UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

JULY 6, 1970.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the State of the Union and ordered to be printed

Mr. MONTGOMERY, from the Select Committee on United States Involvement in Southeast Asia, submitted the following

REPORT
together with
SUPPLEMENTAL VIEWS
[Pursuant to H. Res. 976]

A resolution to authorize a select committee of the House to study first hand the recent developments in Southeast Asia and then report its findings to the House of Representatives within forty-five days of its adoption.
LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

JULY 6, 1970.

DEAR COLLEAGUE: Pursuant to House Resolution 976 adopted on June 8, 1970, the report of the Select Committee on United States Involvement in Southeast Asia is enclosed.

The select committee feels this report will give you additional information to help keep you abreast of our involvement in Southeast Asia. A detailed appendix containing supporting data for this report will follow.

Sincerely,

G. V. MONTGOMERY, Chairman.

(a)
INTRODUCTION

On June 8, the U.S. House of Representatives adopted House Resolution 976. The resolution authorized the Speaker "to appoint a select committee of the House to study first-hand the recent developments in Southeast Asia and then report its findings to the House of Representatives within forty-five days of its adoption."

Pursuant to the resolution, the Speaker on June 15th, appointed the following members to the Committee:

G. V. Montgomery, Chairman
Neal Smith
Augustus F. Hawkins
William R. Anderson
Lee H. Hamilton
Robert H. Mollohan

E. Ross Adair
Howard W. Robison
Hastings Keith
Donald D. Clancy
Albert W. Watson
Orval Hansen

In preparation for its assignment, the Committee heard from persons, both in government and in private life, representing different points of view, who could from their experience and knowledge recommend subjects to be examined and people to see in Southeast Asia relative to the Committee's objectives.

On June 20th, the committee left Washington for Saigon, which served as its base of operations during the two weeks it spent in Southeast Asia. Given the broad mandate of the House and the limited time available, it was decided that more could be accomplished if the committee divided into groups which were given specific missions. By so
doing, the committee was able to maximize its effectiveness and gather substantially more information than would normally be possible.

To collect the information that forms the basis for this report, the committee, either as a complete group, working in teams, or as individuals, traveled thousands of miles. They moved extensively throughout all of South Vietnam. Some went to Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, Indonesia, and Singapore.

The committee talked not only with U.S. military and civilian personnel of most ranks and specialities and Asian officials and legislators of the countries they visited, but also with South Vietnamese, Korean, and Thai military personnel, South Vietnamese civilians in all walks of life, provincial, district and village representatives, religious and student leaders, missionaries, captured enemy soldiers and defectors, American and foreign newsmen, businessmen and others who it was thought could contribute to the committee’s objectives. Earlier the committee had cabled the North Vietnamese Government requesting permission to visit Hanoi to see U.S. prisoners of war being held there. Having received no response to this or another message, three members met with a Third Secretary of the North Vietnamese Embassy in Vientiane, Laos, in an effort to discuss the status of U.S. prisoners of war in North Vietnam.

This report represents a consensus of the views of the committee. In some instances where individual members may differ or may have made an individual study of a particular subject, supplemental views may be presented.

G. V. Montgomery,
Chairman, Select Committee on Southeast Asia.

THE ECONOMY OF SOUTH VIETNAM

The weakest link in South Vietnam’s chain is its economy. Inflation is the most serious problem facing the country. The need for effective action to stabilize the economy is urgent. Failure to solve the major problems on the economic front will seriously and perhaps fatally weaken the pacification and Vietnamization programs. It will surely undermine efforts to develop viable democratic political institutions and processes. In short, a strong and stable economy must be developed as the foundation on which the nation’s future progress will be built.

Controlling inflation is highest on the list of priority economic objectives. Inflation has been steadily eroding the value of the piaster and prices continue to rise at a rate of between one and two percent a week, according to some estimates. Among the hardest hit by inflation are members of the military and civil service, whose pay is notoriously low. Sharply rising living costs are a deterrent to investment, and make any kind of meaningful long-range economic planning almost impossible.

To come to grips with the economic ills that afflict the country, the Government should begin a series of specific reforms without delay. Many of the measures needed will not be politically popular, but the consequences of failure to act could create even greater political difficulties.
The present official exchange rate is totally unrealistic. The official rate is 118 piasters to the dollar. The black market rate of 350 to 400 or more piasters to the dollar more nearly reflects the true value of the currency of South Vietnam.

Failure to devalue the piaster has helped to stimulate a flourishing black market in the currency. U.S. aid furnished at the official rate results in an indirect subsidy of the Government of South Vietnam. Likewise, it penalizes American military and civilian personnel who must exchange at the official rate and are thereby forced to subsidize the Government.

The war has greatly distorted the economy of South Vietnam, which is characterized by a huge trade imbalance. The country imports far more than it exports. This imbalance is further aggravated by the unrealistic official exchange rate, which is a powerful incentive to imports and a deterrent to exports.

Unrealistically low interest rates discourage the savings and investment that the country must develop to build a stable and expanding economy. Coupled with effective anti-inflation measures, interest rates should be raised to reasonable levels. This would help to attract the investment capital needed to provide enough jobs and productive capacity to sustain the country as it shifts from a wartime to a peacetime economy.

Tax reform is also high on the list of national priorities. Most of the taxes are not collected. This deprives the Government of needed revenue and is discriminatory in its effect on those who must pay taxes, such as government employees. The need to develop a fair system of taxation and to administer the tax laws effectively is urgent.

South Vietnam also suffers from the lack of a workable system of commercial law governing sales, credit and other commercial transactions. Attention should be given to the development of commercial law as an essential step in the creation of a healthy investment climate, and to otherwise stimulate expanded trade and commerce.

In the long run, South Vietnam must achieve near parity in its volume of exports and imports. This will require the building of a substantial export trade where virtually none exists today. The agricultural industry offers hope for the production of commodities for export. Recent progress that has been made in pacification in the Mekong Delta gives rise to prospects that the country will soon be able to produce rice in an amount surplus to the country's needs. As the goal of self-sufficiency in rice is reached, however, to the extent that there is no export market for this surplus rice, land should be shifted into the production of other products for which export markets can be developed. The country is also blessed with vast timber resources that are one of the most promising means of earning foreign exchange.

The United States has built for South Vietnam some economic assets of substantial value. An example is the ship-repair facility at Saigon, which is now being turned over to the South Vietnamese. They are developing the skills essential to its operation. Because of relatively low labor costs, it is likely that Saigon will be able to compete effectively with Hong Kong and Singapore in repairing ships from other countries. This will produce foreign exchange that is badly needed by South Vietnam.
The United States has also provided the country with a good system of roads and bridges, mostly built by units of the U.S. Army Engineers. The roads, most of which are built to U.S. standards, have not only been a tremendous aid to the pacification program but have been a strong stimulus to economic growth in the rural areas. Improved transportation and communication links between all parts of the country have resulted in building new hamlets and in the cultivation of land which had been idle. A good system of farm-to-market roads has caused the rapid expansion of trade between the rural areas and the major population centers.

South Vietnam is rich in resources and potential for a strong and growing economy. Much of its land is fertile and highly productive. Its people are intelligent and resourceful.

To achieve its potential, however, will require a major self-help effort by the people and Government of South Vietnam and a fairly high level of outside economic assistance for several years. As long as South Vietnam must maintain a military establishment at or near the present level, it must have outside help to survive. Most of the economic assistance during the next few years will undoubtedly have to come from the United States. However, other industrial nations, particularly Japan, should be given every possible encouragement to share this burden. Japan has reaped substantial economic benefits through the sale of motorized vehicles, electronics and other goods to South Vietnam. It will be a prime beneficiary of the future economic growth of the country and of the successful efforts to stem the tide of Communist aggression in Southeast Asia. However, the level of economic assistance Japan has hitherto furnished to South Vietnam has been disappointing.

U.S. assistance should be furnished on terms that will provide effective incentives for the Government of South Vietnam to institute the reforms and to otherwise take the actions that are essential to success. Our help can be justified only if there is a clearly demonstrated willingness by the South Vietnamese to help themselves.

The road to economic health for South Vietnam is a rocky one and uphill all the way. But it can make it.

PACIFICATION

To most of the committee, especially those who have been in South Vietnam on previous occasions, significant surface gains seem to have been made in the all-important pacification program. Village and hamlet security was better than most of us had expected, as also was the security of travel by road throughout much of the countryside, at least in the daytime.

As best evidence of this, committee members traveled by highway singly and in groups—and much of the time without military escort—in nearly every area of South Vietnam, and moved at will into numerous villages and hamlets where the residents seemed to be living fairly normal lives.

The key to this capability—which is undoubtedly still restricted in too many areas at night—lies in the rapid build-up of the Regional and Popular Forces (RF and PF), as well as the People’s Self Defense Force (PSDF). Regional Forces operate within a province and
are roughly comparable to our National Guard. Popular Forces operate within a relatively small district and are similar to a trained local militia. Both forces are paid, armed with M-16 rifles, and fairly well-trained. Total strength of the RF and PF is 509,500. Upon the continued and vigorous promotion of this program in large part rests South Vietnam’s future chances of reducing its army (ARVN) strength from some 1 million men to a size that a nation of 17.8 million people could reasonably be expected to support.

The People’s Self Defense Force, on the other hand, is a people’s militia—the concept of a “nation-in-arms”—composed largely of those men and women not of prime military age, partially trained and armed, but not paid. Two years or so ago it would have seemed unthinkable to give weapons to the populace for fear they would end up in the hands of the VC—or that some of them might even possibly be used against the Government itself.

Beginning in late 1968, however, the Government of South Vietnam, showing some new degree of confidence at having survived the Communists’ all-out Tet offensive of February of that year, has been making a strong effort in this direction. The result now is a “combat PSDF” force of over a million persons, sharing some 350,000 miscellaneous arms among them and engaged in the defense of their communities and families. There is also an additional indefinite figure of “support PSDF”—women, children and older citizens.

U.S. military personnel have assisted in training all these paramilitary forces. On their constant vigilance and combined capacity to contain VC terrorist assaults at the village and hamlet level depends the possibility of freeing ARVN for its more appropriate role of combat with larger, regular enemy units still operating in South Vietnam and of conducting border patrol. But an even more important mission of these forces is to restore security to the countryside, thereby enabling the people to return to their homes, their rice paddies, farms, and villages from which so many have fled, either because of constant VC harassment or the devastations of war.

Whether or not these programs can achieve lasting success is not yet clear, but representatives of the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support (CORDS) with whom we talked are optimistic that it can, and there is some reason for their optimism.

CORDS, a combined military and civilian operation that seems to be functioning smoothly, maintains a Hamlet Evaluation System (HES) administered by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). The HES system attempts to measure progress in the pacification program by monitoring trends in security of the villages and hamlets. The HES ratings have been criticized in the past for presenting an over-optimistic picture of developments. The ratings were revised earlier this year in an effort to make HES a more realistic guide.

In the judgment of the committee, HES ratings are still by no means either foolproof or a measure of permanent improvement. A hamlet rated at 90 percent on the HES scale could drop drastically overnight if the VC successfully conducted a full-scale and concentrated terrorist attack. An example would be the VC massacre of 75 civilians on June 10, at the Ba Ren Bridge near Da Nang, the site of which was visited by committee members.
The committee feels, instead, that the best measure of pacification progress is the willingness of the people to return to the countryside. Although the statistics on this are far from firm and can be misleading as well (since some "returnees" may now work their rice paddies by day but return to refuge at night), members of the committee visited and observed numerous areas where such resettlement trends were evident.

There are several important reasons why it is essential to develop and maintain such a trend. Only in such a fashion can the costly and frustrating refugee problem be solved, and only in such a fashion can South Vietnam's urban problems be solved. Its major cities are now overwhelmed by persons displaced by the war. In addition, a successful pacification and resettlement program is vital to South Vietnam's economy. Until the major agricultural areas, especially such populous areas as the Mekong River Delta, are secure, the nation's economy will continue to waver under the overburdening deficit in its balance of payments. Even though South Vietnam can potentially produce enough rice for its own needs, as well as a surplus for possible export purposes, it is now importing rice. Its production of rubber and other products, which its rich natural resources can also provide, has likewise dropped sharply because of the war. These economic deficiencies are a direct result of the past insecurity of the countryside.

A "returnee" who may well find his home destroyed, his fields overgrown and local essential services lacking, now receives by way of assistance to rebuild his life an allowance of 7,500 piasters ($63.56), 10 sheets of metal roofing, and a 6-month supply of rice.

Brief mention should also be made of certain other aspects of pacification. A civilian National Police Force has been built up with a strength of some 95,000 men and women located all the way from the most remote Delta hamlet to metropolitan Saigon. The true capabilities of this partly trained force have yet to be tested, but its existence is a necessary element in the hoped-for gradual shift in South Vietnam away from a military oligarchy and toward a republican form of government supported by competent civil service.

Alongside this program, and supported by it, is the so-called Chieu Hoi, or "Open Arms Program" aimed at first identifying and then persuading VC to "rally" to the government. This effort has shown some encouraging numerical results. The total VC thus converted were 18,171 in 1968, 47,023 in 1969, and 13,923, as of May 21, 1970. The trend shows a slight upturn of late, perhaps as a possible side benefit from the Cambodian operations. Any evaluation of these results must note the low rate of defection by officers and soldiers from the North Vietnamese Army, although there have been a few. On balance the Chieu Hoi program can be judged as showing substantial, if imperfect, success.

Next, there is the Phoenix program aimed at neutralizing the Viet Cong's carefully constructed infrastructure. This can be described as an "internal security" program. Despite some years in operation success of the program can only be described as mixed. For whatever it is worth, committee members were given to understand that the government is aware of the shortcomings of Phoenix, and of the domestic and external criticism of the program. Attempts are supposedly being made to improve its operation.

Last, but by no means least, is the "self-development" part of the pacification program—an effort substantially supported by the United
States. The program is the beginning of an attempt to meet the educational, health and municipal needs, as well as encouraging local initiative.

