

VIEWS OF TRAN NGOC CHAU ON GVN/NLF TALKS

The several items following were recently sent me by Tran Ngoc Chau, formerly lieutenant Colonel in ARVN, now a Deputy from Kim Hoa (when he was twice the Province Chief), and Secretary General of the National Assembly, House of Deputies. Formerly a battalion commander in the Viet Minh, rallying to the Bao Dai Government in 1950, Chau was perhaps the leading innovator and analyst of pacification techniques in Vietnam and was first head of the Revolutionary Development Cadre Program. I know Chau as a close friend and, as do many other Americans, respect him as a patriot.

Among the items sent by Chau (not reproduced below) is a hand drawn diagram headed: "This is how the GVN and NVN are competing in winning over the support of the people in South Vietnam." With the "people in South Vietnam" as a box in the center, Chau shows them as appealed to, on the one side, by successive boxes representing various vehicles ranging from the DRV (attracting "communists of the first degree"), the NLF (attracting "communists of the second degree"), Trinh Dinh Thao's alliance (for "communists of the third degree") and the proposal of coalition government (appealing to "communists of the fourth degree"); whereas on the other side, non-communist vehicles encouraged by the GVN (and U.S.) are represented by the GVN alone, appealing to "anti-communists of the first degree": "Everyone else is accused or condemned as pro-communist."

Chau is now regarded as a leader of the nationalist opposition to the present GVN, within the National Assembly. He has for several years favored ceasefire and direct talks between the GVN and the NLF in Vietnamese politics. Were it not for the immunity granted by his membership in the National Assembly, he would undoubtedly be arrested by the current GVN leadership for his recent expressions of these long-held views (as represented in the accompanying translations). That immunity is probably not absolute. His vulnerability has undoubtedly been increased by his recent public disclosure that a Viet Cong captain now in police custody is his brother (another brother is a North

Vietnamese official), even though these family relationships have been known to the government for some time and represent, as he put it, a "familiar drama" in the conflict in South Vietnam.

WHY MUST WE TALK WITH NORTH VIETNAM
AND THE NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT
By Deputy TRAN-NGOC-CHAU

On January 15, 1969, the Quyet-Tien Daily published an interview with me about attitudes towards the NLF. To make the matter clearer, I would like to add the following statement.

Deputy TRAN-NGOC-CHAU

Not Gone With the Wind

From the beginning of 1945 to the end of 1949, I had the privilege of wearing torn clothes, walking bare-footed, living from hand to mouth, working without pay and living in straitened circumstances along the Truong Son Mountains to participate in the resistance, taking up arms to oppose foreign invasion.

In 1950, I changed ranks and rallied to the Nationalist camp. Since then, I have worn French uniforms and American shoes, lived in plenty and received high salaries, enjoyed comforts from Hai Phong and Hung Yen to the Ben Hai and Ca Mau, participating in the resistance against the Communists.

The time I have spent on this side is threefold or fourfold the time spent on the other side; feats of arms I have accomplished on this side also outnumber those on the other side. My authority and privileges on this side are also superior to those on the other side. My way of life and my thoughts are also more at ease on this side than on the other side. I have also more friends and relatives here than there.

Thus, there is no reason why I should support a victory of the other camp (NVN and the NLF) whether on the battlefield or at the conference table.

But we must also sincerely admit that if the great majority of our people could enjoy their basic rights under a good regime, they themselves would have long ago been determined to defend themselves against any form of Communist propaganda and terrorism. Thus, the Communists would never have been able to use minority rule to sway us and to make

it necessary for us to cope with them for so many years.

In view of the above, I believe that the Communists are guilty of provoking the war, but that we ourselves, non-Communist leaders, have been incapable of improving society, of bringing confidence to the people, and of fully utilizing our capabilities to destroy the Communists.

And it is because of the above-mentioned inability that the Communists have been able to expand and attract a great part of the population to them, while we ourselves must depend on our ally, the United States, to fight the Communists.

Until the day comes when the U.S. changes its methods, we must face our enemy in the front and our ally in the back.

We cannot prolong this war under such conditions.

