

W
MONOGRAPH FILE
INDOCHINA ARCHIVE

C 1977

**BREAKDOWN OF THE VIETNAM CEASEFIRE:
THE NEED FOR A BALANCED VIEW**

BY

**The Indochina Resource Center
1322 18th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
Telephone: (202) 785-3111**

"If the North Vietnamese were to choose without provocation to launch an all-out offensive . . . and if the President requested from Congress . . . to use U.S. tactical aircraft . . . that authority might be forthcoming . . ."

I believe the request is highly likely . . . under the circumstances I have mentioned . . ."

— DOD Secretary Schlesinger, "Washington Straight Talk,"

Jan. 7, 1974

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Introduction: Toward a Balanced View | 1 |
| Part I: An Assessment of Responsibility for the Breakdown of the Agreement | 3 |
| Part II. U.S.-GVN Violations of the Paris Agreement—a listing based on western press reports | |
| A. Political and refugee release provisions | 9 |
| B. Military ceasefire provisions | |
| Part III: PRG-DRV Violations of the Paris Agreement—An overview by the GVN Embassy in Washington, D.C. | 48 |

PRECIS

Breakdown of the Vietnam Ceasefire — the Need for a Balanced View

Introduction: Toward a Balanced View [p. 1]

One can support or oppose U.S. involvement in Indochina regardless of who is responsible for violating the Paris Agreement. Each side, however, has made the other's Agreement violations its basic justification for continuing its own fighting.

After a careful study of western press reports of violations by both sides over the past year, the Indochina Resource Center has found the Administration's claim that the other side is responsible for the ceasefire breakdown to be one-sided and unbalanced.

The U.S.-Government of Vietnam (GVN) side is at least as responsible as that of the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) and DRV.

Part I: An Assessment of Responsibility for the Breakdown of the Ceasefire [p. 3]

The primary importance of the Paris Agreement is that it represents a *political formula* for ending a war which cannot be won on the battlefield. This means that the most basic responsibility for each side under the Agreement is that it engage in *political competition* with the other.

U.S. analysts and western press reports indicate that the PRG has been willing to engage in a political struggle. The US-GVN side, however, has outlawed both the PRG and neutralists from the political arena. It is difficult to understand how the US-GVN side could expect the other side to stop fighting unless they are allowed to engage in political competition.

The US-GVN side has also given a one-sided view of the fighting by restricting western journalists, classifying potentially embarrassing information, and intimidating Vietnamese from speaking openly. The Administration has frequently reported large communist arms buildups, for example. But it has classified most information about the amount of U.S. arms shipped to the GVN since the ceasefire.

There is reason to believe, moreover, that many reported communist military activities have been responses to GVN military initiatives.

After balancing claims by both sides, the evidence seems to indicate that the US-GVN side may actually hold the primary responsibility for the breakdown of the Agreement. Its fundamental failure to allow the PRG to compete in the political arena may, in effect, be provoking the other side's military activities.

Unless the U.S. and GVN test the PRG's offer to engage in political competition, the Administration may find it difficult to justify its present involvement and/or a resumption of U.S. bombing on the grounds of communist violations of the Paris Accord.

Part II: US-GVN Violations of the Paris Agreement [p. 9]

Many Americans are unaware of the fact that hundreds of US-GVN violations of the Paris Agreement have been indicated in the western press. This section contains a sample of some 200 such reports, in which violations have been either witnessed by, or officially reported to, western journalists. These reports have generally been given far less prominence than Administration claims of communist buildups.

Part III: PRG-DRV Violations of the Paris Agreement [p. 48]

Reports of PRG and DRV military violations are more widely known. This section contains an overview of such reports, prepared by the GVN Embassy in Washington.



BREAKDOWN OF THE VIETNAM CEASEFIRE—

THE NEED FOR A BALANCED VIEW



Introduction: Toward a Balanced View

Today, one year after the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement, South Vietnam knows neither peace nor agreement.

One's attitude toward continuing U.S. involvement in Vietnam need not, of course, depend upon the Paris Agreement. Opponents often maintain that the war is too costly to justify further U.S. intervention, no matter who is responsible for violating the agreement and supporters of our involvement sometimes argue that the loss of 50,000 American lives demands aid to the GVN no matter if General Thieu is refusing to compromise with the PRG.