A new approach to this was undertaken in 1969 when a fund for "village self-development" was created with 1 million piasters (about $8,500) being allocated to each village with an elected council. The use of the fund was required to be discussed in an open public meeting with the final selection of projects to be determined by the council. For 1970, allocations are being based on population, and the total funds amount to about 2.7 billion piasters ($23 million).

The range of projects being selected run the gamut from new schools to bridges, to farm machinery purchased on a cooperative basis, and to pig raising. To encourage greater local participation and initiative, the current program also requires local matching funds, except in instances where the hamlet or village is deemed too poor. With the election now of province councils, a comparable province development fund has also been cranked into the program for more regional planning purposes.

The committee has commented on this overall program at this length because, for the strong majority of the members, pacification is the key to South Vietnam's future.

As the withdrawal of the U.S. presence in the country proceeds, and as our large military effort upon which South Vietnam's economy has become so dependent is scaled down, only a secure and productive countryside can maintain in South Vietnam a society economically viable and politically stable.

VIETNAMIZATION

The committee was told that in December, 1968, President Thieu said that he believed it was time to start an orderly withdrawal of the American military presence, and that the South Vietnamese were approaching the capability to handle the requirements for military manpower. This is now the announced policy of the United States; therefore, the question to be resolved is how fast Vietnamization should take place.

The committee believes the process of Vietnamization of the war is progressing and that all levels of our military command are planning to meet withdrawal schedules. The Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) are increasing in their capability, both in experience and materiel, although there are still measurable differences between units. Our military commanders have their withdrawal schedules from now until October 15, and are making assessments to be used in determining the speed of the withdrawal thereafter.

Today, one person out of 17 is in the South Vietnamese Armed Forces. This is the level they believe will be necessary for a protracted engagement as long as North Vietnam furnishes manpower and China and the U.S.S.R. furnish the weapons. Most of our American soldiers of all ranks who have experienced close cooperation with the South Vietnamese forces say they are a potent force and vastly improved compared to two years ago and are still improving. South Vietnamese operations in Cambodia have given the South Vietnamese soldier more self-confidence and poise than he has ever previously displayed.
The desertion and "absent without leave" rate is too high. However, 90 percent of the Vietnamese deserters end up back in the manpower pool by joining another military unit near their home.

Additional geographic areas and military functions will be turned over to the South Vietnamese, but not all areas and functions can be delegated simultaneously.

The committee believes an orderly withdrawal requires training of additional men for the South Vietnamese Air Force and some other special categories. As far as ground troops are concerned, America should continue its withdrawal program at least as fast as is now scheduled. They only exception would be additional time to solve logistics problems.

In recent months, the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have avoided big-unit offensive operations indicative of a more or less limited conventional war. Instead, they have reverted to the "protracted war" approach of the guerrilla, as well as terrorist tactics. Some of their regular, or Main Force, regimental units apparently are being broken down into numerous "local force" units of company size or less. This is not to say they are ineffective. To the contrary, one must expect renewed and increased small-scale offensive actions against small outposts and hamlets and increased terrorist attacks in both cities and the countryside. This is in fact happening at the present time.

While all of the American and Vietnamese military officials agreed on the announced troop withdrawal schedule, some expressed concern over its being announced publicly. That concern is shared by the committee. The knowledge of specific details of our withdrawal may give an undue advantage to the enemy.

The South Vietnamese Air Force has continued to show improvement and the U.S. Seventh Air Force has recently accelerated considerably the plans to train Vietnamese pilots and Air Force support units.

The committee believes plans could also be accelerated for the training and phasing in of ground support forces, such as artillery units.

The U.S. Navy's primary mission in South Vietnam has been that of interdicting infiltration into South Vietnam by waterways. The Navy has been conducting one of the most effective Vietnamization programs that the committee observed. As evidence of this fact, only twenty percent of the patrol craft engaged in the recent Cambodian operations were U.S. Navy (USN) craft manned by USN crews.

The USN has adopted a Vietnamization policy that is relatively simple and may well be considered by the other services where such a policy proves feasible. A typical naval patrol craft normally carries a crew of five. The USN added one Vietnamese crew member, selected by the South Vietnam Navy (VNN) and when he is thought to be qualified, a VNN seaman replaced another USN seaman, and so on, until only one USN advisor was left on the craft. Eventually the patrol craft is turned over to the VNN.

In the opinion of the committee, Vietnamization should continue to improve and be one of the stronger programs we have sponsored.
LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOUTH VIETNAM'S JUNE 28, 1970, ELECTIONS

Essential to pacification in South Vietnam is not only the ability of South Vietnam's national leaders, but also of the country's leadership at the local level—the provinces, districts, villages, and hamlets. In South Vietnam, the 44 provinces generally equate to U.S. states, the districts to U.S. counties, the "villages" to U.S. townships or supervisor beats, and the hamlets to U.S. town or village communities.

For the most part, the committee was favorably impressed with the capabilities and leadership attributes of the province and district chiefs. Because of past insecurity, these men are appointed by the central Government, and are nearly all officers of the Vietnamese Armed Forces. However, the Constitution of the Republic of Vietnam provides for popular election of these officials in 1972. Those members of the committee who had toured South Vietnam in previous years found a marked improvement in the abilities of these men.

The committee feels that as individual provinces and districts become secure and the people become more knowledgeable in a competitive political system, steps should be taken to see that province and district chiefs are elected by the people they govern. We were encouraged when President Thieu assured us that this would be the case. South Vietnam will not have a truly democratic form of government until its officials at all levels of government are chosen through a process of popular self-determination. President Thieu stated his agreement with our view, and is apparently pursuing this objective with all practicable speed.

The committee would also like to pay tribute to the American military and civilian personnel who have provided invaluable assistance to the province and district chiefs in administering to the needs of the people. These dedicated Americans live at the "rice roots" and share many of the dangers, discomforts and difficulties of the South Vietnamese. We think that nationals of both countries gain from the experience.

As to elections, the committee observed firsthand the provincial voting practices and procedures on Sunday, June 28, 1970. Seventy-two percent of the eligible citizens voted in these elections. This is commendable when one remembers that this was the first such election for Provincial Councils. There were numerous candidates and unusual interest in the campaigning, which was reflected in the presence of several hundred people at a campaign speech. The balloting was simple and secret. The South Vietnamese have adopted a simple method to assist the forgetful or less informed citizen in casting his vote. Each candidate and his party had a distinctive symbol on the ballot, so as to minimize confusion and permit the illiterate voter to cast his ballot without outside assistance. While there is always the critic who questions the validity or meaningfulness of the elections, the committee detected no justification for such criticism.
LAND REFORM

There have been several South Vietnamese land reform programs in previous years, which has resulted in elimination of all non-Vietnamese ownership of rice lands and have reduced maximum holdings to about 100 acres per person. A recently enacted new land reform program is designed to reduce maximum holdings to 7.4 acres per person in the rich Delta area, and a maximum of 37 acres in other parts of the country. Present landowners would be paid 20 percent of the value of the land in cash and the balance in bonds, redeemable over a period of eight years and bearing ten percent interest.

There is not unanimous agreement that the new program will in fact be as popular as some have believed. Some of the land to be divided is held by a member of a family who supports dependent relatives or common village activities. The land may be in one family member's name, while in fact other family members own part of it. This possibility is enhanced by the fact that a substantial transfer tax has been in effect in South Vietnam. Some Vietnamese have avoided paying the tax by merely failing to transfer title. In these family situations, taking land which by the legal record may appear to belong to one person will result in either great dissatisfaction on the part of the people or in paying for land to give to a "tenant" who was the owner in the first place. An additional difficulty is the lack of sufficient land records, such as are kept in the United States. In the rural areas, family records are relied on heavily to ascertain ownership.

Since the United States pressed for the new program, the cost of $300 million to $500 million would presumably have to be borne largely, if not entirely, by American assistance.

The committee found reason to doubt that the new land reform program will be the panacea some have claimed, and there is a possibility it could have adverse effects. While not passing final judgment on the new program, the committee believes the above facts must be taken into consideration when making an appraisal of the program.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION PROGRAMS

The committee became increasingly interested in and concerned about the public information programs conducted by the South Vietnamese and U.S. governments. Two members investigated the public information programs in as much detail as time and circumstances would permit.

South Vietnam, although relatively small by U.S. geographical standards, is an incredibly disjointed nation. At one extreme is a sprawling and overpopulated Saigon, and at the other is remote villages and hamlets. Within South Vietnamese government officialdom, there are fairly good lines of communication extending to the chiefs of most remote and pacified hamlets. Despite considerable progress in establishing democratic forms of government, nearly all provinces, villages and hamlets have military officers as their chiefs. Thus, the country is tied together by a quasi-military communications network.

Outside of Saigon and the other municipalities, the man on the street is the Vietnamese farmer. He has little present knowledge of, or feeling about, the government of President Thieu. However, some evidence of increased interest was observed. The real interests of the farmer revolve around his extremely close knit family and its members—their...
security, how well they are nourished and housed, and the extent to which an education can be provided his children. The farmer's ancestors had had to contend for centuries with a Chinese presence. He himself had seen and felt the French presence. Now he sees and feels an overwhelming American presence. This situation has endured for centuries and the Vietnamese farmer can only surmise that it will go on forever. These are the Vietnamese civilians who are prime targets of VC and NVA propaganda and the most frequent targets of VC recruiters and abductors.

As in the United States in the late 1940's the most intriguing new development in South Vietnam is television. Outside the large cities and the Delta area, there is not a great deal of coverage by television. There has been a recent rapid increase in the number of privately owned television sets, with some estimates running as high as 300,000. Of these U.S. AID, and DOD have furnished 3,500 mainly “community sets.” Where television can be received, it is not uncommon for scores and even hundreds to watch TV during the small time of day that programs are aired. More frequently than not, reception in the countryside is limited to the U.S. Armed Forces Network. This programming is in English, and for the most part consists of American television serials and variety shows. Beside television, there are estimates that from 10 percent to 90 percent of the families in each hamlet own transistor radios.

The Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office (JUSPAO) estimates that 75 percent of South Vietnam is covered by GVN radio programs. Local citizens report, however, that Radio Hanoi was the most powerful station available on the dial, although the North Vietnamese do not broadcast television in either North or South Vietnam.

The committee is concerned over the apparent lack of effort being made by the United States and Vietnamese Governments to increase the availability and use of television messages and radio programs to help unite the nation, as has been done in Thailand, and to explain the U.S. presence as being on behalf of democracy for South Vietnam. Colonel Tran Van Doc, a defector from the North, said “The Communists are far better at telling a lie than the United States is at telling the truth.” From its observations, the committee can only report that the colonel's views were not overstated.

Lt. Gen. Lee Sae Ho, Commanding General of ROK Forces, RVN, feels that civic action and psychological warfare are just as important as military action. This is a lesson in which the United States needs a cram course. One high ranking U.S. official with noticeable hesitation characterized U.S. psychological actions as “notoriously sorry.” The sad fact is that our failure to learn and practice effective psychological warfare has contributed to the loss of American lives and national resources. The pitiful paradox is that we are the world's best in communications technology, but among the world's worst in using it as an instrument in helping to achieve our foreign policy goals, particularly in Southeast Asia. The committee feels it is high time for the United States and South Vietnamese to take the communications offensive.

The official policy of the Joint U.S. Public Affairs Office in Saigon appears to be “to work itself out of a job.” We are furnishing some nominal technical assistance to South Vietnamese television, which is plagued with acute growing pains and a shortage of skilled manpower.
Apparently our public affairs leadership feels it is better for mass radio and television communications in South Vietnam to develop according to its own speed. One can only partially respect this point of view. The committee feels, on the contrary, that the anti-Communist stance of the South Vietnamese, the processes of pacification and Vietnamization, and thus the prospects of rapid withdrawal of American combat forces can be considerably enhanced by effective in-country communications. The committee was encouraged that President Thieu recently included stepped-up public communications as one of his high priority goals.

The committee strongly recommends that the United States should immediately re-evaluate its public information policies in Southeast Asia, and that the communications industry in America should recognize its ability to furnish invaluable assistance. One obvious suggestion would be a program similar to ETV's "Sesame Street" aired in Vietnamese and based on Vietnam's own rich cultural heritage.

**AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR**

Of primary concern to the committee and all Americans is the plight of U.S. servicemen held as prisoners of war or listed as missing in action. Before leaving for South Vietnam, the following telegram was sent by the committee on June 19, to the North Vietnamese Foreign Ministry in Hanoi, as well as its Minister in Paris, Xuan Thuy.

Sincerely request a part or all of our group be granted a visa as private citizens to come to Hanoi for the purpose of visiting with a representative group of American prisoners of war sometime between the dates of June 22 and July 2. Our request is for humanitarian purposes. Your thoughtful consideration of our request will be gratefully appreciated. We look forward to a favorable reply at your earliest convenience.

Having had no reply, the committee sent the following follow-up telegram to the Foreign Ministry in Hanoi on June 25.

On June 24, Members of this Select Committee made a visit to and inspection of the Republic of South Vietnam prisoner of war camp at Da Nang. Our inspection of conditions at the camp and of the treatment accorded both North Vietnamese and members of Viet Cong held there as prisoners of war confirms and supports the official inspection reports of the International Red Cross that all provisions of the Geneva Convention regarding treatment to be provided prisoners of war have been and are being met. Because of this visit by members of the Select Committee and as a result of their findings, we again request that we receive an early and favorable response to our telegram of June 19, 1970, regarding approval of a visit to prisoner of war camps in North Vietnam where American and South Vietnamese prisoners of war are being held.

Unfortunately, neither of the telegrams elicited a response from Hanoi.

Three members of the committee pressed the matter further during their trip to Laos. While in Vientiane, the members met with a Third Secretary of the North Vietnamese Embassy. They made a strong plea...
for North Vietnam to allow the sending of an international committee
of Red Cross representatives to North Vietnam to investigate the
condition of our servicemen being held prisoners there. An attempt
was also made to leave a petition containing 50,000 names calling for
humane treatment of American POWs. The Third Secretary refused
to accept the petition.

The upshot of the brief meeting was a loud denial by the North
Vietnamese official that North Vietnam has any American prisoners
of war. Rather, he said the men they held were war criminals. The
Third Secretary ended the meeting after 15 minutes by storming out
of the room.

