by the soldiers to continue our animal jobs.

I forgot the definition of our sleeping camp because they don't have this word or any other similar word to this meaning in a dictionary. Our camp didn't have the surrounding walls, no roof to cover ourselves when it rained or shone. Our camp's capacity was only six (6) people, six people lived around a base of the tree trunk. At night, our feet were chained to the tree just like chaining a dog. There were many animal groups like us at the U Minh farm, Ca Mau, and every group was provided a tree as a camp. "The Communist government didn't want our labor and production, there was no purpose of reeducation but the purpose was to beat and investigate us" was my thought and conclusion. Therefore, the people who supported the old regime were shipped away with the myth of studying and eventually they will die in a jungle.

I remember when I was a kid, my father and I used to hang a net to protect my cows from mosquitoes bites, but truthfully in a communist jail, they looked at the prisoners worse than an animal. Many labor people at the farm died because of inadequate food, and inadequate

medicine. When a person died, the Communist threw the body in a big hole, and then covered it with dirt. There was no tombstone, no grave and at the same time the relatives were not informed. For our part, we could not talk about the death, nor have a religious ceremony for our dead friend. We couldn't show our sympathy or sorrow. To the contrary, if we wanted to be safe and to be seen as progressing in our studies, we also should convict the dead.

Among the animals that were locked up and beaten at the farm, I was the most special animal because I was labelled as a member of the most dangerous group; a close friend of an CIA agent; and the representative of Hoa Hao Buddhist who contacted other parties with the purpose of fighting against the communism. Thus besides being forced to labor, eat and sleep, I was beaten seriously by Viet Cong. As a result, these incapacitating injuries could have paralyzed me according to the medical doctors in Pittsburg. The Cong San wanted me to show them where the Hoa Hao Buddhist buried weapons, resistance plans, the connection between Hoa Hao and CIA after the surrender of Saigon, the relationship between Senator A (named not disclosed) and Hoa Hao Buddhist insurgents.

When Senator A established the front in France on February 17, 1976, called for the neutralization in South Vietnam and carried out the Paris Agreement on BBC in London, I was more severely punished than ever.

Cong San shined the high voltage light into my eyes, hung me upside-down and poured fish sauce into my nose, etc. I was not lucky because the Communist continued to beat me after I was unconscious, but I was luckier than anybody else because the Cong San didn't want me to die as

soon as some of my friends; they wanted me to stay alive longer for more information. Therefore, when I was seriously ill due to injuries, malaria, hemorrhoids, homoroid , Cong San took me to the hospital for treatment. I was the only prisoner who was taken to the hospital. In the Mekong Delta, when a guard was careless I escaped on July 15, 1976. I had a meeting with the Hoa Hao leaders and finally decided to leave the country by using a fishing boat from Rach Gia.

We hope to deliver our sorrowful voice from the three (3) million Hoa Hao people to Senator A and at this time we give all of our hope and our souls for our Hoa Hao's future generations. I want to share with you the suffering of millions of Vietnamese people and to discuss with the refugee authorities who are still loving and want freedom for our country in order to alert the USA and the world and hopefully to create a response to change the deathly situation which has afflicted Vietnamese people. I started my journey on October 15, 1976, at Rach Gia, and arrived at Thailand on October 23, 1976, was admitted to USA and relocated to Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, on December 23, 1976.

Honorable Congressmen

Continuing the above facts, I will gradually present the following to you all that I have seen and heard in situations I faced from April 30, 1975, to the date I escaped, October 15, 1976. I want to especially emphasize the people's life as a whole, the life of the people who participated in the last fighting, relating to the basic human rights such as: freedom of religions, freedom of movement, freedom of the press, freedom of ownership, freedom of speech, etc. Finally, I will

present to you, your honors, my personal feelings as well as the feelings of the Vietnamese people as a whole that I obtained, hopefully this sorrowful voice from a terrible situation will create a response from you as the representatives of the USA.

