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SAIGON, 26th April, 1960

THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

SAIGON

Sir:

We, the undersigned, representatives of a group of notables, personalities, intellectuals, with all propensities and in all good will; having noticed the actual dangerous political situation we cannot remain indifferent any longer to the very life of the country. Therefore, today we request an official call on you in order to present you the truth, with the hope the Government will pay attention and quickly alter its policies in order to save the situation and bring the people out of the enclosure of peril.

Let us look back at the time when you were overseas. During the course of eight or nine years, the Vietnamese people had to experience many miseries from disasters of war: forced from French domination to Japanese occupation, from Revolution to resistance, from false nationalism to conceal communism to independence to cover colonialism, from this terror to that one, from one sacrifice to the other - in brief, a series of promises and then all hope became disappointment.

Therefore, when you were about to return to this country all the people had the hope, that under your leadership, they could live a secure life in order to make a living, rebuild fallen homes, restore abandoned land, remain no longer in a condition of obliging to "worship in the morning this regime and in the evening that regime" no longer be assaulted by a cruel and oppressing faction, no longer be treated as coolies, no longer be exploited by monopolies, no longer suffering under corrupt officials displaying their power - in brief, had hope of living a life with some security, to enjoy a regime with some justice and freedom. All the people hoped that you were the man for the situation and would bring their hopes to reality.

Then you returned. The Geneva Agreement of 1954 brought the fighting to an end and ended the disasters of war; gradually the French Expeditionary Army returned home and, concretely, there was entire independence in South VIET-NAM; in addition, there was moral encouragement and there was a giant increase in foreign aid from the Free World. With so many advantageous political factors, added to blessed geographical conditions of a rich and fertile country with excess agricultural, forestry and fish products for export, South VIET-NAM would definitely win in the historical competition with North VIET-NAM, in order to win over the people and bring the country to a point of hope, freedom and happiness.

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Now, nearly six years later with vital conveniences which cannot be denied, what has the Government done, Where has it taken South VIET-NAM, What part of the hopes of the people has been fulfilled. We are trying to make an objective check of the situation without flattery and without slanderous fabrication exactly in line with the spirit of construction for which you yourself have often appealed, with the hope that the Government will alter its policies in order to save an extremely grave situation for the very existence of the country.

Politics:

Though an anonymous regime which the colonialists created and protected has been overthrown and feudal organizations of factions and parties which oppressed the people, have been destroyed, however, under the Republican regime you have built, the people have not yet received a more secure life nor more freedom. A Constitution made for the sake of formality, a National Assembly which always moves in the same direction, non-democratic elections, all methods and "staged plays" copied from communist dictatorial regime, cannot help the people to make comparison with North VIET-NAM.- Continuous arrests that have filled the prisons and jails to overflowing as they are at this very moment; then the public opinion has been silenced as well as that of the press; even the will of the people revealed by open elections is also crushed underfoot and scorned, such as during the recent election of the second national Legislature, causing the people not to care and to be discouraged.- Religious sects and political parties were eliminated and "groups" or "movements" replaced them; these replacements have resulted in further oppressions to the people and have not protected them from the hand of communism. Evidence: religious sect areas which were previously deadly grounds to the Communists are now no more a secure zone and furthermore have become the actual areas of Viet-Minh guerilla activities as they are anywhere in the rest of the country. Therefore, it has been proved, that although feudalistic, religious sect organizations were effective anti-communist elements. Eliminating these elements has opened the road to the Viet Cong and unconsciously "lengthened the sword of the enemy", while a more realistic political handling could have linked them together and lead them to reinforce the anti-communist fight.

Today, the people are demanding freedom. You must, Sir, liberalize the regime, expand democracy, grant minimum civic rights, recognize opposition in order to let the people speak without fear so that grievances and resentment will last no longer, and then, when making a comparison with North VIET-NAM, the people of the South will see the value of true freedom and democracy and only then will make any effort to sacrifice themselves to protect this freedom and democracy.

Administration:

Although the country is reduced in size, the number of civil servants is larger, but the actual work is not being done because the Government, modeling communism, is bringing out political parties to control the Nation, to divide the upper crust of lower echelons, to sow distrust among individuals "in the movement" or "outside the group", to plant distrust among each other; while the real power is not in the hands of the responsible individuals, orders are actually issued from anywhere on the decision of an irresponsible "family" man, slowing down administrative machinery, paralyzing initiative, discouraging good will, at the same time that not one month is the press not smeared with incidents of corruptness in public funds which cannot be concealed. It is an example of this graft to another, from one million to the other.

The administrative machinery which has been slowed down and is about to be paralyzed, needs to be urgently repaired: but proper people in the correct position; restore discipline from the top to the bottom and authority which must be in accordance with responsibility; take effect, initiative, honesty and thrift as the standards for promotion; let technical ability to be respected; get rid of the one-party idea; do not have a "family" mind; punish influence speculator bring to the light corruptness and abuse of power and then the situation can be saved, the human pride restore the faith in an honest and just Government recovered.

Military:

The French Expeditionary Army left the country and a Republican Army was formed thanks to America's aid in supplying modern equipment. However, in a group of eminent youth with an air of pride such as the Army, which should only know that honor is to be respected and that blood and sweat must be used to protect the fatherland, where there is no place for the "family" or "faction" mind, there also the Government has brought (?) in the spirit of the one-party, the "Phong-Trao" or the "Can-Lao", thus dividing men of the same unit, planting distrust among friends of the same ranks, using loyalty in the party and agreement with upper echelons as the standard for promotion, creating extremely harmful results; and the recent Tay-Ninh incident is only a small warning of danger.