The committee would like to point out most strongly the seriousness
of the situation involving 1,500 American POWs and MIAs. It is a
known fact that many POWs are being held by North Vietnam in
Hanoi. What is not general knowledge is the fact that some Amer­
icans are held prisoner by the Pathet Lao in Laos and by the Viet Cong
in unknown and isolated areas of the Mekong Delta in South Vietnam.

The committee knew it would probably be a futile effort to try to go
to North Vietnam. But at the same time, the members felt it imperative
to take every possible step in hopes of bringing us closer to a solution
to this most pressing problem. The necessity of constantly pressing
the government of North Vietnam concerning our American POWs and
MIAs cannot be over emphasized. We must never cease working on
behalf of these Americans and their families.

NARCOTICS AND CONTRABAND PROBLEMS

There are no certain statistics as to how many U.S. servicemen in
South Vietnam use—or have tried—marijuana. Undoubtedly, the num­
ber of our troops in Vietnam who have done so is substantial. We have
seen reports of studies claiming that at least 30 percent of such per­
sonnel are using marijuana, at least on an occasional basis. Certainly,
as committee members could discover for themselves although such
sales are now illegal, a “stick” of marijuana can be purchased for pen­
nies on almost every Saigon street corner.

In any event, U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (U.S.
MACV) has instituted a number of efforts at control, including an
expanded educational program, and encouraging the judicial branch
of the National Police of South Vietnam to form “narcotics teams”
to cooperate with U.S. military police in cities with high concentra­
tions of military personnel. Also, “raid teams”, consisting of U.S.
Army Criminal Investigation Division (CID) personnel and South
Vietnamese narcotics policemen have been established to locate and
apprehend distributors and “pushers” of both marijuana and the so­
called hard drugs.

However, of equal seriousness has been the problem of narcotics
smuggling out of Vietnam, an activity in which some U.S. servicemen
have participated. Given the extremely high number of daily depar­
tures from South Vietnam of both servicemen and materiel of one kind
or another, this has been an extremely difficult problem to control. At
one point it reached such proportions as to cause host rest and recrea­
tion countries—particularly Australia and Hong Kong—serious
concern.
Besides this principal problem with marijuana, the use of hard drugs by military personnel in South Vietnam is also of concern to MACV. Again, the problem is accentuated by easy access to such habituating and debilitating narcotics.

Another facet of all this has been the surge of contraband articles of all kinds, but particularly of weapons (other than qualified “war trophies”) and ammunition for them, along with such items as “live” grenades, being sent or brought back to the United States. Several months ago, a test “operation-intercept” was conducted by the U.S. Customs Service at one of the major West Coast Army Post Offices. The number of such dangerous and illegal weapons, ammunition and other contraband, along with the quantity of marijuana and hashish seized, confirmed the existence of a problem requiring the immediate attention of military authorities.

Corrective measures have since been taken. A team of six experienced U.S. Customs agents was sent to South Vietnam to work with the Provost Marshal at Headquarters, MACV. With their help, over 800 military men have been recruited and trained as “Acting Customs Inspectors.” These persons, under the direction of the Provost Marshal, in accordance with new and detailed procedures perform a pre-clearance inspection of military personnel and their person possessions before they leave for the United States.

For the purpose of this report it is not necessary to detail such procedures, although such information is in the files of the committee. The important thing is that such procedures are working, a point verified both by the MACV Provost Marshal and by the U.S. Customs Service Commissioner.

CON SON ISLAND PRISON

In view of the fact that U.S. aid is given to South Vietnamese national penal institutions, some members of the committee visited one of these facilities on Con Son Island. While there, they observed some conditions which required remedial or corrective action. These matters were called to the attention of an appropriate Vietnamese official, as well as the American Ambassador. Assurances were given the committee that our authorities would thoroughly investigate this situation.

ADDITIONAL MATTERS PERTAINING TO U.S. TROOPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

While the committee concentrated its efforts upon the South Vietnamese capability of assuming the military burden for the defense of their country, it also investigated the morale prevailing among the American troops deployed in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Generally, morale was found to be very good with a significant boost from the operations to destroy the enemy’s sanctuaries in Cambodia. Here the consensus, both among American and ARVN forces, was that the strike in the country was an outstanding military success, and would give the United States the breathing space needed to accelerate troop withdrawals. There can be little doubt that the anticipation of this acceleration contributes materially to the high morale.

Out-of-country R. & R. (rest and recreation) is also a considerable factor in the morale of our troops.

Concern was voiced by American servicemen over the dissent in the United States which obviously has been maximized in Vietnam as well as at home. Some expressed doubts about being accepted on college
camps upon after completion of their tour of duty. The committee shares the concern that the amount and character of dissent adds to the already heavy burden which the individual soldier bears.

The committee also visited the U.S. military stockade at Long Binh. The prison has a capacity of 500 and had 327 inmates at the time of our visit. Of these, one-third were being held in pretrial status, another third has been tried but not sentenced, and the remaining third has been tried and sentenced but not transferred to permanent prisons.

While the charges varied on which these men were being held, a significant portion of them were the result of actions taken by servicemen seeking separation from military service. Approximately 15 percent of those incarcerated were charged with some form of drug abuse. It should be noted that most of these charges, especially simple possession and usage of marijuana, were disposed of by nonjudicial punishment at the company level.

Although there have been allegations of racial discrimination, the committee found no evidence of such charges in the administration of the stockade. It is significant in light of these charges that the commanding officer, who impressed the Committee as being most capable, is a black. The Committee found the stockade to be extraordinarily well run.

AMERICAN CIVILIANS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

The Committee noted and heard of the presence of large numbers of U.S. government-associated civilians in South Vietnam. Upon inquiry, the following breakdown of civilian personnel as of April 1, 1970, was furnished the Committee.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embassy, USAID, JUSPAO</td>
<td>2,222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOD direct hire</td>
<td>2,065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contractors</td>
<td>8,738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees on contract to USAID and CORDS</td>
<td>718</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

American civilian personnel are not bound by the same regulations as military personnel, but any unacceptable activity by U.S. civilians damages our image just the same, if not more so.

The committee feels that the reduction of American civilians (including personnel of contractors) in South Vietnam should be continued and even accelerated wherever possible.

INTERVIEW WITH NVA DEFECTOR

(The following is a summary of an informal discussion between a high ranking North Vietnamese defector and a committee member.)

The use of propaganda directed toward the North Vietnamese by Hanoi is intensive. The people believe what they hear and read. Until the Tet offensive of 1968, there was no doubt in the minds of the people that the war was being won decisively. They tended to anticipate a complete victory over South Vietnam at an early date. After Tet they have become increasingly "puzzled."

 Virtually all of the NVA and VC infrastructure have broadcast band radios. About 20 percent of the civilian families in North Vietnam own receivers. There are strong prohibitions against listening to foreign broadcasts, but this is apparently directed toward the civilian populace. Most of the infrastructure listen. The most heard station is the BBC; VOA was the fourth station mentioned. The extent to which the public listens surreptitiously to foreign broadcasts cannot be estimated.
The officer's most recent assignment was as deputy commander of forces in a section of South Vietnam consisting of two provinces and part of a third. Therefore, he had no direct knowledge of the casualties resulting from US bombing of the North, although he gathered that they were considerable. He did not believe the bombing caused either a decrease or an increase in the determination to fight. Rather, it "worried" the populace. The bombing and other factors contributed to a failure to meet North Vietnam's own in-country development timetables.

In North Vietnamese propaganda, the United States is portrayed as a war-mongering nation which is trying to dominate South Vietnam permanently. However, the defector said the North Vietnamese did not hate Americans as persons (this may have to be taken with a grain of salt because of the Oriental quality of going out of the way to avoid hurting one's personal feelings).

Victory claims as to enemy killed, territory "liberated," and aircraft destroyed have tapered off. The more enlightened North Vietnamese privately tend to question prior claims. (If all claims were true, would not victory have come soon after Tet?)

War dissent and related incidents in the United States are played up highly. America has been portrayed as on the verge of internal collapse. More recently, however, many North Vietnamese are starting to perceive that internal dissent must not be a fatal disease in the U.S. system (otherwise, would not the predicted collapse already have occurred?). The government of North Vietnam has no desire to negotiate for peace, because its unshakeable goal is to have South Vietnam.

Ideologically, North Vietnam is far more closely tied to the Soviet Union than it is to Red China. The tensions between the two latter nations "worries" the North Vietnamese very much. Direct Chinese military intervention in Southeast Asia is highly improbable, unless the war expands beyond Cambodia and Laos (presumably into Thailand and Burma).

The defector did not attach any great military significance to China's road network being built toward Thailand and Burma (he may not have been very well informed on this subject).

The officer had no direct knowledge regarding the treatment of American POWs. In his judgment he felt confident they are treated fairly well because "they want to keep them alive." When asked, "In other words, they want to milk the last ounce of propaganda and political value out of the American POWs," his answer was a firm, "Yes." The people of North Vietnam have a satisfactory amount of food, primarily due to large imports by sea.

The economy of North Vietnam has suffered because of the large percentage of personnel and other resources devoted to the war. The currency, however, is fairly stable, and inflation is not a large problem because wages and prices are rigidly controlled.

Asked what additional steps he thought the U.S. could take to help achieve peace and stability in Southeast Asia, he replied with some feeling, "Win the war."

Asked why he chose to return to Saigon (he was born near Saigon of a peasant family), he replied that he was upset over NVA war plans for this summer. He felt that the recent US-ARVN operations in Cambodia had contributed to an alteration of those plans. (This discussion was not pursued because it would have led to classified military matters, which were beyond the purpose of the meeting).
U.S. TROOP WITHDRAWAL FROM CAMBODIA

On June 29, six members of the committee went to the sanctuary areas of Cambodia to view the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Elements of the 101st Cavalry Division were the last to return to South Vietnam. There were still some U.S. military advisors with ARVN troops on June 29, but all of them were out of Cambodia by late afternoon of June 30.

Based on personal observations and talks with American, Vietnamese and Cambodian officers and servicemen, the committee concluded that all American combat troops were out of Cambodia by June 30, 1970.

CAMBODIA

Cambodia has less than seven million inhabitants. From the end of French rule in 1953, until the spring of 1970, the dominate political figure has been Norodom Sihanouk, first as King and then as Prince. Although the country has a popularly elected legislative body, its powers were progressively diminished. Prince Sihanouk claimed to be a nationalist anxious to maintain the independence of the country, but the leaders who deposed him now say he was a “traitor.”

South Vietnam and Laos are contiguous to Cambodia and much of the border area is covered by jungle. Several years ago the North Vietnamese established large sanctuaries in Cambodia from which to carry on the conflict in South Vietnam. Cambodia's present leaders say that since Sihanouk approved the sanctuaries, the country really has not been “neutral”. In May of 1965, Sihanouk broke relations with the United States. Relations were re-established in 1969 when we sent a charge d'affaires to Phnom Penh.

Although the Khmers (Cambodians) comprise about 85 percent of the population, there are sizable numbers of Vietnamese and Chinese in the country, along with Chams of Moslem descent and hill tribes. Although Cambodians have been traditionally suspicious of all Vietnamese and Thais, officials in Phnom Penh said they want and need South Vietnamese aid in resisting North Vietnamese and Viet Cong aggression.

The policies of Sihanouk steadily created a growing uneasiness in the country. In late 1969, as nearly as can be determined, other leaders discussed cautiously how to cope with the situation. Sihanouk's departure for Europe this January provided the opportunity to do something about it. Demonstrations started in several Cambodian border areas against the occupation by North Vietnamese. These were followed by demonstrations in Phnom Penh, resulting in the sacking of the North Vietnamese and Chinese embassies on March 11. Resentment against Sihanouk on the part of Cambodian leaders—the Army, intellectuals, and students—ended in the displacement of the Prince as Chief of State by unanimous action of the National Assembly, and the establishment of a new government under Lt. General Lon Nol, who had already been Prime Minister. Even before that action, Prime Minister Lon Nol had issued an ultimatum demanding that North Vietnamese and Viet Cong forces leave Cambodia within 72 hours. When these demands were not met, Cambodia requested and received some direct support from the South Vietnamese Army (ARVN). Penetration of the eastern sanctuaries has continued by the ARVN.
On April 30 President Nixon announced that U.S. forces would co-operate with those of South Vietnam to “clean out” enemy sanctuaries, but that such U.S. forces would be withdrawn by June 30.

About a third of the country is now the scene of conflict with forces opposed to the new Cambodian government, nearly all of them NVA. Elsewhere these forces occupy a number of cities and towns. Most of the principal highways are interdicted by anti-government forces ranging from a few men to large units. VC, NVA and possibly some small pro-Sihanouk groups of the Communist Khmer Rouge are active in the countryside.

When military operations began, the Cambodian army numbered about 39,000. Its effectiveness was limited by inadequate training and neglected equipment. Communications, mobile equipment and air support were lacking. The present Cambodian leaders list their immediate needs as including arms and ammunition, plus communications and transportation equipment. Even if these items are made available, additional time will surely be needed to provide training of personnel.

As of the date of this report, the United States has sent some 35,000 small arms, more than 10,000 other weapons, and medical supplies. Cambodia hopes that other countries will also furnish clothing, training facilities, and even perhaps volunteers. Ten thousand Cambodians have begun training in South Vietnam.

The committee made it clear that, in its opinion, the United States would meet the pre-announced deadline for withdrawal from the Cambodian sanctuary areas, and continue a progressive reduction of U.S. combat forces in Southeast Asia. Cambodian leaders, although not happy about the prospect, are reconciled to it. They still expressed, however, the hope that the United States would continue to supply them with military hardware. Captured enemy weapons and ammunition, it is estimated, will give them a slightly greater capability for a few months. After that, additional arms and ammunition will be required. Although the army strength has increased to 180,000 through mobilization of men and women, we were told that many of these are government and office workers who do not really need arms. Estimates provided the committee were to the effect that about 70,000 or 80,000 should eventually be armed.