I. The People:

On May 1, 1975, after taking over the South Vietnam, the Communists immediately announced their ten (10) point policy in all the newspapers, radio and TV broadcasts. The content was summarized as follows:

"The ten (10) point policy of the Provisional Revolution Republic of South Vietnam. The imperialists and the puppets administrators who loved the war, were afraid of peace, and stubbornly violated the Paris agreement. The imperial warlike country and its followers who sold out Vietnam were chased away by the people and the revolution. The Revolutionary Government belongs to the people's, by people, and for the people. The Revolution protects the people's ownership, their life and respects all the basic rights of the people. The Revolutionary Government will be generous and will offer clemency to all people, those who are devoted to the public interest will be rewarded, those who are not should work harder, and those who committed offenses but reported it to the government, and repented, will be forgiven. The revolution will use the specialists from the old government."

It is true that: "Communist say one thing and practice another." Therefore, the statement made by President Nguyen Van Thieu was well-remembered by the people: "Don't listen to what Cong San say, but look at what they do." During the war, Ha Noi used to publicize that "Americans

invaded South Vietnam, and the South Vietnamese people themselves fought against the Americans to liberate the country. Ha Noi was not involved." Truthfully, Ha Noi deceived the world and violently abrogated the Geneva agreement in 1954 in that Ha Noi transported the soldiers and crossed the line to invade South Vietnam. They were covered under the mask of the National United Front for Liberating South Vietnam. Because of their cleverness, Ha Noi cheated the public. After April 30, 1975, they realized that they didn't need to cover themselves any longer, so they let their mask down and revealed that Liberation of South Vietnam was an invading instrument of Ha Noi. The Revolutionary Government considered the name dead right after the revolution. All the powers were concentrated in the Ha Noi dictatorship headquarters' party.

Cong San publicized that they protected the people's ownership, wouldn't touch anything even a needle, or a threat, but in reality, they stole the people's property by confiscating the property of "puppet" soldiers, and administrators, beating comprador exploiter, beating the "robbing landowners", issuing new money, etc.

Cong San usually proclaimed that "there is nothing more valuable than independent freedom" but at this moment, the Vietnamese people don't even have one basic human right.

- Freedom of the press: South Vietnam currently has three (3) daily newspapers, and two (2) weekly magazines. The writers and news are provided by the government, the papers are only permitted to print and publish after government censure. There is no freedom of speech;

the news on the paper is also broadcasted on the radio mainly to praise an individual leader, as extracted from the speeches of leaders, and to praise the progressing development of the socialist societies. News related to the development of non-communist blocks was almost forbidden. Because of the small amount of news which is usually repetitious, only a few people buy. The government has forced people to buy with the reason that they need to read for progressing studies.

- Freedom of movement: Traveling from one place to another, from one town to another was very limited and under great control. People who wanted to move must make an application through channels from Hamlets to Villages, to Districts, and to Provinces. After getting permission, the people were not sure if they could buy a bus ticket. Currently, in Vietnam buses are very rare because of an attempt to save fuel and also because of government programs which limit and control movement. Buying tickets is also in a priority system:

- Priority 1: The communist soldiers on duty, traveling
- Priority 2: The revolutionary families
- Priority 3: For relatives and family of dead persons, and finally for the people. So sometimes after getting the permit, the permission expires while waiting for the bus ticket, and the trip is cancelled.

- Freedom of religion: The government does not officially request people to stop practicing their religion but their actions are aimed at persuading people to neglect their religions. According to them, Vietnam has only two (2) persons that should be worshipped. Hung

Vuong who founded the nation, and Uncle Ho who protected the country. Thus, Vietnamese people only need to know that they are the children of Hung Vuong and grandchildren of Uncle Ho. At home, Ho Chi Minh's picture has to be placed in the altar, at the same level or a little higher than to Budda's or Jesus Christ's statues. Even so, they still are not satisfied, if any house wants to be left alone, they must take down all the statues and pictures except Ho Chi Minh's picture, and then the government states that the family is progressing, and everybody should follow its example.

Cong San applied many strict, harsh rules and policies to South Vietnamese people. Under their eyes, all the people who lived in the south are private compador elements, and needed to be reeducated. They believe that South Vietnamese were americanized, and were affected by a corrupted education so that all have to be reeducated for progressing. Truong Chinh, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National Assembly in his speech for the Unified Conference Occasion in Saigon, had said: "North Vietnamese people are progressing rapidly in the socialist revolution, while in the south, the people are still very low, do not recognize the power of mastery collective, therefore, the South Vietnamese need to study more to have the same standard of the north."