Both of the official sides in the conflict, however, have made the question of who is responsible for violating the Agreement the centerpiece for justifying their present military and political actions in Vietnam.

The U.S. and Government of the Republic of Vietnam (GVN) insist that the blame lies with the Provisional Revolutionary Government (PRG) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV).

On this basis, Defense Secretary Schlesinger has threatened a resumption of U.S. bombing in the event of an offensive "without provocation." Communist violations of the ceasefire are also the basis for the Administration allocating more than \$3 billion in military aid to Indochina this fiscal year. And it is reported planning to give another \$1 billion in arms aid to the GVN (including new F5Es, which go beyond the "one for one" replacement allowed by the Agreement).

Communist violations also serve to justify the GVN's Dec. 30 announcement that no elections would be held, and its Jan. 5 declaration that it would begin bombing PRG zones regularly and launch a major offensive against them.

The PRG and DRV have, on their part, claimed that US-GVN violations of the Agreement justify the suspension of searches for U.S. Missing-in-Action and their recent step-up in attacks on GVN camps and units they claim are being used for offensive actions against them.

Establishing responsibility for the ceasefire breakdown, therefore, has become the major element in the struggle for

public opinion by both sides. The outcome of this debate may have a direct impact on the possibility of renewed U.S. bombing.

The Nixon Administration has drawn wide public attention to its claims in recent months, by issuing frequent reports of new communist buildups and by highlighting communist military activities.

After a major study of western press reports of ceasefire violations by both sides, however, the Indochina Resource Center has found that the Administration has presented a one-sided view to the American people. By classifying such information as the amount of U.S. arms shipped to South Vietnam, by downplaying GVN ceasefire violations and placing restrictions on U.S. journalists, the Administration has not balanced the scale.

This paper is an attempt to right the balance.

Parts II and III of this paper are a description of ceasefire violations by both sides. With a view to providing some balance to Administration claims, Part II is a listing of some 200 ceasefire violations by the US-GVN side as reported in the western press. Part III is a summary of charges made against the PRG-DRV. We have not included a detailed listing of these charges, since they have been so widely reported in the western press.

After comparing western press reports of charges of ceasefire violations by both sides, our major findings are these:

1 ☆ Both sides have engaged in military activities in violation of the ceasefire provisions of the Paris Agreement. The Nixon Administration, however, has not revealed to the American people that many PRG-DRV military actions appear to have occurred in response to military initiatives from the GVN side.

2 ☆ Both sides can only be expected to lay down their arms if they are allowed to compete for power politically. The Administration has not been candid in admitting the refusal of its GVN ally to test the PRG's offer to engage in political competition. This may place primary responsibility for the ceasefire breakdown on the US-GVN side.

3 ☆ Unless the US-GVN side tests the PRG offer to lay down arms and compete for power politically, the Administration may find it difficult to justify a resumption of the bombing on the basis of violations of the Agreement by the other side.

□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

**PART I: AN ASSESSMENT OF RESPONSIBILITY
FOR THE BREAKDOWN**

☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆☆

Wars historically end either through a political settlement or decisive military victory. Viewed from this perspective, the importance of the Paris Agreement is that it offers a *political formula* for ending a war that cannot be ended decisively on the battlefield.

For the Paris Agreement to work, however, both sides must be willing to compete for power politically. It does not, as Dr. Kissinger noted at its signing, rule out further struggle for power in South Vietnam. It does, however, take such struggle out of the military and into the political arena.

Any assessment of responsibility for the Agreement's breakdown, therefore, must begin with an analysis of each side's willingness to compete for power politically.

The consensus of western opinion appears to be that the PRG has been willing to engage in such a political struggle.

In June, 1973, for example, the U.S. Embassy in Saigon published a directive from the PRG high command, number 02/CT/73, dated January 19, 1973. (Document No. 113, Vietnam-Documents and Research Notes.)