The conflict in Cambodia is not a civil war. Cambodians are not fighting Cambodians. Divisive internal elements are minimal in the country, although one cannot exclude the possibility that Sihanouk may be able to rally some Cambodians in the countryside. From what should be the viewpoint of other countries of Southeast Asia, this is the first opportunity for them to join together to help a beleaguered neighbor against a common enemy. The elimination of a number of key enemy sanctuaries may provide both a short breathing spell for the Cambodians to improve their own military capability and for other nations of the area to devise a common strategy.

While Cambodians understand that no U.S. troops will assist them, they remain hopeful that, if the need becomes urgent, the United States will at least provide air support. At the present time, U.S. Air Force activities in Cambodia are confined to the northeast section of the country, although the committee was told there are no restrictions upon operations by the Vietnamese Air Force in Cambodia.

Under Prince Sihanouk the defense establishment took about a third of the national budget. Presently, the military outlay has been increased five-fold. Although the war in the country has been in progress
for only a few months, the economy has already been seriously affected. Little revenue is coming into the treasury and inflationary pressures have begun.

Except for the presence of pill-boxes, barbed wire and numerous soldiers, Phnom Penh and its citizens appear to be carrying on as usual. The loss of Sihanoukville (Kompong Som) formerly Cambodia's principal seaport on the Gulf of Thailand, would deny the country its major supply point and restore its availability to the North Vietnamese as a principal supply route for much of South Vietnam. It was estimated by a number of authorities that about 85 percent of the supplies the enemy had been using against the southern part of South Vietnam have been coming through the port of Kompong Som. These were transported across Cambodia by truck to the sanctuary areas—something that has been occurring for several years.

During the committee's stay on Cambodian soil, both in the sanctuary areas bordering on South Vietnam and in the capital, members were impressed both with the evident success of the sanctuary clearing operation and with the apparent determination of the Khmer people to maintain themselves.

LAOS

The Royal Laotian Government (RLG) is perennially and seasonally menaced by Communist Pathet Lao (PL) and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) troops pushing out of mountain and jungle areas into populated Mekong River lowlands. Until recently the Laotian Government forces have been able to reclaim much of the territory so taken during the dry season.

The Communist control most of the country's terrain, but the Government most of the people. The Lao are basically a peaceful people who want to be left alone. Hundreds of thousands of them have fled either the Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese Army or U.S. Air Force and Royal Laotian Air Force (RLAF) air strikes. Fortunately, most of them have gone south toward freedom, rather than north toward Communism.

The Committee members received conflicting reports on the abilities of the Royal Laotian Army and those of the Royal Laotian Air Force. Their capabilities have improved, however.

There are relatively few U.S. governmental employees stationed in Laos—about 900 in the mission and 2,000 in all. There are very few American military men in Laos acting as advisors to the Royal Laotian Army. Other Americans work with the tribal forces, such as those led by Meo Maj. Gen. Vang Pao. Most of the other Americans in Laos are either with the Embassy or working in AID development programs.

USAF air strikes in Northern Laos are approved by the U.S. Mission. While the next year may be a difficult one militarily for Laos, United States, and RLG officials, including Prime Minister and Prince Souvanna Phouma, emphasize that they will neither make a request nor see the need for employment of U.S. ground troops in that country. However, the Prime Minister expressed the opinion that it is essential for Laos' future that the U.S. maintain some type of military support in Thailand.

The Members were told that continued American financial aid to the Laotian military is indispensable to Laos' existence. Not only does this aid provide the means for Laotian forces to deny the most heavily
populated part of the country to the North Vietnamese, but their military actions also result in tying down two crack NVA divisions that could otherwise be fighting in South Vietnam.

One other important factor adding to the volatile situation in Laos is the Chinese Communists' road-building program in NVA/PL-held areas of Northern Laos. Since 1964-65 the Chinese Communist have been building roads through that area designed to connect China and North Vietnam. Recent information indicates that the road may well be aimed at the Thai border. Once constructed, the road could be used to transport supplies in one day, where it now takes 30 days.

The long-term outlook in Laos is therefore cloudy. If the Communists choose to break more openly the 1962 Geneva accords, they could overrun Laos and imperil Thailand.

THAILAND

Thai government officials are convinced that the countries of Southeast Asia should assume greater responsibility for their own security. Especially is this true with respect to manpower. However, they stress the need for U.S. military equipment, as they do not want to become dependent for defense equipment upon any country with whom they could have a territorial dispute.

The United States has approximately 32,000 Air Force personnel with equipment at six major Thai air bases in addition to several smaller facilities. Thai officials express fear that U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam and Thailand might be carried out in such a way as to be misunderstood. They fear that the people in some nations of the area might interpret U.S. withdrawal as abandoning the goal of self-determination for Southeast Asian nations rather than a belief the South Vietnamese can handle their own manpower requirements. Such misunderstanding, they feel, could have adverse consequences in a struggle which is partly psychological.

Thai officials state that the war in South Vietnam has never been simply a “Vietnamese War” but rather that North Vietnam with Chinese backing has for many years been waging a war to dominate all of Southeast Asia. If they had not been convinced of this fact, they state they would never have sent troops into South Vietnam.

They also expressed the opinion that Americans should understand that North Vietnamese aggression against Laos and Cambodia is nothing new, because the North Vietnamese have partially occupied these countries for years.

While Thailand is prepared to furnish troops and training to assist the Cambodians, the Thais say they cannot do so without external financial assistance. Foreign Minister Thanat Komar was obviously disturbed by reports emanating from the United States that the Thai soldiers in South Vietnam were “mercenaries”, when the Thai government needs financial aid for part of their expenses. Thai officials stated that their soldiers were paid far less than prevailing civilian wage rates in Thailand.

The Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) does not have enough trained pilots and ground crews to handle fully its need for air power, but it is training 100 pilots per year, and wants to train more. The Thais believe they have enough pilots, so that with updated planes they could handle more of the air responsibility for the region. They say it would
be better psychologically to have Asians flying aircraft over targets in Southeast Asia, which would afford less opportunity for the Communists to create anti-American feelings.

Thai expenditures for defense account for 23 percent of their budget, and those for economic and social development are 14 percent of the budget. Their economic position is obviously stronger than that of most of Southeast Asian nations.

Communist guerrilla activities along the border with Malaysia are being countered through close cooperation with the Malaysian armed forces and police. Thais are concerned about North Vietnamese activities on their border with Cambodia, and about the modern fortified road which is being built from China to Thailand's northern frontier.

Thailand strongly supports an Asian development program based upon Mekong River development. Extensive surveys and construction of two dams have already begun. Thailand would welcome North Vietnamese participation and sharing in the benefits of such development, if North Vietnam would turn to peaceful pursuits and abandon any plan to take control of much of Southeast Asia by force.

INDONESIA AND SINGAPORE

Members of the Committee visited Indonesia because half of the population and much of the resource potential of Southeast Asia lie within that nation. Indonesian diplomatic initiatives show promise that this young nation, which has achieved its own independence, sees itself as playing a leading role in the Southeast Asia region.

Indonesia would appear to be a prime mover in developing East Asian regionalism, not only at the present time but especially in the future. The future is emphasized because of Indonesia's continuing problem of creating a viable nation out of a vast archipelago. Not only do these island people have wide racial, linguistic, cultural and religious differences, but there is a problem of creating a rational economic system out of the chaos left by Sukarno. However, since the fall of Sukarno, Indonesia's new leaders have shown a willingness and ability to step forward and provide responsible international leadership. An example of this was the May 16, 1970, meeting in Djakarta at which eleven Asian nations, with a combined population of approximately 350 million people, met on their own initiative to discuss the Cambodian crisis.

Indonesia has taken a responsible and positive role in regional economic developments and, to some extent, in a parallel development of political organizations. Because the present day Indonesian leaders do not have the personal pretensions and ambitions of former leaders, they are better able to provide acceptable leadership for nations of the area.

The varied island nature of the nation provides more scope for developing individual leaders with differing backgrounds. This, together with the national spirit developed through its own achievement of independence, furnishes the impetus for its initiatives. The Members were impressed by the capability, and the depth and breadth of perspective of those Indonesians with whom they talked. The diplomatic initiatives of Foreign Minister Adam Malik—one of the several very competent and effective civilians in what has been thus far a military government—reflect the Indonesian potential for leadership. In the search for stability in the area, so as to be able to achieve real economic
progress, Malik has adopted the approach that his country must take action to "buy more time" to achieve Indonesia's national development objectives.

Indonesia does not want to help in the present Cambodian situation, but has not yet found an appropriate alternative or means to implement her diplomatic initiatives.

Despite the heritage of debts and low per capita income from the Sukarno era, Indonesia is turning the corner economically but it is not climbing out fast enough to assume significant overseas commitments. They still feel that they cannot afford to furnish troops for external military action, specifically for Cambodia. Neither they nor the other Southeast Asian nations are psychologically prepared for a defense organization such as NATO; they feel they cannot afford it politically or economically. In their view they cannot support a combat role on the mainland of Southeast Asia.

Indonesia, which was so recently dominated by a foreign power, cannot be seen—either internally or by its neighbors—as again even being remotely subservient to a foreign government. Thus, Indonesia must not only be careful about what it does, but also as to how and when it accepts foreign aid.

A number of primarily economic regional organizations have come into being with diffused leadership. Examples are: the Economic Commission on Asia and the Far East (ESCAFE), a United Nations organization; the Asian Development Bank (ADB); the Asian Parliamentarian Union (APU); and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat (SEAMES). These organizations hold meetings, conferences, seminars, etc., not all of which are economically productive, but they have provided a form of cement and regional consciousness among the nations of the area. Through these meetings the leaders of the various nations of the area have come to know one another both officially and personally. Barriers still exist, but progress has been encouraging.

As the countries of Southeast Asia achieve a greater degree of economic and political cooperation, more effective regional defense relationships can and hopefully will be developed. Having been exposed to Communism in its own government and overcome it, the Indonesians believe their country has a bright, though difficult future, involving friendly and fruitful relationships with countries both of the East and of the West.

The city-state island of Singapore is strategically located in the heart of Southeast Asia. It can play a significant role in the region's development through its technological, banking and investment resources. Singapore is a center of commerce with an excellent educational system which contributes to its capability to play a most significant role in Southeast Asia. However, its potential is limited by its large population inhabiting a small area. This in turn may limit its significance in Southeast Asia.

After Singapore's rude awakening to the necessity of self-defense when Great Britain withdrew from its former protective role in the Far East, Singaporeans have put 30 percent of their budget into defense. Singapore does not receive U.S. military aid and prefers to buy U.S. weapons and equipment. Its efficient government uses Israeli military advisors who help produce tough, well-trained soldiers who contribute to the island-state's national development.
The leaders of Singapore rejected Communism and now pursue a policy of nonalignment. In supporting the U.S. Vietnamization policy, they indicate explicitly that we must not cause a "crisis of confidence" in Thailand and the rest of Southeast Asia by a precipitate pull-out.

**THE FUTURE OF SOUTHEAST ASIA**

The increase of military conflict in Cambodia and the tenuous situation in Laos inject additional uncertainties into the already complex situation in Southeast Asia. With the planned reduction and ultimate withdrawal of U.S. combat forces from South Vietnam, external economic assistance will be a survival factor exceeded only by the ability and will of the people of this region to make their own accommodations on how best to cope with external aggression and internal strife. An acid test is coming of their ability to survive as independent states with self-determined governments.

Some leaders in the region view the expansion of the war into Cambodia as an opportunity to draw together more closely the countries of that part of the world. A common strategy, grants of military equipment, provisions for mutual combat training, and the use of neighboring countries' forces to repel invasion are a few cohesive steps that have been suggested. South Vietnam has military units in Cambodia, and is helping to train the Cambodian army. The Thais have expressed a willingness to play an active role. The big question is if the combined manpower and military capacity of each of the possible allies is sufficient to help its neighbors to combat Communist aggression, and at the same time to fight insurgency at home. Distances are vast and terrain is rugged. Inadequate transportation systems, communications, and airpower are common weaknesses. Progressive reduction of the U.S. military presence in South Vietnam can make available much of the needed materiel. A question arises as to the extent to which the South Vietnamese themselves need this equipment to further their Vietnamization efforts, and to maintain their lengthy supply lines if they penetrate more deeply into Cambodia.

Before one becomes intrigued by the potentials for close and continued military association of the countries of Southeast Asia, it is well to recall that hostilities that run deep into history cannot easily be erased. The past trials and tribulations of NATO, comprising nations with a common long and bitter experience in war, suggest some of the problems these less sophisticated countries now face.

Thailand excepted, all have a fragile political base. A century of colonial rule did not prepare them for survival as independent governments responsive to popular rule. While popular government may exist in all countries, the gap between the governing and the governed is often wide. The dangers of aggression and subversion understandably require a greater concentration of power in the hands of those entrusted with saving the country. The thin cadre of leadership often gravitates toward the military establishment. It is no easy problem to strike a balance between military demands and procedural and popular government.

The elements that make for a cohesive and viable nation-state, such as common language, common objectives, and a common thread of history, are in short supply in most of the countries. These shortages are a result of thousands of years of turmoil with boundaries and power
structures in perpetual change. Thus a greater and more pressing burden falls upon their governments to identify the interest of all citizens with the interest of the nation. To those whose land has fallen under colonial rule, occupation, and war, government means little more than taxation and military service. If the citizens' sights are to be lifted from defense of their ancestral hamlets, something they have been doing for centuries, to defense of central and remote centers of power whose motives they suspect, the government has a responsibility to develop and make known a set of meaningful values that merit defense.

Few governments in the region have mastered the technique of reaching down to their citizens and rallying them to support a common cause. Such success as North Vietnam has had in this regard has been achieved only at heavy human cost and through massive propaganda techniques. Other governments in the area have yet to devise and implement a strategy of communications with their own citizens. This information vacuum has been filled by broadcasts from Hanoi. (See section on Communications and Public Information Programs above.)

While the economy of South Vietnam has been covered in detail above, further general remarks about Southeast Asia's economy seem in order. There the potentials for development are considerable. Traditionally, the large river basins that form the southern part of Southeast Asia are the "rice bowls of Asia." A wide variety of agricultural crops, together with livestock, form the basis for the area's economy. Even in the piedmont areas, subsistence farming has been the backbone of the economy. Mechanized farming and improved agricultural techniques could vastly increase production once "pacification" is achieved.