An early end must be put to the war so as to save the great majority of the population from death, from infirmity, and from bankruptcy caused by the war.

Both sides -- we and the Communists -- must put an end to the war for the sake of humanity.

Realistic Reason:

There are only three ways of achieving peace in this war:

1. Surrender to the Communists
2. Defeat the Communists
3. Make mutual concessions.

Of course, we cannot, nor is there any reason for us, to surrender to the Communists in any form. At any rate, we remain stronger than than they.

Defeat the Communists? We have been defeating them successively day after day. Whoever opens the daily news bulletins and statistical reports from 1959 to the present would certainly see that the total number of Viet Cong killed stands at millions by body count, and that the population that we control comes up to twenty or thirty million.

Therefore, if we choose to defeat the Communists with the old strategy, it would mean that the war would go on indefinitely-endlessly. Such a situation would be tantamount to continuing the present war with promises but without any end in sight.

A number of anti-Communist elements whose incomes increase and whose relatives and friends dodge military service have chosen this self-deceiving formula.

Therefore, if the two above formulas are not chosen, we must make mutual concessions to put an end to the war and bring peace to our country.

Conditions to End the War:

But on what basis must concessions be made? This is quite a problem which we must analyze.

As everyone of us knows:

In the past -- in spite of statements and promises of peace -- our government has advocated that the war must be ended on the basis that "NVN must withdraw its invasion troops", the Viet Cong must "chieu hoi" and surrender to the government, and that, even if they would do so, only elements recognized as "good" can participate in political as "individuals" in the "national community".

The above conditions require that NVN and the Viet Cong must lay down their arms and surrender-no more, no less.

In my heart and that of all non-Communist people, we hope that NVN and the Viet Cong will act that way.

Our attitude in resigning ourselves to sit down at the conference table in Paris on January 18, 1969, with a delegation equal in number to that of the United States delegation, with the presence (known to the entire world) of the National Liberation Front indicated that our government had given up the above unrealistic policy of restoring peace.

What a shame!

When the other camp consists of 8 Vietnamese facing our camp which consists of 4 Vietnamese and 4 Americans.

But let's look into the reality, into the bones and blood of the people and into the scenes of destruction of the country, and thus continue to seek peace.

The most loud-talking anti-Communist elements should raise their voices and tell people what we should do in the face of this tragic and shameful situation.

Should we accept the Communists and thus maintain Vietnamese personality (because we all still are Vietnamese) or accept dependence on the United States not necessarily to be anti-Communist, but rather to depend on the United States to lead us anywhere it wants?

Is there anyone who forgets that:

In 1963 the United States accused President Ngo-Dinh-Diem (who had been elected by the people in accordance with the Constitution) of repressing the Buddhists and attempting to come to agreement with NVN in order to come to the November 1, 1963 coup?

And that in 1966 the United States supported the most terrible repressions of the Buddhists by tanks and planes, and today (the U.S.) compels the Republic of Viet Nam to sit at the conference table, not only with North Viet Nam, but also with the National Liberation Front?

But reality, however shameful, still does not necessarily require us to choose between "dependence on the United States" and "acceptance of the Communists".

Reality still gives us a chance to choose another road, different from slavery (Communist or foreign).

Responsibilities of the Nationalists:

That road is one of nationalism, pure nationalism, which can overcome all temptations, influences and controls by both the Communists and the foreigners.

Those Vietnamese who sincerely love their compatriots and their country will unite to build that new road.

If there are Vietnamese who sided with the French, or follow the Americans or the Nationalist camp out of horror and hatred of the dictatorial nature and the brutal actions of the Communists, why can't there be other Vietnamese who sided with the Communists out of horror and hatred toward the arbitrary and despotic nature and the selfish and cruel actions of some of us?

In the most cruel and corrupt regimes, there still must be generous and honest elements.

The road to save the Vietnamese nation now and in the future in South Viet Nam, in North Viet Nam, and all over the Vietnamese territory, will not be built by the Vietnamese who follow the American, follow the Russians or follow the Chinese, but rather will be built by the Nationalistic Vietnamese.

In the face of that new reality and those new requirements, the Republic of Viet Nam should bravely talk peace directly with North Viet Nam and the National Liberation Front.