U.S. Embassy analysts, writing an introduction to the document, stated that:

"Some days prior to January 19 (Hanoi) instructed COSVN to prepare to continue the struggle for power in South Vietnam by primarily political means in contrast to the reliance on "main force" military action which had characterized Vietnamese communist activity in 1972 . . . Hanoi and COSVN opted for a long term political struggle rather than any last minute power grabs . . . War-wracked North Vietnam itself . . . meanwhile required a protracted period of respite and economic reconstruction."

Another indication of this is that even the GVN has not accused the PRG of unwillingness to join in a political struggle. A GVN factsheet entitled "Communist Violations of

the Paris Agreement," for example, lists military violations of the ceasefire. But it nowhere accuses the PRG of refusal to compete politically by allowing freedom of the press, movement and political belief in return for similar actions by the GVN side (See Part III.)

Western press reports since June have confirmed this official analysis of PRG willingness to compete for power politically. Recently, for example, the New York Times reported that:

"President Thieu has never had any real interest in engaging in the complex, high-risk "political struggle" suggested by the Paris Agreement . . . And the Communists, *while willing to try the political struggle*, were hardly prepared to abandon their military options."
(Nov. 1, 1973, emphasis added)

As this *New York Times* quote suggests, moreover, the principal blame for the failure to switch to political struggle lies with the Thieu government. In fact, since the ceasefire, the Thieu government:

- 1 ☆ Has not released its more than 100,000 political prisoners, as estimated by Amnesty International;
 - 2 ☆ Has refused the PRG offer to begin formation of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord;
 - 3 ☆ Has attacked PRG delegates trying to deploy to inspection sites;
 - 4 ☆ Has kept PRG delegates in Saigon from contact with the Vietnamese people and the press;
 - 5 ☆ Has attacked the "Third Force" neutralists, who are envisioned by the Paris Agreement as playing a balancing role in the Council's efforts to set up nation-wide elections;
 - 6 ☆ Has put restrictions on the press, and has continued to tamper with Senate and village council elections;
 - 7 ☆ Has denied refugees the "freedom of movement" mentioned in article 11 of the Paris Agreement;
 - 8 ☆ Has announced, on December 30, that there would be no general elections as called for in the Paris Agreement.
- By refusing to compete politically, the GVN has given the PRG no choice but to seek military solutions.

The Administration and the GVN have made the most of PRG military activities since the ceasefire. By drawing attention to these activities, and by restricting the press from covering the battlefield adequately, the impression has been

conveyed that the PRG is primarily responsible for ceasefire violations. Three major means have been used to give this impression:

1 ☆ *Restrictions on journalists*—Journalists have been regularly kept from the scene of battle. They have often been detained and harassed, as when the tires of a *New York Times*' reporter's vehicle were shot out (*New York Times*, January 29, 1972). Nor have journalists been allowed free access to U.S.-built military bases in South Vietnam or Thailand, or to PRG zones. Virtually every reporter who has ventured into PRG zones has been detained upon reentry to Saigon-controlled areas. Additionally, many reporters have been physically prevented from going into PRG areas.

2 ☆ *Classifying embarrassing information*—The U.S. government has classified a good deal of information which might prove embarrassing if revealed. It has refused, for example, to tell reporters how much military equipment has been given to the GVN since the ceasefire. It has also refused to issue maps showing which side controlled what at the time of the ceasefire and subsequently.

Much information regarding U.S. involvement, e.g. the role of the CIA, in South Vietnam's police and prison system, has also been classified out of public reach. And the western press—as well as the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Refugees Staff, the Red Cross, and concerned individuals such as Bishop Gumbleton of Detroit have been denied access to GVN prisons.

3 ☆ *Threatening Vietnamese with arrest for embarrassing the GVN to the Western press*—Vietnamese newsmen and interpreters have been threatened with arrest for accompanying western reporters into PRG zones. Released political prisoners have been specifically forbidden to speak with westerners on pain of re-arrest. Although some have done so at their own risk, many other Vietnamese have been intimidated from making statements critical of the GVN. On at least one confirmed occasion, involving several released political prisoners who talked with Bishop Gumbleton, arrests did take place.