The long period of conflict and insecurity that dates back to World War II has made farming precarious and hazardous. Millions have become unwilling refugees divorced from their land. Manpower has been drained to fill the demands of military service. For many, exposure to the excitement and somewhat greater security of urban life has not encouraged a return to the routine of a rural society.

To meet their heavy fiscal burdens, governments have relied increasingly upon government ownership or control of business. (Thailand is the exception.) The effect has been to stifle private initiative and to multiply the problems with which government cannot cope.

The area does not lack the basic resources to embark upon industrialization. Take South Vietnam as an example. With peace and improved farming techniques, soil and climatic conditions will permit food production with a smaller percentage of the populace. There are five excellent ports. With training, many Vietnamese mechanics are as proficient as their contemporaries in the industrial nations. The Mekong Delta offers bright prospects for multi-purpose development, including power generation.

In each country, fiscal strategy more than military strategy may well be the decisive factor in national survival. Inflation is widespread and growing. Mounting military costs cannot be sustained if the economy falters. A decline in foreign exchange earnings, the import of necessary (and sometimes unnecessary) items, and a shaky tax base strain the financial resources. Our own efforts to combat inflation in the face of heavy domestic and defense expenditures are a microcosm of the problems faced by these countries. If inflation is allowed to go unchecked, the governments face financial ruin.
The current instability of the area is not conducive to a major influx of private investment. Reduction of U.S. military outlays that parallel the reduction in our troop strength adds another problem.

While Communist China, either directly or through its satraps, remains a military threat to Southeast Asia, the quiet economic penetration of Japan is giving cause for some concern over the long haul. It requires no exhaustive research to become aware of Japan's role in Saigon, Bangkok, Vientiane, Djakarta, or Phnom Penh. The endless procession of wheeled vehicles, ranging from bicycles to automobiles, and a walk through the commercial centers give convincing evidence. One member expressed his concern this way, "The United States will spill the blood and spend the billions; Japan will move in and capitalize." Southeast Asians do not generally look upon Japan today as a Asian protector or mediator. Although still linked with the United States by security arrangements, they note Japan's slowly strengthening military posture and its rapidly increasing economic aggressiveness. The impending reversion of Okinawa to Japan is a further thrust southward.

What of the future role of the United States in Southeast Asia? Most officials of the various governments with whom members of the Committee spoke are reconciled to, but unhappy about, the determination to withdraw our combat forces from the area. Some seem to welcome it, provided direct economic assistance is bolstered. With varying degrees of bluntness, all urge increased military equipment, more training, the presence of advisors, and air support.

If the U.S. presence is to be low-keyed, it would be advisable to increase emphasis on international lending agencies such as the World Bank and the Asia Development Bank. Certainly, Japan is in a position to and should pick up a larger share of the burden.

Perhaps the U.S. has gone full circle in this part of the world and should direct its assistance to specific, but essential activities. Three fields that warrant immediate assistance are agricultural and industrial development and public administration.

Agriculture is the basis of the economy. If it falters, these countries face serious internal problems. Industrialization offers a needed economic balance. Public administration should fill the gap in the design and operation of essential public services and provide the glue needed to hold these countries together.

After a long and costly involvement in Vietnam, the progressive reduction of U.S. forces will have a short-term adverse effect upon the Vietnamese economy. One can only guess at the number of Vietnamese who, directly or indirectly, derive all or much of their livelihood from the sale of goods and services to the United States and its personnel in that country. While Vietnamization of the military forces continues, any sudden drop in U.S. assistance will only intensify economic strains and jeopardize the financial structure. This juncture of conditions both offer opportunity and the absolute need to exert more leverage upon the Vietnamese government to address itself more vigorously to improved military capabilities, internal reforms, and to put its economic house in order. Possibly these pressures will not be well received. But such pressures are imperative if one both reads correctly the mood of the United States and observes the reaction of the South Vietnamese to the overwhelming American presence.
In submitting these supplemental views, I seek in some measure of proper balance to reflect the human and social dimensions of the investigation conducted by the Select Committee on Southeast Asia. In my dissent on a number of matters, I believe the difference is accounted for in the greater emphasis I have given to views of South Vietnamese people, student leaders and religious groups as distinguished from the military establishment.

About Southeast Asia, U Thant was never more right than when he said: "In times of war, the first casualty is truth." I found that what was cited as facts in Washington seldom coincided with realities in Saigon. And what we saw in the Vietnamese countryside seldom resembled what the central government told the people.

U.S. POLICY QUESTIONED

I am saddened but obligated to report that we are not winning the war or support of the people in Southeast Asia. The military is performing its mission well but within the context of a foreign policy geared to a conventional military victory instead of a political settlement. The United States emphasis is on getting more countries involved in the war rather than encouraging peaceful settlements with their neighbors.

The basis of that policy regards the conflict to be between communism and the "free world." Halting Red China, not achieving self-determination for South Vietnam is the United States official concern. Our policy is in direct conflict with the aspirations of the South Vietnamese who seek independence from all foreign powers and national pride. Most of the people are suspicious of our real intentions. They cite, when permitted, our support of corrupt, unpopular, military dictatorships who are for war as their means of getting American dollars and military backing to stay in power.

CAMBODIA

Our invasion of Cambodia is seen by many as another example of western imperialism. Great caution is warranted in describing the operation as a success since this depends on the objectives sought. The bulk of the Communists we pushed out of the sanctuaries are now occupying almost half of Cambodia's territory. The tensions we found in Phnom Penh and Bangkok certainly do not justify optimism that the United States military "success" has helped Cambodia and the rest of Southeast Asia. Everyone is now asking what will we do for a helpless nation.

(31)
Neysmen in Phnom Penh regarded our Cambodian operation as imposing on that country military and economic problems it cannot bear without massive United States assistance. The new military cost alone will exceed its current total national budget. Its revenues are almost shut off and its export trade interrupted. The North Vietnamese occupy many of its rubber plantations, a major resource.

Conflicting reports are heard in Cambodia concerning United States airpower already being in operation more than one hundred miles inland and in use other than "interdiction of supply routes." Cambodia can easily become our second "Vietnam-type mistake."

VIETNAM

In South Vietnam, we are ostensibly fighting for the selfdetermination of the people. Yet, every act of ours reflects paternalism: we direct their military, we select their political regimes, pay their armies, and even act as their negotiators. It was common throughout our trip to see American "advisers" answering our questions and even making the decisions while their South Vietnam counterparts merely nodded approval.

Mennonite missionaries in Vietnam in testifying before the Select Committee expressed it this way: "Vietnamese apparently see America as only replacing French imperialism; the feeling of being used still pervades their life and spirit . . . and causes nationalism to burn brighter among opposition elements."

The "opposition elements" constitute a majority can be deduced from the last time a national election was permitted in Vietnam. Somehow, Ambassador Bunker's assessment of the situation of President Thieu as bringing "democracy" and effective Government to Vietnam doesn't ring true.

ELECTIONS

In the presidential election in 1967, General Thieu won with only 35 percent of the votes cast which represented about 20 percent of the electorate. But this hardly describes the real facts.

Every conceivable means was used to suppress the opposition which was divided among many splinter parties. Candidates and voters alike were prohibited from discussing relevant issues, including peace. Popular candidates were jailed for their views. Freedom of the press and of assembly were curtailed.

Much publicity is being given to the recent local elections for province and city councils as being fair and popular in voter interest. Actually most persons regard these local bodies as meaningless and without any real power and duties. The real power lies in provincial chiefs who act as military governors and are appointed by the central government in Saigon.

In my opinion the most troublesome aspect of the situation in Vietnam is the suppression by the Thieu-Ky regime of those non-communist elements out of which a popular, independent, and peace-loving government can be created.

In a country where it is illegal to discuss peace, and where "neutralists" and "pacificists" are jailed for their views, there is little hope for much needed social change or ending the war.

Hopefully, I listened to such national leaders as Mrs. Tanh (Vice President of National Progressive Movement) who had been held in
jail without trial twice for a total of over two years merely because
she proposed a government of conciliation which would organize an
election with all concerned parties in agreement.

Most productive was a personal interview I was granted with the
venerable Thien Hoa, Rector of the Buddhist Institute and a leading
force in the powerful Buddhist religion whose faith commands 87
percent of the people.

I listened as he described the people's image of the Thieu-Ky
regime and of his peoples struggle for independence, nationalism, and
freedom from outside forces. I marveled at his great insight and belief
that a popular government, one not corrupt and evil, could stand
strong and resist both communism and imperialism. Failure to use
such powerful figures as this religious leader is one of the most tragic
mistakes of the Thieu government.

With sadness, Thieu Thien Hoa, described how such forces as the
Buddhist, students, and disabled war veterans—forces upon which a
sound anticommmunist government could be built—were being op­
pressed, tortured, and jailed.

Significantly, therefore, there are alternatives to war being proposed
by indigenous leaders whose voices are being suppressed by a govern­
ment which stays in power only because it is supported by the United
States. Is there any wonder then that so many South Vietnamese
express the belief that if American military powers were withdrawn
the people in Vietnam could solve their problems among themselves.

As I listened to young students who had been arrested, tortured
and imprisoned for expressing their opposition to the war and govern­
ment corruption, I became more critical of what is happening to the
people in Southeast Asia. At first, it was hard for me to believe the
stories of detention, interrogation, and torture of those who opposed
a corrupt government and an absurd war. On my last day in Vietnam,
I decided to visit Con Son Prison in search of a truth I hoped did not
exist.

CON SON

Con Son is a South Vietnamese National Prison located on a remote
island in the South China sea. Four of us Congressman Anderson,
myself, a staff member Tom Harkins, and an interpreter, Don Luce
made the—trip. We were accompanied by the Director of Public Safety
for the American program CORDS, Frank E. Walton, and other
United States AID personnel. Our government furnished a modest
amount of aid for improvement of the national prison system.

On Con Son Island we were escorted through the prison facilities
by the Commandant, Colonel Nguyen Van Ye.

After routinely visiting the more visible cell compounds, our group
by virtue of unique and ingenious circumstances observed certain
areas of the prison known as the Tiger Cages in which are kept political
prisoners who had the courage to express their belief in peace.

No one can possibly describe this compound except one who has
experienced the brutal torture of these chambers. Attached to my
report is a statement of persons who have. After observing the torture
cells and talking to many of their occupants, I believe all that is
reported by them.

The Tiger Cages are cells approximately 5 feet wide and 10 feet
long. Five persons are crowded into this space surrounded by cement
walls and floors on which inmates sleep. About a foot off the floor is an iron rod to which the legs of the inmates are shackled. Lying in this position for years causes a paralysis of the legs.

Occupants are fed a small portion of rice and a few dried fish, often molded, and always an inadequate amount of water which forces the prisoners through exhaustion to drink their urine.

At the top of the cages are kept boxes of lime which is sprinkled into the cages to quiet any noise or disturbance. More often, however, those who protest against their treatment are beaten by trustees who thereby earn special privileges.

In opposition to prison officials, we used the walkway atop the cages to interview various prisoners. Among them several students, a Buddhist monk, and an elderly woman 60 years of age who was blinded from beatings. None we interviewed had criminal records but generally had been imprisoned, often without judicial trial merely for participating in peace demonstrations. Although many were sick, medical care was practically nonexistent. The only merciful thing observed was a separation of men and women.

I described Con Son in some detail because it represents the evils of a government that can only stay in power by suppressing the people and limiting their constitutional rights.

Con Son is a symbol of how some American officials will cooperate in corruption and torture because they too want to see the war continued and the government they put in power protected.

Con Son dramatizes what war does to the countryside, the villages and hamlets that our planes and firepower have devastated and the thousands of civilians we have maimed, killed or made homeless.

Con Son is the type of "not-looking-at-our-own-faults-and atrocities" that endangers our American prisoners of war held by the Communist. By exposing and opposing torture regardless of by whom committed, I believe we can best help those Americans for whom we plead humane treatment and a safe return.

VIETNAMIZATION, PACIFICATION AND LAND REFORM

Much of the Committee's time was devoted to exploring the question of what happens if and when the Americans withdraw. Vietnamization and the pacification programs have been upheld as assuring a safe and viable society. Land reform has been cited as a means of providing self-help among the peasants who have either been displaced or relocated.

In theory, there is not much to disagree with the objectives of these programs even though the statistics seem inflated with unwarranted optimism. Statistics on pacification indicate an increase in American casualties since December and in the number of Viet Cong terroristic attacks. These may be temporary trends of course.

In the final analysis, I agree with the venerable Thien Hoa's appraisal of these programs, that their success depends on the quality of the government that administers them.

RACE RELATIONS

The militant young black soldiers in Vietnam is one of the war's touchiest aspects. I was always suspiciously regarded by top brass whenever I talked to black soldiers apart from their officers.
Even in the military stockade at Long Bien when I requested the opportunity to meet privately with soldiers from my own state, the group assembled for me did not contain a single black soldier although 61 percent of the stockade population is black.

When asked the reason for this high percentage, Colonel Jones, the Confinement Officer, himself a Negro replied: The black soldier is anti-establishment and anti-war. I suppose in this respect our black soldiers and South Vietnamese people are soul brothers. But other reasons may lie beneath: racial bias, unequal assignment, double standards, and a lack of understanding at the command level.

I intend to explore further.

I can report our black soldiers are fighting with gallantry. Thirteen percent of battle deaths are black. Many raised questions about conditions back home. They spoke cynically of violence and discrimination against blacks in America. Many sent messages to their families that I will deliver in person.

In barracks everywhere I noticed a great variety of black pinups that displayed not only genuine beauty but pride and black awareness that in a subtle way indicated a new manhood.

Many fine directives on human relations were evident and I interviewed members of human relations councils in various command areas. Although non-minority personnel were generally of good intentions, I often sensed a lack of communication and sensitivity.

I strongly urge appointment of black civilian personnel at top level in the Department of Defense whose duties will involve monitoring and making more effective these human relations councils and assuring equal opportunity and treatment.

