

IRAN VAN D.
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 M. de 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 ~~it~~ 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 Diem, his brother Huân, and myself, on the Vietnamese side; and, on the French side, Guy Laubarz (Minister in charge of relations with the Associated ~~the~~ States) and his ~~chief~~ ~~of~~ ~~colonist~~ ~~unit~~, St. M'Lee [?]. During the course of this ~~luncheon~~, H. Laubarz assured us that the French government ~~was~~ ~~would~~ ~~keep~~ ~~ing~~ 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 sidelines~~ ~~at the edge~~ between different delegations, but ours was ~~kept 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 17° 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} ~~essentials~~ of the meeting.
[The Public announcement;
L'Espresso, La Presse] published the following: Meeting of proud
enemies Dong & Do.] The same day, ~~for that day even~~
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} ~~meeting~~ ^{which had} 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 Dong, 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. ~~[Something]~~
~~missing?~~ I was thus certain that the division had
been decided between the French & the Viet Minh and
accepted by the others. Since the French gave up the
struggle & the Americans refused to engage in the war,
the division was ~~incontestable~~ ~~[? inevitable]~~.
Inevitable.

pg 3
I thought then that in order to ^{preserve the} ~~maintain~~ ^{help the country} ~~the nation~~
[means, resources] we still had, and if not ^{win} ~~arrive at~~ 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
Viet Minh 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 Mendez-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. Mendès-France ^{agreed} ~~accepted~~ and requested that I send someone to discuss the terms of the declaration.

I assigned Nguyen Huu Chau to make contact with the cabinet of Mendès-France for this endeavor. ^{Terms (?)}
~~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 litigation between France & VN would be conducted before an arbitrator acceptable to both countries.

pg. 4 This letter from Mendès-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 Do