

TRẦN VĂN ĐO

Saigon, 29 December 1966

Dear Mr. Fisher,

Received your letter of the 19th December. As I told M. Vu Van Thai, I could not find the letter sent to me by Hanoi-France in Geneva in 1954. I think it was located in Diem's personal papers and was destroyed.

However I think that you want to know the circumstances under which this letter was written, and what were its contents.

I arrived in Geneva 3 July 1954, sent by Diem. Before his departure from Paris for Viet Nam, I organized a luncheon ~~between~~ ^{between} between Diem, his brother Nguyen, and myself on the Vietnamese side; and, on the French side, Guy Lachambre (Minister in charge of relations with the Associated ~~to~~ States) and the chief of cabinet ~~of~~, St. N'Luu [?]. During the course of this luncheon, H. Lachambre assured us that the French government ~~was~~ ^{would} keep us informed of negotiations with friends and enemies.

Arriving in Geneva around the beginning of July, I knew nothing of the situation. Nearly all the heads of the delegations were absent. I learned from my colleagues [collaborateurs] that they knew that there had been conversations ~~on the sideline~~ ^{on the side} between different delegations, but ours was ~~left in the background~~ ^{on the side} and totally uninformed. "Everything was passing over our heads."

Around the 4th or 5th of July, I agreed to meet Pham van Dong (I was accompanied by Nguyen Huu Chau). During the course of the confrontation, I received confirmation of the plan for the partition of Vietnam. Pham van Dong asked me what I thought of a division at the 13° parallel. I told him that, being newly arrived, I had not had time to formulate an opinion. He then declared that it was to be only a provisional partition, since the elections, were to be held after a brief delay. ~~for reunification~~ (in 5 months) He asked what I thought of the delay, to which I responded: "No opinion, but a priori it appears short to me."

That was a resume of the essence of the meeting.
 [The Public announcement:
 Elling to Price] I published the following. Meeting of proud
 enemies Dong & Do.] The same day, [on that day] the
 French and American delegations came to see me.
 M. Chauvel [of the French delegation] communicated to me a
 verbal note in which he had said that the French,
 British & American governments had already agreed to a
 "meeting" ^{which had} ~~having~~ taken place a month and a half earlier
 (around May 27, if I remember correctly) which, if the
 demarcation line would pass through the 18° parallel,
 it would be accepted.

To M. Chauvel, who inquired about the subject of
 my meeting with Pham van Doi, I stated that it
 was a courtesy call and, furthermore, I regretted that
 the French delegation had reneged on its promise to keep
 us informed of the proceedings during their negotiations
 with the Viet Minh.

I received later the American delegation, which
 communicated the same verbal message to me. [mentioning
nothing?] I was thus certain that the division had
 been decided between the French & the Vietminh and
 accepted by the others. Since the French gave up the
 struggle & the Americans refused to engage in the war,
 the division was incontestable [? maritime]
inevitable.

^{B73} I thought then that in order to preserve ^{the} independence of
ourselves the country
we still had, and if not from all the
 competition between North and South at least resist
 the conquest of the South by the North, complete
independence would be necessary — independence within
 the French Union would no longer be [a] satisfactory
 [alternative]. — It would also be vital to deprive the
 Vietminh of the title of "champions of independence",
 which had permitted them to win the support of all
 the Vietnamese people and win the war.

During an encounter with Hendry-France, I told
 him: "I warn you that I would protest the division

of my country, even if I were told that such a division was only temporary, since (as in Germany and Korea) the "temporary" often risks becoming permanent. Next I must have France's solemn oath, given even here, that she will grant us independence - "total and without ambiguity". If not, then I would leave Geneva immediately with the Vietnamese delegation." Mendes-France ~~agreed~~ and requested that I send someone to discuss the terms of the declaration.

I assigned Nguyen Van Chau to make contact with the cabinet of Mendes-France for this endeavor.

^{Text (?)}
~~Terms~~ of the declaration:

- 1) solemn promise by France to grant total independence to Viet Nam;
- 2) Evacuation of French troops at the request of Viet Nam;
- 3) All litigations between France & VN would be conducted before an arbitrator acceptable to both countries.

^{pg. 4} This letter from Mendes-France, drafted in this spirit, was sent to me several minutes before 3:00 p.m., July 21st. That is, just before the Conference convened for the last time.

I do not recall exactly the terms of the letter, but the three above points reconstruct the spirit of the contents.

If there are any remaining points which I can clarify, apropos of the Geneva Conference, I am entirely at your disposal.

Yours,
Tran Van So