PRESIDENT THIEU

In our visit to the Palace and interview with President Thieu, I was struck with what can best be described as a smug and pleasantly-indefinite attitude. Two of his statements seemed highly important in being imprecise, one:

"I cannot say when the last United States soldier will leave. I believe we can replace them in 1971 except some for logistical support of United States bases."

The other as I recall was this: "The North Vietnamese are tired and don't want to continue but they may have been pushed to invade Vietnam and beyond, and they are pushed to continue the war, to continue their mission of 'liberation.' It is difficult for Hanoi to admit they were wrong."

Somehow this last statement does not exactly fit an enemy that was often described to us as "hard, cruel, and a tough fighter," or these words to be those of a seasoned military general.

Unlike Cambodia's Lon Nol, President Thieu seemed more irrelevant to his country and to his peoples' needs and I am not sure which of the two I may be doing an injustice.

A third dimension is added to an understanding of the nature of what we face in Southeast Asia by the many dedicated workers of volunteer agencies operating in Vietnam.

One such individual is Don Luce of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and former head of International Voluntary Services in Vietnam. Mr. Luce, who was our interpreter on Con Son, has done an outstanding service in revealing "the repressive nature of the Thieu-Ky regime.
which claims to be our ally in the search for peace.” (See Congressional Record, June 8, 1970, page E5344.) Mr. Luce described to members of our committee his personal experience of many years in Vietnam the brutal torture used by Saigon police to stifle dissent against the war by students.

In sharp contrast but of a contradictory nature was the testimony before the full committee of General Ainsworth of World Vision another volunteer agency. The following are excerpts from his presentation in respect to my questioning him on the extent of the student unrest after he had charged “only a negligible number was involved”:

Q. Back to student unrest. Only a few hundred students:
Are you saying that these individuals closed up all the schools for two months? Your statements seem to be in very sharp contrast to insertions in the Congressional Record about repression by the Government of students participating in dissent. There has been an indication of a very strong movement by the government to crush student unrest—including torture. How can these two things be reconciled?
A. I believe that out of the 50,000 students you would get a very small percentage (of students participating in dissent).

Q. Why were the schools closed for two months, then?
A. I believe that this government is so afraid it will be criticized by opposition for being undemocratic. The schools were closed because the students were throwing rocks at people who who were going by on the streets and burning Hondas.

Q. Do you know if the allegations of prison torture are accurate?
A. That also happens in the United States, in Arkansas, with people being killed and buried. Is there any difference?
Q. Yes, there is a difference when it is sanctioned. Do you know if the allegations of prison torture are accurate?
A. Imprisonment in the orient is not the same. I don’t know, but it is possible.
Q. Do you think this police force is generally cruel to the people?
A. I do not believe that these police are purposefully cruel.

Our recent “incursion” into Cambodia complicates the whole process of our withdrawal from Southeast Asia for this tragic “strategy” mistake involves us more deeply in the internal affairs of other nations.

Basically, however, it is South Vietnam and how we deal with this question that will determine both our role and our image in Southeast Asia, for the Vietnamese represent the plight of millions of Asians whose lives have been bitterly affected by colonialism. It is Vietnam that will always be on our conscience and serve as our test of world leadership.

Certainly the United States' involvement in the internal affairs of nations in Southeast Asia has caused enough suffering in the world and created too many divisions among its own citizens here at home. The vigor and respect for us of our youth are being destroyed.

As the worlds' most powerful military power, we can with dignity become its strongest leader for peace. Our deeds, however, must match our words. The first step is to withdraw our military from Indo-China and leave its peoples to determine their own way of life.

AUGUSTUS F. HAWKINS.
EXHIBIT IN SUPPORT OF VIEWS

CON-DAO PRISON

To:

Our Fellow Countrymen, Distinguished and Notable Guests, Fellow University and High School Students who have already been in prison and who have not yet been in prison, including also the fathers, the mothers, the older brothers, the younger brothers and sisters, the young friends of all the prisoners in all the prison wards of South Viet Nam.

Report of 5 students who have been returned from Con Dao Prison. They were released from Con Son Island on May 25, 1970.

Distinguished guests, Deputies, from the Joint Committee on Internal Affairs and Justice of the House of Representatives, dear friends, student representatives from the Saigon Student Union, the Joint Council of the Faculties of Hue University, and the Can Tho University, Chairman of the Committee to Oppose Repression of University and High School students, Chairman of the General Confederation of High School Students of Saigon, and close relatives of the prisoners on Con Son Island.

If we had to report to you everything about Con Son Prison, a prison which was established in 1939 and which has experienced many cruel regimes, colonialist, fascist, French, Japanese, and the one existing today, it would be impossible to do so.

To report about the existence of the more than 10,000 prisoners on Con Son Island, we are not yet able to act as their official representatives. So we only intend for the present, to simply report to you about a small portion of the situation of the prisoners on Con Dao, based on those facts from our own experience, we being the principal victims of a system they call "RE-EDUCATION", a system we lived under, endured, and suffered under for the year and more just past. We are prepared to testify in more details before any agency related to the government about the incidents, the affairs, the facts which we report here.

We appeal to the enlightenment and the frankness of our guests and honored deputies, those remaining people in this regime that we can still believe in. We hope that with the help of your spirit, guests, deputies, distinguished persons and our brothers who have been in prison, as well as those who have not yet been in prison, we can eradicate completely all of the evils of the prison system, and re-establish justice and reason for all those people who have lost their freedom.

We also call on all the communication media, both in and outside of the country, particularly the Saigon press, to print this report which reflects accurately and fully the prison system of Con Dao, though this is only a very small part of the infinitely tragic situation that has existed there for many years.

Distinguished guests: After being beaten and held in the Central Police Headquarters for more than 2 months; and having appeared
before the so-called "Field" court; and having received a sentence of imprisonment from 2 to 3 years based on a prepared statement, forcibly signed after many beatings, the members of the Field Court could find no way to clarify what they called our "crime" except by calling it a "disturbance of national security" as the government had already decided in advance. The frankness of our self-defense before the members of the Court was met with threats from the Military Police who also escorted us wherever we went, revealing their violent intentions in the face of and with the consent of the men on the bench (that is, the Field Court) who chose to ignore what was happening. The right of self-defense of a person convicted on no grounds, as we had all been, was rudely denied. The arguments of the Government Commissioner now only revolved clumsily around the words, "stubbornness, stubbornness..." and we were sentenced for "2 years imprisonment, 3 years imprisonment." Today we have returned for all to see. What do those sitting on the bench think of the sentences which they have passed in the name of justice. What does the government think of the years we were ill-treated in their prisons, of the months we were tortured to confess in the police stations. I am sure you know whose responsibility it is.

After being held for many months "imprisonment" in Chia Hoa prison, it was decided by the Prison Master there to transfer us to "hard labor". His intention to transfer us resulted in deportation to Con Son Island. Of course we could never accept this sentence, especially as he had decided by himself to change the sentence from "imprisonment" to "hard labor". Without warning, the Chia Hoa Prison Master sent us off to the island in an enclosed truck aboard a Navy boat #403; our legs shackled from the time we left the vessel and arrived on the Island, where we were welcomed by more than 300 Prison Orderlies (These are the prison's beating-specialists). We were forced to keep our heads bent down toward the ground and were hurried off to the prison ward amid sounds of rude cursing and swearing; amid the whipping rods of the people welcoming "This is Con Son, boy, do you hear!" "The Last Place They Will See." One old man, over 60 years old, from Bien Hoa, could not keep up as we went along because he was so old and weak. The orderlies beat and kicked him, rapped him on the head with a cane. "Be smart and you'll live." "Slowness Means Being Whipped, do you hear, boy?" The old man was beaten numberless times and suffered more than anyone during the welcoming that day. After one day in the prison ward they sent us to the Tiger Cage where our legs were shackled together from that day on, until we left the Island.

This is a room, or more correctly a small cage about 3 meters (10 feet) long and 1½ meters (5 feet) wide, in an area separated from the other cages by many walls and totally isolated from all life outside. They threw 5 people into this narrow cage. On the average, each person had only about 2 hand breadths of space in which to lie and live. The legs were shackled and held high day and night—even while eating, sleeping, washing—fastened to a metal rod about 4 or 5 meters (14 to 17 feet) long. They forced us to lie in silence; we couldn't sit or stir in this hot, narrow, dark cage. The cages are separated by stone walls more than a meter thick. A small door is kept tightly shut all day, except for a few minutes when it is opened and reclosed during meals. Above it are metal bars running horizontally lengthwise, with a small space or passageway left for the orderlies who make regular
checks. We had to lie there all day. Sitting or standing (during the first months) was not allowed. We only had to murmur one or two words ever so softly under our breath and we had to pay for it with the cruel lashings of the orderlies, as ordered by the Administration of the prison. Even when the latrine barrel was open and leaking all over so the floor had a pasty covering, we still had to lie quietly and endure it. The tile roof had leaked for years and never been repaired, and during the rains the water poured down into the cage, not to mention the sand pebbles, and blinding dust that came in on windy days. The ground where we lay was uneven, rough, bumpy with sand, pebbles and dirt since it was many years since the last time it had been cleaned. We were kept here continuously for the first four months. They now throw girls and women prisoners into these places.

The second place was the Cow Cage. This is a prison, located near a cattle feeding shed from the days of the French, which was built by the government in 1970. It was no different from the Tiger Cage except that it was bigger and hotter, 17 people being all thrown together into one of these cages. We were put in chains, and existed as before. Let me describe here what sort of food the government reserved for us.

The food regimen was officially determined for the more than 8000 prisoners in the various locations, wards, and underground cells, according to the various categories of prisoners that the government has set up here: military prisoners, political prisoners, general security prisoners, female prisoners (including children) and more than 2,300 prisoners whose cases were being re-examined.

We want to affirm clearly, at the beginning, that all year round our fellow prisoners are continuously and regularly given just 2 main things to eat, namely fish sauce and a dried fish, along with rice. This was all decided by the Administration, the quantity always being limited and regularly insufficient, not to mention the quality of the food we had to eat.

Besides the matter of allotting an insufficient amount of rice, there were many other ways of keeping us hungry, such as making us eat very fast (so it was impossible to eat much or enough to make us full). Specifically, in the Tiger Cage we were given 3 minutes to eat. A second way was to cook the rice and gruel so it was pasty and liquid, which rapidly filled your stomach so you could eat no more, but then even more rapidly left you hungry again, only an hour or 2 after eating. A third method the government used here to limit the prisoners' rice consumption was simply that most of the rice was mixed with sand and pebbles. Until the prisoners stand up to demand a re-organization of these conditions, they will continue to have little to eat and must accept a state of endless and constant hunger.

Finally, as you know, rice and gruel can't be eaten alone, but must have some flavoring to help get the rice past the throat, but here there was nothing but one kind of dried rotten fish that the prisoners all call dried Quinine because it is so bitter. People in the South of Viet Nam often buy this to use as compost for plants. Even among the most miserable Vietnamese or the people of the most remote minority groups, I have yet to see anyone use it for either human or animal food. There is no word that can adequately describe the quality of this dried Quinine. This dried substance was brought to the island in great quantities whenever it was selling cheap. They stored it for long periods, from 3 to 6 months, which made it even more bitter
and decayed. If there was a little oil they half-fried it, if not they boiled it by pouring on a scalding liquid to make something called "stew"; if there was not enough they poured in more water. At times they roasted it until it was burned black like a piece of coal. For this reason, only prisoners know how to find the saltiness in the bitterness of this dry rot; choked with tears, they swallow the rice grains, washing them down with resentment.

Aside from this dried quinine, there was also a "fermented sauce stirred in-to plain water". So much water was added to the sauce that you could only see a bit of shrimp residue barely coloring the bottom. We still remember many times when this food was brought into the cage it made us nauseous enough to vomit. So our deepest wish now is to eat rice with some grains of salt or sprinkled with a little salty water. That is enough to make it seem delicious. They only gave us salt a few times when they were in a good mood. But if they happened to be in a bad mood when you asked, you were liable to be beaten, as was one of our friends here who was called up to the Specialist Section and beaten and required to testify this past May 16th.

All year, month after month spent in the cage, not once did we ever see a bit of green vegetable or anything that could have been called fresh. Only a few times during New Years (the day when love appears among people). During the New Years holidays we only received a special piece of fried pork fat as big as the end of your finger. We understood that this piece of fat was no bigger now because it had "evaporated" enroute, through the intermediary hands of the orderlies, the organizers, the overseers of the prison. For lack of fresh food over a long period of time, most teeth became rotten and loose, even the biggest and hardest teeth. The only way to solve this condition was to find some leaves to eat, even if they were those distributed later to use to go to the bathroom, but which we had temporarily and painfully to call the "vegetables" of the Administration. Or we could look for insects, crickets, fleas, flying white ants, beetles, and even lizards, unfortunately flying past the prison door or unintentionally chased and falling off the top of the wall. We ate them alive, biting off and sharing pieces, saving some for the weakest among us who had never once in all these years been given a vitamin pill or eaten a bite of vegetable leaf that could serve as vitamins.

In order to get some vitamins or something fresh, sometimes after being called before the Specialist Section for a beating, though totally exhausted we tried to pick some blades of dry grass growing near the road and stick them secretly under our arm to bring back to the sick prisoners. That was the only "fresh" thing that we were ever able to get for food throughout that whole year, month after month of dried rotten fish and watery sauce.

We ate and drank only twice a day, first around 8 a.m., which we called lunch, and then again around 2 in the afternoon which we called dinner. The time between the afternoon and next morning's meal was 18 hours, out of the 24. They only gave us water to drink twice a day along with our meals; each time we received a small sweetened condensed milk can about ½ full of water. Since it was so hot and humid all year round in the crowded and dark cell, we mutually quenched our thirst with our collected urine. In the first terribly hot months our throats were so dry we couldn't swallow any rice, the esophagus and tongue got numb from thirst and there was only one other kind of water to be had, the water that remains from the latrine
barrel after it had been roughly rinsed out. And so we had to use this unsanitary germ-ridden water because of the cruelty of the chief of the specialists and the tight squeeze of the prison orderlies, and we were prepared not to tolerate or submit ourselves to them though we had to accept germs, though we had to accept sacrifice...