Every one knows that where there is communism, there won't be any private property. But the communist do not say that, they keep emphasizing that they give all the basic human rights to the people including private ownership. Reality is contrary, the government applied many wicked policies to steal the people's property under the label "National Trust".

What is the definition of National Trust to them? They reason that all the property in the air, ground, sea, belong to people; but who represents the people? - the revolution. Thus, the revolution has the responsibility to take charge of people's property.

- Robbing workers: Cong San used a beautiful sentence: "Workers are the owners of the industries." in order to fool the public and exploit workers' labor. The government confiscated all the industries and declared to the workers that they regained the ownership power for the workers. Workers are the masters. Yet, the government retained the guardianship power, directed technology, then persuaded workers to compete in labor production. They increased the labor hours from 8 hrs a day to 10 and then 12 hours a day. As a result, workers don't have any privileges except the starving salary and now have increased labor hours.

- Robbing farmers: To the farmers, Cong San applied a cruel tax policy. The standard to calculate tax is 40% estimated in production income. The estimated production income is defined from the government estimates on the size of the land; with that land, they will estimate how much income the farmer receives, and based to that estimation, they finally tax the farmer, they do not base it on what the farmer actually produces.

For example: The location of land is in A category, the area is 10,000 square miles, plant Than Nong rice (R-8), at the end of the season, will gather ten (10)(gia) (gia is equal to 40 litre) rice. The government will tax on the first four (4) (gia). Detailed calculation:

4 (gia) for tax + 2 (gia) for seed + 4 (gia) to eat. At the end of the season, if the farmer unfortunately gets less than the 10 (gia) expected, the farmer still has to pay 4 (gia) tax and the remaining amount is for the farmer. If there is not enough rice to eat, and not enough seed for the next season, then the farmer will borrow the money from the government, therefore debt is increasing. As a debtee, all the activities are directed by the debtor. Because of that situation, many farmers have voluntarily offered their land to the government in order to be a worker rather than an owner.

In addition, Cong San has many more crooked means. Exchanging money was an example. It didn't matter how much the person had, the maximum standard was 200 piaster for 100,000 old money, the remaining was kept by the government. When needed, people must make an application to withdraw the money, but in reality, there was nobody that could withdraw their money from the government very easily.

The government patronize in changing people into a screw driver, where the government put, they sit, without any opinion.

II. The Former Soldiers

These were the worse unhappiness victims, their families were completely separated. Husbands were taken away for education without knowing when they will return, wives were forced to move to a new economic zone, the children can not continue education because of suspicion. I used to live in the Cong San prison, and as a witness of their crimes, I want to present very clearly to you, your honors, the following situations:

1. Manner of Treatment for the Former Soldiers

a. Were called to report for education (May 1, 1975 - May 14, 1975)

As soon as South Vietnam surrendered, the Cong San declared their 10 point system. To make people believe, particularly the former soldiers element, Cong San declared another second system that consisted of 7 point relating to the treatment. According to the 7 point system spirit, Cong San claimed that they defeated American. The government proclaimed its conciliation, and compromise. They called the soldiers to report to them to take advantage of a generosity and clemency policy. At the beginning, the majority of them were hiding, and only a few reported. Anyone who reported would have a certification and was released. Because it was so easy, the soldiers talked their friends into reporting to the new government.

b. Called to report for education (May 15, 1975 - May 17, 1975)

Cong San thereafter issued a notice to call to report for education. The main idea of this notice was: "The Revolutionary Government opens reeducation classes for soldiers, government workers and public workers from the former regime." The notice also reminded that officers from Major up to Lieutenant General, government workers from Chief Office to the President, elected people from province level to senators, to bring enough food for 30 days" - "officers from Second Lieutenant to Captain, government workers from Chairman of the committee to head of an office, elected people from hamlet to village level, to bring enough food for 15 days" - "soldiers from private to warrant officer, plain government workers, to bring enough food for 7 days." We analyzed the

notice and saw that the maximum time is 30 days, it sounded easy so we all reported for education. Two months later, wives, whose husbands had not returned home, gathered in front of the Military Control Committee (the former presidential palace) for a meeting. These women were forced away by weapons before they even had enough time to speak. Later, Viet Cong General Tran Van Tra, Chairman of the Military Control Committee of Ho Chi Minh City, claimed on the radio broadcast stations that: "The Revolution is not keeping any one. The time for studying is unlimited, so the decision when to return home is up to the soldiers. Those who repent their mistakes will be permitted to go home; those who do not, will need to continue reeducation until they become a good citizen before they are reunited with family."