The Army is the pillar for protecting the country, opposing invasion, eliminating rebels; it is only to serve the fatherland not because of a party or faction. It must be immediately reorganized: eradicate the "faction" and "family" idea in the ranks; revamp morale; create a high tradition of national pride; use combat performance; the will to serve and bravery as the standard for advancement, encourage the troops to respect the officers and the

officers to respect the troops. Eliminate all distrust, jealousy and resentment among friends in the same ranks.

Then, when there is an emergency, the Nation will have a man-like army, with one mind and one heart, to protect our most precious fatherland, VIET-NAM.

Economics and Social Affairs:

A rich and fertile country with a surplus of food and clothing, public funds which do not have to bear military expenditures, war claims, profits from Government bonds, colossal foreign aid, a new market for allies full of good will to invest in commercial enterprise,... so many suitable conditions to turn South VIET-NAM into a prosperous and productive area. But, yet, at present, people are unemployed with no possessions and short of money, rice is plentiful but cannot be sold; stalls in the market are full but no one is buying; sources of income are in the hands of a group of speculators using the party and the group as a screen to conceal the monopolies for their private interests. At the same time, tens of thousands of people are being mobilized for hardship and toil, to leave their work and go far from their homes and fields, separated from their parents, wives and children, to take up a life in collectivism in order to construct beautiful but useless Agrovilles which tire the people, lose their affection, increase their resentment and for most of all, give an additional opportunity for propaganda by the enemy.

Economy is the foundation of Society and public opinion insures the endurance of a regime. The Government must quickly relieve the obstacles hindering economic development, get rid of all forms of monopoly and speculation, welcome all investments of foreign friends as well as natives, encourage commercial enterprise, develop industry, employ laborers in order to reduce unemployment. At the same time, it must halt all forms of using man as a coolie to build Agrovilles, then Economy will flourish again, the civilian will live in peace and be content with his occupation, and Society will be reconstructed quickly in freedom and democracy.

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Sir,

Perhaps this is the first time you have heard such fiery criticism unpleasant to your ear and contrary to your wishes. However, Sir, these words are entirely the truth, a bitter and harsh truth which you never have been able to hear, because unintentionally or intentionally, people have covered it up all around you, and because of the nature of your high position, did not

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let you know up to the point that the truth will explode in soaring waves of hatred and resentment, which will not be able to be stopped, of a terribly suffering people standing up to break the chains that restrain them, to clean up that which is foul, and to eradicate the injustices which have enveloped and oppressed them.

Because we truly wish that the fatherland avoid the life of horrible days of roaming about, that to-day we, with no fear of consequences to ourselves for our attitude, have come to sound the alert and ring the bell of the pressing danger in order to awaken the Government.

Up to now, we have remained silent, wishing to let the Government to be free to organize and take action. However, now the situation is pressing and we have noticed that we have the mission, in the situation of a "nation of ups and downs; the boors holding responsibilities" of speaking the truth, awakening public opinion, alerting the people, and achieving opposition in order to illuminate the road and urge the Government to quickly alter its policies to save the situation, protect the Republican regime, preserve the future of the country, and hope that the future will be bright for Vietnamese people and that they will enjoy peace and prosperity in Freedom and Progress.

Respectfully,

- 1.- TRAN-VAN-VAN, Graduate from PARIS School of High Commercial Studies (H.E.O.); Former Minister of Economy and Planning.-
- 2.- PHAN-KHAO-SUU, Agricultural Engineer; Former Minister of Agriculture; Former Minister of Labor.-
- 3.- TRAN-VAN-HUONG, Professor of Secondary Schools; Former Prefect of SAIGON-CHOLONS City.-
- 4.- NGUYEN-LUU-VIEN, Medicine Doctor; Former Lecturer at the Medicine Faculty; Former Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees.-
- 5.- HUYNH-KIM-HUU, Medicine Doctor; Former Minister of Public Health.-
- 6.- PHAN-HUY-QUAT, Medicine Doctor; Former Minister of National Education; Former Minister of National Defense.- (Dai-Viet)
- 7.- TRAN-VAN-LY; Former Governor of Centre of VIET-NAM.- (Catholic Leader)
- 8.- NGUYEN-TIEN-HY, Medicine Doctor.-
- 9.- TRAN-VAN-DO, Medicine Doctor; Former Minister of Foreign Affairs; Former Chief of the Vietnamese Delegation at the 1954 Geneva Conference.-
- 10.- LE-NGOC-CHAN, Attorney at Law; Former Minister of National Defense.-
- 11.- LE-QUANG-LUAT, Attorney at Law, Former Minister of Information and Propaganda; Former Government's Delegate for North VIET-NAM.-
- 12.- LUONG-TRONG-TUONG, Graduate from High School of Public Works; Former Minister of Economy.- (Entered Govt. directed by Premier Ngo as Officer of Hoa Hao)
- 13.- NGUYEN-TANG-NGUYEN, Medicine Doctor; Former Minister of Labor and Youth.-
- 14.- PHAM-HUU-CHUONG, Medicine Doctor; Former Minister of Public Health and Social Action.-
- 15.- TRAN-VAN-TUYEN, Attorney at Law; Former Minister of Information and Propaganda.-
- 16.- TA-CHUONG-PHUNG; Former Mandarin, Chief of Province of Binh-Dinh.-
- 17.- TRAN-LE-CHAT, Bachelor of Arts from the Vietnamese old System of Triennial Mandarin Examination, 1903 session, born in 1874.-
- 18.- Reverend HO-VAN-VUI, Former Catholic Vicar of Saigon Vicarage; actually Vicar of THA-LA Vicarage, Trang-Bang, province of Tay-Minh.-