Talk with North Viet Nam in order to reach agreement on a common framework for the future of both the South and the North, and talk with the National Liberation Front in order to end the war on the territory which lies South of the 17th parallel.

Viet Nam peace cannot be settled completely between the Republic of Viet Nam and the National Liberation Front because on the other side of the parallel North Viet Nam is still ready to stir up trouble and support the war.

Nor can Viet Nam peace be settled completely between the Republic of Viet Nam and North Viet Nam because the National Liberation Front, which North Viet Nam will never abandon, is still on this side of the parallel.

We have the right to call the National Liberation Front by a hundred terms which are bad, vile and most servile, but we must admit that this organization exists in reality, and that there could never be any peace talks which could bring an end to the war if we did not agree to make some concessions to this organization and thus to satisfy some of its minimum demands.

We have done this before with regard to some armed opposition groups. Why can't we do it again with regard to the National Liberation Front? Is it because this Front is Communist or dependent on the Communists?

That is the truth.

But at present, both we and the U.S. have realized that our army and the army, technical ability and resources of the most advanced modern power in the world can't exterminate them and because of that, we are forced to talk with them at the conference table.

Whether we like it or not, we are compelled to discuss the methods of ending the war in order to restore peace.

But peace is never restored by means of a combat of wits and open discussions at the conference table.

Peace can be restored only by means of acceptance by the concerned parties.

Responsibilities of the Concerned Parties:

Let us ask ourselves who are the concerned parties and what understandings and concessions are possible?

The U.S.:

First, let us speak about the U.S. We must speak about the U.S. first because in the past the U.S. has proven its power through the evolution and shifts of power among the patriots and scoundrels among the leadership of the Vietnamese nation, and at present the U.S. is still the most influential power from our local level to the central government and from the companies and battalions to higher echelons.

If the U.S. had withdrawn some assistance items (as in the recent rice affair) or some supply items, certainly what happened to President Diem, to the regime prior to 1963, would have happened to President Thieu, to the present regime.

With its available open and secret power, the U.S. is the main obstacle which blocks Viet Nam on the road to war or peace. If the U.S. does not agree with the RVN.

Therefore, let us demand that the U.S. reconsider its attitude at the Paris peace negotiation and at other peace talks to come.

It is precisely the presence of the U.S. at the conference table which has:

- a. encouraged North Viet Nam and the NLF to refuse to talk with the RVN;
- b. pushed the RVN back into a subordinate position;
- c. escalated its role in the war, that the Communists always make propaganda about;
- d. and consequently, caused the majority of the people in the world and the American people to oppose the war in Viet Nam;
- e. made the most pro-American nationalists feel ashamed and hate the U.S.;
- f. made the North Vietnamese feel more proud and enthusiastic because they can sit at the same level as the U.S.; and
- g. made the Southeast Asian nations friendly to the U.S. doubt the goodwill of the U.S.

The presence of the U.S. not only entails the above consequences, but moreover the whole world knows that it is the U.S. that took the helm and forced the RVN to sit at the conference table with North Viet Nam and the NLF.

In view of the past disastrous consequences, and the obstacles that can be forecast, the U.S. must put an end to its absurd role in

Paris and in other peace talks, the U.S. cannot use the fact that it has troops fighting in Viet Nam to maintain this negotiating role, because the American troops came to Viet Nam at the request of the GVN in order to meet a political need.

Peace talks are a way of solving problems on the political level. Only the RVN - a sovereign nation - has the unique competence to solve (its) political problems.

If one pretends that the U.S. needs to be present in order to solve the military problems, it will be all the more absurd.

Because military decisions must always depend on the political ones.

Assuming that we accept this reasoning, the U.S. only has the right to designate military representatives who participate within the RVN's delegation. It does not have the right (to have) an equal or separate delegation.

The righteous cause of both the U.S. and the RVN lies in these details.

The RVN is ready to conclude separate agreements with the U.S. regarding the guarantees concerning the safety and the interests of the U.S. in Viet Nam. With these guarantees, the U.S. should let the RVN negotiate directly with North Viet Nam and the NLF.