c. Cong San divided people into categories: Cong San divided South Vietnamese into five categories that needed to be reeducated:

- Puppet administrators (religions, parties, elected people, government workers, cadres, police)
- Puppet soldiers (pure military, armed)
- Comprador exploiter (those who were friends with American, puppets)
- Robbing land owners (had more than 5 acres of land)
- Educated reactive persons

According to these categories, all South Vietnamese people needed to be reeducated. Each individual was considered separately from others.

d. Reeducation Centers: Frankly these were prisons but Cong San did not call them prisons, but reeducation center camps. The camp

centers were located in the old prisons. Because of numerous soldiers, they used churches, schools, temples as the reeducation centers.

The reeducation center staff was called administrative and faculty staff, usually included from 8 to 10 key cadres, and approximately from 60 to 80 cadres to guard and for security control. The prisoners of war in the camps were called camp members. Every camp usually consisted of 1,000 to 1,200 members. For organized activities, the prisoners were placed into unions and groups. Every union has 30 people, and 6 for every group. The head of the union, the second in command of the union, the group's president, and vice president were chosen by the staff. The staff usually selected those whose father, mother, brother, sister, or relatives rallied or was active for Viet Cong. These heads, presidents, vice presidents, and vice union had the responsibility to examine each individual member for his idea, opinion, labor, etc., and also had the responsibility to report each day the member's condition. On the other hand, the camp member had the right to directly report to the staff anything he discovered from any other members. For instance, they reported to the staff about other members' offenses during the reeducation period. In these camps, Cong San always tried to find ways to separate and caused misunderstanding between members with the purpose that the members would report each other so they could get more information. There were quite a number of prisoners who were trapped by the Cong San because of anxiety or stupidity. These prisoners reported their friends demeaningly. I will present to you, your honors, my personal life from the time I was captured so that you will understand more about the prisoner's life in Cong San prisons.

2. Captured as prisoners of war

I was arrested by Cong San at 7 a.m. on August 2, 1975, in Ba The, Nui Sap, An Giang Province. At 4 p.m. that day, they took me from Nui Sap to Long Xuyen Province by motor boat. They placed me in a dark tiny room where one could only sit but could not lie down. For a while, I felt tickled at my feet. I touched to see what it was. Oh, my God, it was terrible, there was a layer of worms about an inch deep, they crawled on the floor and tried to get to my feet, my body. Unable to bear the tickle, I squashed every where but could not destroy all of them. I was kept in this room approximately 20 days. During these 20 days, Cong San took turns beating me to find out the remaining CIA plan, where the weapons were buried and where the Hoa Hao's military people were stationed, etc. The reasons why they investigated me were because I was a member of Hoa Hao, was in Central Hoa Hao Buddhist Committee, was a henchman of Senator A, and also was in Headquarters of Protecting An Giang Province Committee during April 30, 1975, May 1, 2, 1975. I was the one who directed the Hoa Hao members to open the Central Support Maintenance An Giang Province's weapon storage, and delivered weapons to them. I also directly commanded the 2 ships which were full of weapons, and foods that I took from the storage of Tan An Temple, Co Tu, Long Kien.

a. At big prison in Long Xuyen

After 20 days with no information, the Cong San took me to a big prison in Long Xuyen and my crimes was hiding from reeducation period. The big prison in Long Xuyen at that time had quite a few

prisoners about 1,200. I was kept in room #6. We had 80 prisoners in this room and I was number 81. Eighty one prisoners were in the small, low ceiling, and dark room. We had to lie on our sides, back to back, in order to have enough room, we lay down and packed just like in a sardine can. Here, day or night we were hand cuffed, our feet chained, we lay down like a dead body, with no movement. We had two meals a day, 6 a.m. and 4 p.m. Water was contained in a dirty nylon can, not boiled and not purified. For every meal we were supplied with two small bowl of rice and a little salt. For the whole time we were there, we didn't have a chance to take a bath, brush teeth or wash our faces.

b. Can Tho Prison (September 2, 1975 - November 3, 1975)

On September 2, 1975, Cong San moved me and approximately 150 others who they labelled as the most dangerous group to Can Tho prison. Here in the prison we were still hand cuffed, and our feet were chained, day and night. We lay down on the concrete floor, with no bath, and no mosquitoes net, or pillow, or clothes to change. As a result, we were itching and we all had scabies disease. This disease was exactly fitting the expression "scabies as a piece of crusty rice". We had this all over our bodies.