Due to these conditions of eating and drinking, most of us were sick, in addition to the symptoms we had after the savage beatings of the prison system. Some had stomach trouble from eating too fast and from eating the mixture of sand and pebbles, or suffered from chronic dysentery from having to drink cold water as we did in the Cow Cage. When we were sick like this, or physically exhausted, or when we could not eat at all, the problem of reporting this and getting permission to eat rice soup was very difficult indeed. Each sick person could only have a small bowl of rice soup and he had to talk endlessly before he even got that. If he reported he was sick and still got no soup, he got so hungry he had to stave off the hunger by eating a few spoonfuls of the gruel of one of the other prisoners beside him, knowing that if the orderlies caught him he would be beaten with a rod until he would have to give up eating for many days... as happened to one of our friends here who was beaten by an orderly who used his elbows and knees to pound him, and as happened to someone on a day in September 1969, because he had eaten one spoon of rice that a fellow prisoner had saved for him when he was sick. Though he called out, "I am sick. Why do you keep beating me so?" the orderly did not cease striking him except to answer shortly, "You're sick. Then let me beat you to death."

To sum up the issue of food and drink, we constantly were in a state of insufficiency, misery, and—compared with an animal who has someone to feed him—we were much worse off, even if you don't consider the savage beatings we received as compared with the lot of a family pet. But still we continued to endure this for more than 13 months, because we dared oppose the injustice and beastiality of the individuals who belong to the cruel government of Con Son Island.

These living conditions were all created by the Island Master and his committees, and the causes of these conditions originated in a policy called "5 year plan for economic self-sufficiency" which Mr. Le Canh Ve drew up in 1964. In direct requests, the Island Master began going around the usual contractor because he found that otherwise he could not divide things up and get as much as he wanted. On the economic self-sufficiency theory it was easy to deceive and flatter the government on the mainland. And he achieved the goals of his policy by exploiting the prisoners, limiting their food and drink, letting his men distribute the food supply, over which he held a complete monopoly, as they wished; he could arrange for supply any way he wished, he could grant anything he pleased. And at the end of each contract bid term, he didn't have to laboriously run up and down conniving with the contractor like the other Province Chiefs did before him... In this way Mr. Le Canh Bo was filled to overflowing on the starving, suffering, needy bellies of more than 8,000 prisoners.

Many times when the prisoners stood up and demanded an improvement in their living under the dynasty of Mr. Ve, it had seemed that a fierce accusation of the policy of economic self-sufficiency he had created, which meant a direct collision with his interests, was always answered by the Island Master with beatings by the group of specialist orderlies and security orderlies that he had set up and supported. Many
unscrupulously corrupt Province Chiefs in South Viet Nam who exploit the very bones and marrow of their own countrymen, have been protested by the people in favorable situations, but still succeeded without suffering revenge. The case of uncovering the unscrupulous corruption of the Province Chief of Con Son was not so easy, because the struggle of the prisoners could be labeled a “revolt,” “Communist rebel struggle,” “prisoners daring to resist,” by the Province Chief and his friends. Thus their suspicious activities continue over many years concealed from the eyes of the Saigon government and from public opinion despite the hatred and anger at injustices of the prisoners and all the people.

All this time the ration allotted to the prisoners was never made clear to the public. The Con Son government has put the blame on the Ministry of the Interior. Since the Re-Education Center has not granted them enough, the prisoners must accept their lot. Thus every struggle to demand an improvement in the life of the prisoners has no base to stand on and is always accused of “violating internal regulations” and is thus punished. Ultimately only 2 solutions were left to the Con Dao prisoners, namely to:

- Surrender and submit themselves to the cruelty, and live forever a miserable existence, slowly dying in need and oppression until the very end.
- Or continue the struggle by voluntarily sacrificing so that other fellow prisoners could live more easily than before, though it was necessary to sacrifice one’s body, go on a hunger strike to the death, slit one’s stomach, or disembowel oneself, in order to force the Island Master and his cohorts to find solutions to the minimum and simple aspirations of the prisoners (as happened on May 14, 1970, in the 4th Ward, where an unsuccessful request was made to meet with the head of the Specialist Section in order to demand a solution to the food problem of the prisoners.).

Besides the “Food” problem, we also had to cope with a modern method of “Washing” that came out of the Con Son Prison Master’s many years of experience in overseeing the prison, as well as the extraordinary code of “Dressing” practiced in the prison in the Tiger Cages. We called it “bathing in shackles” and “dressing stark naked, at least nearly so.”

The day they first pushed us into the Tiger Cages, our clothes, money, and medicines and all the other things an individual finds essential were taken, put all together and simply appropriated immediately by the orderlies, following the orders of the Administration. They purposely created a situation where everyone’s individual material possessions were all mixed up, using the pretext of having made a mistake in order to rudely steal from us. They deliberately recorded incorrectly the amounts of money they kept from us because a criminal in the “discipline cells” has no right to possess money. So each prisoner had to bear the loss of anywhere from 100$ to 1500$ piasters, which was a lot of money for us. And the grand total of all this stolen money was not so small considering that there were over 1000 prisoners that they called “isolated” prisoners. A classical example, in my case I lost all my clothes, and possessions, including all the letters that my family sent. How can one tolerate a situation of injustice and robbery right in the place that the government calls a “re-education center,” a “reformatory.” If we complained then the
overseer whom we called Mr. Chin Rong issued the order for a merciless beating as revenge for our complaint which he called "daring to protest" (in the case of university student Nguyen van Chin). Sometimes the complaints were ignored and left unsolved as in the case of Mr. Nguyen Tuan Kiet and Mr. Tran van Long, not to mention all the other prisoners who have had similar experiences.

We still continued to struggle and complain about their oppressive, barbarian and inhumane actions until the morning we were returned to mainland. Only then did we get their answer: "You already have your freedom; what are all those little things you lost worth compared to that." How ironic and bitter is the price of freedom for a prisoner.

We could only keep one outfit. In this single outfit we had to pass all the terribly hot days and months, as well as the months of winter on Con Dao when the cold penetrated us to the very bone. There were no blankets, no sleeping mats; we lay flat on the earth floor, our skin covered with ulcers from the gravel we lay on for long days and months. As for washing, during the first months (April, May, June, July) we were only allowed to wash once a week, and then our feet were kept chained to this short metal bar. We sat together and the orderly poured a tub of water over the 5 of us. Naturally the water never got our whole body wet. Moreover, during the past 13 months, washing our mouths or brushing our teeth was unheard of. Brushing the teeth and washing the mouth was something the authorities, the "discipline" keepers, absolutely forbade us. We couldn't even go to the bathroom; for toilet paper we had to use a small scrap of cloth ripped from a shirt or pants pocket, which we carefully washed out with urine so it could be used again and again.

Living under these conditions of eating, dressing, and shelter, the prisoners had to endure confusion and serious disease. Food was inadequate, beatings were regular, feet were shackled day and night. Most of our fellow prisoners in the cages were paralyzed, on the average 2 out of the 5 persons were paralyzed, not to mention the number suffering from chronic dysentery (resulting from the drinking water); tuberculosis due to long-term physical exhaustion; stomach disorders from the beatings by the orderlies, from eating sand and pebbles, from eating too fast; gangrenous feet from a lack of vitamins; and endless other diseases and medical problems such as mumps, swellings, etc. Medicine was dispensed as the person in charge of medical problems was inspired to do so. Here, every time we wanted to ask for medicine we had to wait until we were in agony and then we generally only received a few aspirin tablets. Any medicine more valuable than this was all hoarded by the orderlies and their accomplices in the administration and was taken away and sold. The situation now is even more tragic than when we were in the Cow Cage around February, March, April, May of 1970. Weakness, pain, or the effects of beatings over many days and death during the subsequent period was nothing unusual.

No matter what medical problem the prisoner has: T.B., diphtheria, ... he is still thrown in with all the others who are not sick, all still eat out of the same bowl, sleep together, shackled to the same rope. We know of no other place on earth where human lives are so cheap as in Con Dao, to the degree that the government and the orderlies there dared to state openly to us that "If you die it only costs us a piece of paper." A sheet of paper which they call the announcement.
to the Re-education Center of the Ministry of the Interior. This evidence can serve to help you all see clearly what our conditions of life and death were like.

Medical problems on Con Dao were entrusted to a lieutenant in the medical corps. We had heard his name, but never once did any of us see his face, even though we were taking our very last breath. Seeing this Doctor in charge was a remote dream for us political prisoners because, in the name of this ideal or that ideal, he avoided having to treat directly these people he called V.C. . . . especially the sick who were in agony and really needed him. Thus medical work was entrusted to people under him: Some were truly capable but lacked the needed medicines and supplies; others had just studied their profession for 2 or 3 months and only understood the names of drugs. There was one male nurse one time who was very capable and wanted to cure us of our diarrhoea and asked the administration for more drugs. He was suspected of being an accomplice of the V.C. and could have been thrown into the cells too for doing something like that. Though we were dying, the medicine our families sent us never reached our hands, for the simple reason that we were being disciplined and could not receive pills. Many people have died in spite of the piles of medicine their families sent them, which was kept stored in the warehouse of the specialists.

Deputies, student representatives and relatives of the prisoners at Con Son.

Through our report of the ConSon government's treatment as concerns our food, our diseases, the squeezing of our means and their robberies, the shameful acts of the Province Chief and his fellows, we hope to have given you some small views of the prisoners' life at Con Dao. The corruption of the Con Son government has not been reported despite the bitter resentment of the prisoners who have lost their freedom and who have been in agony. These facts are not as barbarous and violent as the beatings, repressions, mental and physical terrorisms they carry out on us. To perform these cruel scenes, special committees have been set up. The security-committee, responsible to the province chief has at its head a proctor, with “3 grades” named “Mr. Chin Khuong”, his assistant “Mr. Chin Rong” directly commands over a thousand orderlies who specialize in beatings. The office of beating is near Camp 2, area with its stores of lime powder, canes, chains, shackles and other equipments for torture. Whenever the prisoner is tortured and beaten, he must sign under the following statement: “Not being beaten at all” and similar statements such as “the dried fish are deliciously fried and we prisoners ask for more” in case of food problems.

In order to explain the silent and subtle killing “machine” and the violent barbarian beating “machine” that the Island Master set up, we will successively report the following situations.

Being political prisoners, we sympathize with and feel pity for the fate of our fellow-prisoners. On the other hand we feel broken hearted at the sight of some prisoners who work as “orderlies”, order and security specialists, which we recognize, are part of the terrible policy of “division for government” by the Con Son government to crush the prisoners. A most painful case publicized by the press, was the death of 7 prisoners on May 31, 1970, most of them political prisoners. The rest are seriously injured and in agony. At Con Dao there are a number of prisoners convicted of robbery, killing people, and
raping who are sentenced from 5 to 20 years of hard labor, and death punishment. These include military culprits who could have been retrained by the government in order to participate in the equal life of the Vietnamese community. However, the Con Son government encouraged their cruelty and barbarism by giving them the title of "Order Guard" of the prison. They use materialistic means and allow a certain indulgence to attract and increase the cruelties of the "Order and Security" prisoners, while they could have ended these acts.

Some of the prisoners who were attracted by these materialistic means, once again sold their soul to take the responsibility of "keeping the order". They are used as reformative cadres because they directly beat and control the lives of prisoners in the various prison wards and cells. Their inhumane acts of beating, of killing and disposing of us increase the "prestige" of the administrators, and the confidence and favors on the part of the authorities. They have much hope of having their sentences reduced through the report of the Administrative Committee that "they behave well". Thus the orderlies' killing actions were easy activities, even pastime hobbies.

The Con Son government's toleration of these barbarous acts of the orderlies encourages their bestial desires, most clearly, through the acceptance of their lusty activities: visiting the prostitute houses, injection of marihuanas and opium and gambling. This type of life has been and is still being public at Con Son. Smuggled opium is bought through the intermediary of the proctors. Gambling is tolerated by the upper proctors. Prostitution is provided by a series of girls. The orderlies fight in these activities, sometimes even killing each other. With the support of the Con Son authorities and with their assigned positions, they publicly grab our money. Some of them possess as great a sum as 4 or 500,000 piasters from these "activities" (as is the case of the orderly Tam Kinh) or are released after having been able to kill too many political prisoners (as is the case of Muoi Mau).

The Island Master and the heads of the committees protect these acts that they themselves have planned, and destroy the evidences of robbery and acts of cheating the prisoners of their food ration in order to raise poultry for their own benefit.

At the island, a prisoner who wants to buy something must get it through the order-committee, i.e. through a "filter" who fixes the price of the items. The prisoner has only a choice either to buy it or not, either to need it from the prison or not. Money coming from the prisoners of the tiger-cages may reach a million piasters, and this is freely divided among the chiefs. Prisoners who want to get the money they had or the money sent to them by their families run into many difficulties, some of them have had to fight and sacrifice their lives in order to get it.

With the support of the government, the orderlies have a new profession: that of killing people without being accused, that of torturing which was reserved only to the secret police, that of reformative cadres of the prison and the Administration. A more tragic profession is the acting as a health assistant. Such is the case of Mr. Pham Van Nong, who, after having beaten us to death, is now assigned the job of health assistant in order to try medicines on us and use us as experimental animals, shooting needles into our bodies in place of the previous clubs on our heads. Of course, we never forget the devoted help of the doctors, health assistants who are here as political prisoners and
who, despite suffering and continuous threats by the authorities, still manage to give cure to many of us. We also do not forget some of the orderlies who still treat us with some sympathy. We can never forget their grace. Some of them were barbarously beaten by the Administration when they tried to help us.