(I don't know whether the American negotiators in Paris feel ashamed when they face, not the U.S.S.R. or Communist China, but the delegates of a segment of a little country. I, personally feel very ashamed over the situation of the V.N. negotiators who must sit together with the American delegation in order to talk with Vietnamese even though they are Communists.)

The Republic of Viet Nam:

As for the RVN, we must be determined to put an end to the military war.

But we can't surrender to the Communists.

We will accept in sequence:

- a. a total cease-fire;
- b. a number of representatives designated (chi dinh) by the NLF in the village councils, the provincial councils and in the National Assembly. The ratio of these representatives must be that of a minority.
- c. the incorporation of the NLF armed forces into the RVNAF.
- d. representatives of the NLF may stand for election to the organs provided for in the Constitution;
- e. a general election for the reunification of the two regions within 10 years;
- f. an international police organization will supervise and arbitrate the implementation of the above clauses.

Of course, such a plan must be approved by the National Assembly which will amend 1 or 2 articles of the Constitution concerning election procedures.

Once again I must stress that if we want peace, we must be realistic and make concessions.

In Italy, the Communist party is the strongest party. However, the Italian nation is still not controlled by the Communists.

In Viet Nam the Communists have not and will not triumph over us by force of arms. But they have come to the conference table with political prestige.

Why don't we accept replacing this military struggle with a political one? We will win.

Because only when faced with a direct Communist threat will the Nationalist parties unite. The South Vietnamese people don't like Communism and will choose the Nationalist parties immediately after terrorism and danger have ceased.

North Viet Nam and the NLF:

We must acknowledge that they have scored some success when they

forced the U.S. to stop the bombing and come to the conference table as their equal.

But results are only a possibility.

We hope that North Viet Nam and the NLF must realize that they can never conquer South Viet Nam:

- a. by force of arms. Despite the fact they have initiated the most violent attacks;
- b. by a coup d'etat. Despite the fact that many similar attempts have occurred.

Even though the RVN has not yet defeated North Viet Nam and the NLF this year, nor next year, certainly the RVN can still continue to exterminate the Communists and prevent them from winning.

If North Viet Nam and the NLF see this reality clearly, we hope they will thrust the U.S. aside in order to sincerely seek with us a peace solution among Vietnamese, even though they are of different political views.

If agreement is reached:

Assuming that peace is restored based on concessions made by the RVN, what will happen?

The NLF will become an open political party, but it must observe the Constitution, especially Article 4.

Faced with this direct and present threat, non-Communist parties will be forced to come to an agreement, make mutual concessions and form an alliance to cope with it.

The population will have the free opportunity, without fear of terrorism or danger, of choosing the side that will secure for it the greatest material welfare and spiritual guarantees.

In this environment there will certainly occur a tense competition between the non-Communist side and the NLF.

Precisely this competition will help our society progress quickly, and our fellow countrymen easily find the righteous cause.

And because of this, all open or latent conflict due to religious and regional differences among the non-Communist people will be erased. And only because they do not have a serious adversary to cope with.

In the new political struggle, the Army will no longer play the main role, but the political parties, religions and the people will have to directly and totally resist the Communists.

Is the Constitution Violated?

Many persons deem that it is unconstitutional to express the view of accepting the NLF since this Front is a tool of the NVN Communists.

The Constitution clearly forbids in Article 4 as follows:

"The Republic of Viet Nam opposes Communism in any form. Every activity designed to publicize or carry out Communism is prohibited."

So, when discussing the reasons why we must talk peace with the NLF or with North Viet Nam does not mean making propaganda or carrying out Communism. Provided that the above discussions only bring up realistic data and do not praise or encourage people to follow the Communists.

We ask ourselves, when the National Assembly authorizes the government to talk peace directly with North Viet Nam (authentic Communists) can this decision be interpreted as an action aimed at making propaganda or carrying out Communism or not?

Of course not.

So the proposal (and not the decision) to talk with the NLF (which is only a Communist tool) cannot be considered unconstitutional. Especially when representatives of our government are actually talking with the representatives of North Viet Nam and the NLF in Paris (despite the fact that both parties still declare they do not recognize each other).

