

Saigon, April 26th, 1960

To the President of the Republic
of VIETNAM.
SAIGON.

Mr. President,

We, the undersigned, are the Representatives of a group of Notables, Personalities, Intellectuals, of various political opinions, and full of good will. Realizing that our country is in a great danger, we cannot stay indifferent to her life or death. So we come to you for an interview for showing you the Truth, with the hope that the Government will pay attention to it, and quickly change its policy, in order to save the situation and to avert the danger threatening the Vietnamese people.

We remember the time when you were wandering abroad, when the Vietnamese had experienced plenty of miseries and misfortunes for nine years. They had known the curse of the Wars: After the French domination came the Japanese one, after the revolution came the movement of resistance, after the Communists with the false colour of Nationalism came the mock independence concealing Colonialism, after the terrorism of one kind, came the terrorism of another, sacrifices were heaped upon sacrifices, and a series of promises finally turned every hope into disappointment. Because of this, when you came back, the whole population hoped and wished that under your leadership, everybody would live a peaceful life, enabling him to earn his living, to rebuild his destroyed house, to cultivate the abandoned land, to be saved from the terrible obligation of obeying one government in the day and another at night, from being kidnapped either by one side or by the other, to be freed from the oppression of Parties, of cruel petty lords, from being requisitioned for labour from being exploited by monopolies, by greedy, unscrupulous and arrogant officials. In short, everybody hoped to live a life endowed with some security, to enjoy a regime with some justice and liberty. The whole nation hoped that you were the man of the situation who would help these wishes to come true.

Then you came back. The 1954 Geneva Conference brought us the truce, put the misery of the war to an end. The withdrawal of the French troops made concrete the independence of South-Vietnam. In addition to this, we had the moral encouragement and the gigantic financial aid from the Free World. With so many far too favourable conditions, besides the natural resources of a fertile and rich country, with an over-producing agriculture, forestry and fishery, South-Vietnam, to be sure, would be able to be the winner in the historical competition with the North, and to get the population on her side, and so to bring Light, Liberty, and Happiness to the Vietnamese people.

Until today, nearly six years have passed. With all the important advantages that nobody can deny, what has the Government achieved? Where is it leading the nation to? How many of the population's aspirations has it satisfied? We will give an impartial survey of the situation, item by item, with neither flattery nor distorted criticism. And in doing so, we adopt the constructive spirit that you have the habit of underlining. We hope also to be able to bring a remedy to a very critical situation which may endanger the life of our country.

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"5 It is a common error of even specialists in the field to believe that the July 20, 1954 Geneva agreements on the Indochina cease-fire 'provided' for a plebiscite to be held by both zones on or before July 1956. This plebiscite was mentioned only in the unsigned Final Declaration and the reference to it there constituted merely an expression of hope by the signatories (of which South Viet-Nam was not one, but France was) but not a binding commitment upon anyone. The Final Declaration was a temporary face-saving device given by the West to the Communists, but little else."

Bernard B. Fall, "North Viet-Nam's Constitution and Government," Pacific Affairs, September 1960, from a footnote on page 283.