Once again, we are thankful to their sympathies and help for us. On the other side we are forced to accept the daily cruelty and the insults. Some of them use the most vulgar words and in our struggles for improvement of conditions some of them have become torture-specialists by applying lime powder on our bodies so that some of the prisoners are choked and vomit blood. The orderlies are equipped with masks and gloves while beating us. In one of the most typical and recent cases in December, some women political prisoners were covered with lime powder and two of them were beaten to death. Each 4 orderlies are in charge of torturing and beating one of us as in the case of February 28, 1970 at Camp, where the repression was carried out under direction of the proctors Tha, Chin Khuong, Chin Rong and high ranking officer named Duc. On May 5, as we asked to see the head of the committee for improvement of conditions, we had to decide on the last means of struggle—that we were ready to accept death through a non-violent protest: an unlimited hunger strike. The strike lasted over a week. Still we could not see Mr. Chin Khuong. He remained indifferent to our minimum and just demands. One fellow prisoner, Mr. Ho Van Chin, 23 years old, of Dien Ban district province of Quang Nam sacrificed himself in this struggle. His corpse was robbed and his death was given a falsified reason “dead because of illness” with the complice of the health service and the police department of the Island.

Under the direction of the Island Master Le Canh Ve, we are constantly under threats of being beaten or killed. Just an act of unbuttoning your shirt because of the heat, or a noise caused by your leg as you involuntarily move it under the chains, or your not bending the head as you pass the office, and you are punished with a series of beatings and insults for the reason of not observing the rules of the center.

Here, the orderlies have the opportunity to use the modern ways of the hooligans which have the name of “Rubbing the Heel”, “Crushing the Pepper” or “Used Bolts”: they use their feet, or long heavy sticks which were used to bar the doors (called Red Bars) or iron bolts to hit on our heads and necks, especially on the weak parts of the body. Besides this, they continually keep us under shackles. In the past year, we were free from the shackles only for 8 days, 4 days at New Year, 3 days at Wandering-Soul holiday, and one day before we returned home. This “grace” to the prisoner is very valuable as we were at ease being able to move our legs when we slept after days and months of being paralyzed. We always remember these feelings and are grateful for those who have created the se holidays, to save the conscience of these people here who have lost most of their human qualities.

We had the “opportunity” to be under two kinds of shackles belonging to two different periods:

shackles of the period of the French colonists which are round and smooth under legs.
and shackles of this period which are made of F.8-iron provided by U.S. aide for the construction of houses. These iron bars are shaped to the form of shackles. They are full of sharp, pointed thorns which cause violent pain reaching to your heart and brain when you have your leg under it. Later, these sharp teeth cut the legs and make painful wound around them; each time he moves to one side or the other, is a misery for the prisoner. Such is the shrewdness and cruelty of this present regime and of F.8-iron aide.

As for the prisoners with hard labor sentence, whenever they struggle to ask for more rice and salt, they are punished bye the “disciplinarians” who shut them up in cave-cells. The shape of the caves is a half-circle. It is very narrow, without enough light and air for 10 people jailed together. The prisoners collapse in extreme insufficiency and because of continuous tortures to death. The call “Mr. Orderly, we have a dead man in our cell” or “Mr. Orderly, someone is in agony” is very common to us. Each time we hear the call, our heart is broken and we think of our own fate.

To protest against this situation, the prisoner accepts sacrificing himself so that his friends may “live” in a better condition, or he surrenders to the cruelty of the men, thus letting his friends live in a worse condition. We choose the former, because we cannot let the proctors and the island master exploit human strength, through hard labor, causing death to the prisoners when they slipped from the top of a high hill or were smashed by a fallen tree. The master robbed part of the wood that the prisoners have chopped, what remains is divided among the other proctors (as the case of the Proctor Danh Sinh and his fellows). They used about 10 prisoners in their families as slaves, 3 to cultivate land for the family’s food, one to take care of their children, 2 to cook, 2 to wash clothes, one to be messenger. In case the prisoner has some education, he is used as preceptor without wages to the administrators’ children against his will. Selling their education in order not to be whipped! Selling their education in order not to be shackled! Such is the fate of the intellectual in prison who is forced to accept the regime, to overlook it, even though it is cruel. Does one accept to stay in prison in order to learn more slavery or to learn to fight against injustice in the tiger-cages. Most of us students in the whole country take the second choice.

If in Saigon, there are continuous campaigns in favor of lowly romantic love, and family ties to avoid the struggle against injustice, this type of reformatory education is strictly not applied to us in prison. The love of brothers, sons, fathers in dangers, prisoners... is repressed by “discipline”. One is not allowed to write letters to his family, to meet his relatives. They publicly call these love sentiments “lowly”, so that the prisoner gives in his desire to see his relatives. The authorities have created scenes of unhappy mothers and wives weeping day and night for their sons, husbands and fathers. The authorities rudely accuse the prisoners of “having no sentimentality” i.e. having no lowly love as they expected, giving pretext that these prisoners who dare struggle against cruelty have a higher love and a higher and more determinate love for their country.
However, in front of the infinite unhappiness of mothers and wives, can the authorities always remain silent? For, no matter how violent they are, they cannot in the name of cruelty destroy family relations and human love. We have experienced the deprivation of love and we have escaped this. But what is the fate of thousands of our fellow prisoners who still remain there?

Here, we have to raise a question. How can the authorities at Con Son plan and carry out these barbarous acts without being discovered? How can the province chief succeed in taking bribes, squeezing out the prisoners if the "special committees", "the organization of the order committee", "the division of benefits among the province chief and the proctors" are being openly reported?

The province chief classifies the jails into different categories:

- jails for the prisoners with and without sentence
- jails for the prisoners with hard labor sentence and the isolated prisoners.
- jails for the prisoners with a light sentence and political prisoners

But most typical are the jails for the "undisciplined" and the "disciplined"

The system of re-training the prisoners through series of barbarous whippings, though forcing their labor by the chief of Con Son island has transformed these prisoners without freedom into complete physical and mental slaves. The degree of slavery depends on the degree of "correction" given by the Con Son Administration. At the very beginning when we first came to the prison we were warned by Mr. Ve's words: "Obey us, bend to force and misery. Otherwise we'll treat your stubborness by breaking your bones."

We had to obey, and follow the orders, sell our labor. If we protest if we dare stand up against violence, whether we are numerous or not, no matter what means we use, we will be beaten to death. They try to correct us through violence, threats, cheating us of our food. Correction here means violence, and robbery by the Con Son authorities. Yet, they are not yet satisfied. They deceive the outsiders who come and visit us through false "democracy at the island". How can there be democracy here? Only prisons. Therefore the master of the people is the King of the Island Le Canh Ve. In order to see how powerful he is, how much authority he has over the slave prisoners, he has the idea of setting up a letter box to receive the people's opinions. For more than 4 years, he has only received several letters from the box. As a result, the authors of the letters were summoned to a special committee to get answers, in form of terrible whippings. "Who tells you to denounce us?" "who gives you the right to give opinions?" "Remember boy, this is a prison". From then on, the letter box gets rusted through time, still it remains on the wall. We wonder if any of the congressmen group who came to visit the island has noticed the rust on the lock of the box through the words "People's Opinion" still remain, together with Mr. Le Canh Ve.

When there are teams who come to visit, or investigate the order, the special committee takes care of giving us some "wipe". We get a chance to wash ourselves lest we stink. They have us cut our hair and whiskers so that we look less wild and they do not forget to warn us "Don't you breath a word to the team, beware of death, we will not
forgive you. Hear it?" We not that when some of the members of the team have the generous idea of asking about the conditions in the tiger-cages, cell no. 2, the cow-cage, they are given such answers as "that was in the French period, it no longer exists to day" Stacks of firewood were piled in front of the doors of the cells to hide the cells, cow-cages, and the tiger cages. "It no longer exists" says Le Canh Ve.

Sirs, countrymen, friends, Student Representatives of the Saigon Student Union, the Joint Councils of the Faculties of Van Hanh University, and Can Tho, Hue Universities, the Committee to Oppose Repression of the Students of Van Hanh, Saigon, Hue and Can Tho Universities and of the Saigon High Schools and relatives of the prisoners all over South Viet Nam.

We hope to have reported to you only a very small part of the violence and cruelty of the prison system. What does the Government think? Sirs, what must we do to reestablish equality and justice to the people deprived of freedom, those who can never speak out for their human rights, those who silently and continuously struggle against the injustices of a sinful and vulgar society.

SAIGON, June 19, 1970.

TRAN VAN LONG, CAAO NGUYEN LOI, NGUYEN THANH TONG NGUYEN TUAN KIET NGUYEN MINH TRI
SUPPLEMENTARY VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAM R. ANDERSON TO REPORT TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES BY THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON UNITED STATES INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, JULY 6, 1970

LOGISTIC SANCTUARIES

The comments relative to logistic sanctuaries are submitted at the risk of belaboring a very obvious point.

Two-thirds of the war materials and very important food imports sustaining the North Vietnamese war effort arrive by sea through the port of Haiphong. While our own intelligence was slow to ascertain the fact, it is now apparent that most of the materials in the Cambodian sanctuaries arrived not via the Ho Chi Minh Trail but by sea through Sihanoukville. As impressive as were the quantities of supplies taken by U.S. and ARVN forces in Cambodia, the entire quantity, nonetheless, could be replaced by one shipload. Fortunately, the South Vietnamese Navy is now trying to seal off the Cambodian coast. This is one of the most important steps taken in the war to date.

War supplies and food are shipped to North Vietnam by the Soviet Union, Red China and other nations. By far the more important source is the Soviet Union and the satellite nations, to whom the North Vietnamese have their strongest ideological and other ties. The Vietnamese do not trust mainland China.

While it is very apparent that North Vietnam wants South Vietnam for its own purposes, the ability of the North to sustain the war is very much dependent on the logistics train arriving by sea from the Soviet Union, et al. The ports requisite to the functioning of this train, mainly Haiphong at this point, comprise a logistics sanctuary of infinitely greater magnitude than the entire network of Cambodian supply caches.

Thus it is perhaps not an oversimplification to view the war as one in which the Soviets and Red Chinese are exploiting the incredibly adept North Vietnamese jungle fighters as willing puppets to perpetuate the tying down of U.S. forces and all that involves—tens of thousands of lives lost—a large part of our national resources spent—a rising domestic dissent—and a military establishment whose weapons are being worn out at a time when they should be modernized and replaced for the even more dangerous confrontations which lie ahead. As is altogether obvious, the Soviets are modernizing and extending their weapons at a furious pace—particularly their sea power.

It is difficult for this member to rationalize the situation where more than 300 American servicemen die to take a shipload of enemy arms and supplies hidden in Cambodia while scores of replacement shiploads are permitted to proceed unimpeded and unchallenged into Haiphong. We are willing to commit American boys to the ultimate
risk of death in the jungle, without shouldering in a national sense a portion of that risk—the risk involved in demanding that the huge sea logistic train to the north be stopped. If it comes to it, naval authorities agree that Haiphong Harbor could be easily closed, probably without loss of life, by mining, sinking a hulk across the entrance, or by other means. More than likely, this could be accomplished by South Vietnamese forces.

If South Vietnam were willing and successful in taking that step, the rate of Vietnamization of the war, and therefore the U.S. troop withdrawal timetable, could proceed at least twice as fast as currently planned.

The preferable course of action, however, would be the achievement of new U.S. conference table initiatives vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Virtually the entire world would applaud a bilateral agreement which would lead to an early negotiated peace and the substitution of economic aid for military aid to Vietnam on the part of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, in order to rebuild that war torn nation, South and North. The Soviet Union has a moral responsibility to take a part in the Paris peace talks for this purpose.

SOUTH VIETNAMESE VIEWPOINT OF U.S. ASSISTANCE

As pointed out in the section on Communications in the basic report, the U.S. and the government of South Vietnam have not been very effective in explaining the U.S. presence to the Vietnamese people outside of the government and the armed forces. One gains the impression that while some Vietnamese citizens are genuinely appreciative of U.S. assistance, the majority are not. In some respects this attitude pervades the highest echelons of government. This member was surprised to hear President Thieu express the rationale that the French had been there, now the Americans—the Americans would probably not be the last—there might be three or four other nations in the future. One could not help but gain the impression that our assistance is viewed as a somewhat necessary expedient, but of only passing significance.

Closely related to the casual attitude toward U.S. assistance, is a lack of sensitivity within the Thieu government regarding domestic U.S. concern over the war and the phasing out of U.S. forces. This lack of sensitivity unfortunately seems to be shared by some in civilian components of the U.S. Ambassadorial Country Team. It is with a deep sense of personal regret to so report, but this member feels a moral obligation to suggest that we have arrived at a juncture where the necessary leverage upon the Theiu government for rapid Vietnamization and urgently required economic and other reforms can only be applied through new U.S. Ambassadorial leadership in Saigon. Ambassador Bunker is a superb American who has rendered vast service to his country. The foregoing comments should not be interpreted as derogatory in any respect. It is merely an effort to appraise a difficult, confusing, and rapidly changing situation realistically. Any other person, no matter how able, would equally have been forced into a position of diminishing alternatives in dealing with the government of a nation seeking self determination under such difficult circumstances.
CON SON NATIONAL PRISON

By virtue of U.S. aid involvement in the South Vietnamese National Prison System, this member was one of two who visited Con Son National Prison. While there, partially due to advance intelligence, but mainly through happenstance, we gained admittance to a prison compound known as the "tiger cage" area. The treatment of South Vietnamese civilian prisoners in this area can only be described as inhumane and shocking. Throughout the prison severe problems of malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, tuberculosis and other deficiencies of deep concern exist. A detailed report of conditions is contained in the Supplementary Views of Congressman Hawkins.

While one may legitimately argue as to the basic wisdom of our involvement in that nation's prison system, we are, nonetheless, involved. What we must do now is to insist on immediate prison reforms in the name of humaneness, and immediate reforms to the South Vietnamese legal processes in the name of justice. Setting aside for a moment the humane factors, any system where a citizen can be jailed and held two years without trial by little more than an administrative action of the part of a provincial council is bound to involve some innocent people and to be counter productive to self determination of government and to viable anti-communist democratic progress.

Because we are already involved and because of this nation's dedication to justice and humane treatment of all, we cannot stop at the mere insistence of reform—we must provide suitable advisers and suitable material resources to carry out those reforms if we are to continue to support the existing Saigon government.

WILLIAM ANDERSON.