In summary, it is unconstitutional only when the promoters of the idea renounce the RVN regime in order to demand the recognition of the NLF as a true government, but it cannot be unconstitutional only to

propose the acceptance of the NLF as a political party that must observe the RVN Constitution and its incorporation into the whole RVN structure as a minority element.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I must define clearly once again my position concerning peace talks with North Viet Nam and the NLF as follows:

1. The concerned parties must be determined to put an end to this savage war.
2. The U.S. must withdraw from all peace talks with North Viet Nam and the NLF. Only when this has been done will North Viet Nam and the NLF accept direct peace talks with the RVN.
3. The RVN will resolve with North Viet Nam the future regime of a Free and Unified Nation of Viet Nam.
4. The RVN will accept the NLF as a political party provided that it honors the Constitution. There may be some amendments to the Constitution with regard to election procedures.
5. The armed forces of the NLF must be integrated into the Armed Forces of the Republic of Viet Nam.
6. The Nationalist political parties must automatically ally to form a majority capable of checking the NLF.
7. An international force will supervise and arbitrate the implementation of the above clauses.

With the concept presented in this document, I still maintain the position of a Nationalist who puts the integrity of the body and the mind of the Vietnamese above all other ideologies or interests.

I never accept Communism, but I also never accept our subordination to a foreign country. Because subordination to either side brings the nation war and destruction as the past and the present have proven.

Saigon, January 26, 1969

Deputy Tran Ngoc Chau

Deputy TRAN-NGOC-CHAU

Secretary General
House of Deputies
National Assembly
Republic of Vietnam

Answers to an interview given to "Chanh-Dao" Daily on
Venerable Thich-Thien-Minh's sentence.

Q - What do you think about Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh's sentence?

A - I think that it only makes the existing discussion between the Administration and the majority of the Buddhist laymen deeper, especially considering the present national political requirements. The Administration should calm down the opposition to pave the way for a true national great union to strongly support the government against communist propaganda which will help the South win over the communists in the peace negotiations as well as in the war.

Q - Do you believe that the charges by the government against Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh are impartial?

A - I don't believe so for the following facts:

1. Illegal arms and leaflets had been found at the Minh Mang Students' compound in 1966 and students arrested for pro-communism. The Administration only sued and condemned the students but not the Rector or the compound's Proctor. Why is Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh sued and condemned in this case?
2. The communists have attempted to assassinate Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh once making him a crippled man and thus there is no reason why he should act in favor of Communism. Besides, although he has criticized the Administration in several instances, Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh also set forth his non-communist national stand in some others.
3. The Quang Duc center is owned by the Buddhist church, not a private property of Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh. Why is it then confiscated because of the condemnation?

Q - Suppose you are a responsible government authority and receive a report from your subordinate security agency on the Quang-Duc center with all such evidence, how would you deal with it?

A - I would:

1. Act as the Administration did in the similar case that had taken place previously at the Minh Mang student's compound.
2. Take Administrative rather than judiciary measures against the actual responsible authorities of that center.
3. Notify the Buddhist church to prevent similar cases from taking place.

Q - How would you react in the capacity of a representative?

A - Along with my colleagues who have the same viewpoint as mine I will bring the case up to the Supreme court.

Q - Do you believe that our justice is impartial and fair?

A - I think that the courts-martial's authority is too great and absolute resulting in the serious violation of the citizen's freedom.

Q - What attitude of the Buddhist church do you think is appropriate?

A - Both the Buddhist church and the Administration must act after the experience they have had since 1963, which means they ought to avoid any collapse which would weaken the nationalist regime in favor of Communism and foreign countries.

Q - Do you think that the Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh's sentence will make the Buddhist and Catholic followers hate each other because President Thieu is a Catholic?

A - I don't think so, because I have many Catholic friends who have disagreed with Administration in this affair. They also think the followers of any religion ought to respect fairness and be united so as to effectively fight against Communism.

Q - What do you think about the decision of the Ministry of Information to close the Chanh Dao daily because this daily has published an article protesting the sentence against Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh?

A - Closing dailies has become a general rule of the Administration to control the press and force them to follow the government information policy.