On October 15, 1975, Cong San allowed us to be at the prison's lawn to listen to their lectures. One Cong San cadre told us: "During the time you were in a camp, you showed that you are progressing very well, some of you were repented and declared wholeheartedly to the revolution. Those who are awake will be released soon, those who have not must then follow the example to declare all they know about Americans."

and their CIA system that are still remaining before running away. We like to remind you that the revolution doesn't want to keep you, the time of returning soon or late is up to your ability and sincerity." Thereafter, they gave us a self-declared statement, this was the third statement since I was in the camp. Later on, every single week or 10 days, they still gave us another statement to let us know that we did not frankly declare and suggested that we needed to do it so the revolution would be satisfied and allowed us to be reunited with our families. There were 60 detailed parts in this self-statement, but Cong San paid special attention to the following sections:

- The CIA system of America
- Identified to the revolution those who were associated with the Americans, and the puppets.
- Identified CIA agents who are still in the country or escaped abroad.
- Identified or list names whom relatives married Americans, went after Americans, and those whose relatives are abroad.
- The Cong San's aim was to destroy and eliminate all the American influence in Vietnam, thus those who were associated with American such as: were good friend with American, worked for them, had daughter married to them, will be strictly followed after and punished. To Cong San, the most severe offense is associated with America. The victim families still in Vietnam, that were close to Americans, are suffered and imprisoned.

The Cong San cadres also informed us that the reeducation period was beginning. We were required to use all of our efforts in studying to achieve the standard level. Achieving the standard level was when we truthfully declare to the revolution all we knew about Americans, or puppets and identified those who owned blood to the people and the revolution. Beginning on October 15, 1975 at 8 a.m., and 1 p.m., we were unfastened from all the chains and told to go to the lawn for studying.

3. Studying to change ideas

This studying lasted a month and repeated 9 lessons.

- The imperialist America invaded our country and therefore is our enemy.
- Puppet administrators were an element, a servant for imperialist American.
- Puppet soldiers were an element, a servant for imperialist American and puppet administrators.
- The causes of shameful, painful failure of imperialist American in Vietnam, and the completely fell of puppet administrators in Saigon.
- The meaning of great victory "Anti-American from our people".
- The results of shameful failure of imperialist American and Saigon puppet administrators.
- The revolution and people's immediate duty, and functions.
- Labor is honor.
- Chairman Ho lives forever in our work.

Average is 2, 3 days after every lesson was a discussion part, self declaration, and reported the imperialist American's activities and puppet administrators.

The main points that Cong San usually repeated during the course of studying were: "Imperialist Americans invaded South Vietnam by modern colonialism policy, and created the Saigon puppet administrators to be looked as a scene. Imperialist Americans are unfair, therefore, they were pitifully defeated and their economics were going down because of Vietnam war. While studying, the prisoners should realize that imperialist Americans are our deathly enemies, and thus it is necessary to report their activities which are still affecting Vietnam. The followers were left by their masters, American, at the last minute, and still followed their master's soles. The CIA agent such as: Ky, Truong followed their masters and now are hungry and wander around in America. These men, day by day, stand in front of the restaurant to ask for the food left over. All their lives, they were servants for their American masters, but when they are losing their positions, their masters have no pity for them and at the same time have chased them away just like a mangy, stinky dogs." On the Cong San revolution paper, there was a picture of vice president Nguyen Cao Ky who chewed a beef bone that was left on the ground in front of the restaurant. Speaking of reeducation, their main goal is forcing the prisoners to declare so they can eliminate and destroy the American influence in Vietnam.

4. Labor reestablishment

On November 3, 1975, at 4 a.m., some of us were called to the