I think that this is a great mistake which makes our people and the world suspicion the democratic and free regime of the Republic of Vietnam.

By closing the Chanh Dao daily, the Administration has proved to lack self-confidence in the punishment of Venerable (Thich) Thien Minh.

The President of the
Republic of Vietnam

Mr. President:

We, the undersigned Representatives and Senators, have the honor to submit this letter to you to express our emotion toward the judgment of Venerable Thien Minh in the present national political situation.

Mr. President,

Even if there might be infiltration of some political speculators or pro-communist elements as in some organizations, the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (seated at An Quang Pagoda) still represents the majority of truly nationalistic monks, nuns and laymen throughout our country.

It is, however, unfortunate that for the last several years, differences and opposition kept on increasing between this church and the government and the government had applied many strong measures against this church giving the Buddhist monks, nuns and laymen the impression of being brushed out of the anti-communist forces.

In this state of mind and while the courts - martial are still holding absolute authorities beyond the limits of the Constitution, the sentence of Venerable Thien Minh only adds resentment of the Buddhist church and of the monks and nuns toward the government.

Mr. President,

We think that the government has full strength to crush all opposition which may take place, but in continuing to do so, the world believes that either our regime could only exist thanks to violence or there are too many pro-communist elements among the Vietnamese people.

The concept which holds that victory at the conference table depends upon victory on the battlefield is no longer one hundred per cent correct. The Vietnam war has proved that world opinion plays a decisive part at the conference table as well as on the battlefield.

If it was not for public opinion, the Allied Forces could have been increased to millions after the Tet of Mau Than and we would have surely

been able to end the war faster.

Also, if it was not thanks to public opinion, the Communists would have surely not been able to force the U.S. to the conference table with their purely military pressure.

We also think that the Buddhist masses are not going to actively struggle against the government because of the judgment of Venerable Thien Minh but their passive attitude in hate and humiliation would make impossible the national Great Union which you advocate.

In that case, caught in between the anti-communist masses and the pro-communist forces, the Administration would have to be vigilant to cope with the large masses which are more and more opposed to the government.

This situation would compel us to:

- a. Keep on increasing our Army numerical strength for pacification and masses control purposes (you have announced before the Tet that the government had controlled 90% of the population or 12 million people. At present, our armed forces and those of our Allies have reached 1,600,000 which means that out of 7 old and young men and women or out of 3 adults, 1 soldier is required).
- b. Increase our numerical strength and war expenses which will result in lowering the standard of living of the servicemen, civil servants, cadres and people (The salary of a captain having five children is just enough for twenty days thrifty expenses).
- c. To cause the people to question the honesty of their leaders (no one believes that a Minister could live on a 30,000 VN \$ salary.)

We are sure you would not like such a situation which would only drag on the war and make the people and army men dissatisfied and ready to be rushed into political troubles which might be more awful than the November 1, 1963 political upheaval.

Mr. President,

In presenting to you some arguments and producing evidence with figures

we earnestly hope that you will think of the Great Union of the Nationalist Masses as a political factor necessary to solve all the country's difficulties and to drive our country to the victory over the Communists at the negotiations as well as in war.

Such a great Union could never be materialized if the Administration only surrounds itself with familiar representatives of the minority defending their own interests.

A true union can only come true thanks to the compromise between the difference of views of the government and those of the people through the true representatives of their groups and/or religions.

We earnestly hope that you will act appropriately to give to the 67% of the voters who required confidence to be used as the basis for the national great union of which you are the advocate.

Mr. President,

In the spirit of the People's Great Union; we have the honor to request you to:

1. Find all appropriate means to release Venerable Thien Minh, return the Quang Duc center to the Buddhist church and annul the two related sentences.
2. Reconcile with the Buddhist church so as to set up and strengthen a powerful national force to fight against communism at home and abroad as well.
3. Accept the difficulties and opposition as an evidence of our true democratic and free regime because this is the only special aspect which gives the Republic of Vietnam a higher value than the North Vietnam regime not only in the sight of the Vietnamese people but also in the sight of the world.

Respectfully,

Representatives:

83 signatures including
10 Catholics

Senators:

No