In addition to these contrived restrictions, a major limitation on western reporting arises from the fact that most western newsmen are living in Saigon or other urban areas, and necessarily cannot report on happenings in PRG zones on

a daily basis. The several dozen reporters who have visited PRG zones briefly since the ceasefire have virtually all reported seeing ARVN shelling and bombing attacks on PRG areas. If one were to extrapolate from this, one could assume that the vast majority of ceasefire violations by the U.S. and GVN have gone unobserved by the western press.

Given these limitations on western reporting, it is not remarkable that many Americans feel the Communists bear the major responsibility for continued war in Vietnam. This tendency has been increased by the media's practice of featuring official U.S. and GVN statements more prominently than reports of their violations, which are often buried either on the back pages or at the end of stories leading with official claims.

A careful analysis of western press reports, however, yields a surprising number of US-GVN violations observed by—or officially reported by—Western journalists. The 57 political and 145 military violations listed in this study are but a sampling of such reports. (We have also included, in italics, another 32 PRG/DVN claims of ceasefire violations taken seriously enough to be reprinted in the nation's major newspapers.)

The listing in Part II of US-GVN military violations, moreover, suggests that PRG military violations may not only be a response to GVN political intransigence. The evidence suggests that the GVN has been consistently taking military initiatives since the signing of the Agreement, and that PRG violations may have been largely in defense against them.

A Fact Sheet published by the GVN itself is a dramatic indication of this. (See Part III.) Entitled "Communist Violations of the Paris Agreement," numbered 02/73, it was published by the GVN Embassy in Washington, D.C. on December 5, 1973. We have chosen it because it is the latest such document available to us.

On page 2, this document details 9 "major" Communist attacks since the ceasefire. Three—on Cua Viet, Sa Huynh and Tong Le Chanh, are listed as occurring between January 29 and up to February 28. (The siege of Tong Le Chanh is reported as continuing to the present.) The other six—on Le Minh, Khiem Hanh, Bach Mai, Nui Giai, Bu Prang, Bu Dong, and Nha Be—are listed as beginning September 22. Thus between the months of March and September, this

GVN document does not report new major Communist ceasefire violations. (A separate document issued by the GVN Ministry of Foreign Affairs in June 1973 lists two more major attacks, at Rach Bap and Tri Ton between February and March 22, 1973.)

It seems clear that the early PRG attacks on Cua Viet, Sa Huynh and Tong Le Chanh may well have been responses to Saigon-initiated activity. Reporting on Cua Viet, for example, CBS News reported that Saigon marines had admitted launching a "last-minute" offensive on January 28, and claimed to have "reached their objectives precisely two minutes before the ceasefire began. Then, they say, the North Vietnamese counter-attacked." It added that there were no outside observers.

Sa Huynh was reported by the New York Times to have been captured by the Communists on January 27 (report was on January 30). "We have been warning the government about this for months, but they have lost it," one American official was reported as saying. The GVN then went back in after the ceasefire and took Sa Huynh. The Communist *counterattack*, on February 16, is listed as a major Communist violation of the ceasefire agreement.

The Christian Science Monitor reported on April 7 that Tong Le Chan base was being used for patrols into Saigon territory, an apparent violation of Article 2b of the Ceasefire Protocols, which forbids "armed patrols into areas controlled by opposing armed forces."

Secretary of State William Rogers did not support the GVN in its claim that the PRG had launched "major" attacks against Cua Viet, Sa Huynh and Tong Le Chanh in January and February. Testifying before the House Foreign Relations Committee on March 6, he was reported by the Washington Post to have stated:

"We have been encouraged by the fact that we haven't had a large scale violation."

During the period between March and September 22, in which this GVN document does not list any major Communist violations, many serious ARVN military activities took place (see Part II of this paper). On September 30, for example, the *Washington Post* reported

"In the past month, military officials say, almost 20 square miles of formerly Communist-held territory have

been seized by South Vietnamese troops driving westward from Highway 1 . . ." (Emphasis added)

The step-up in PRG military activity since September may also not indicate wholesale abrogation of the agreement, as the GVN has charged. For one thing, these activities have been accompanied by an even greater step-up in ARVN military activities, culminating in the recent (January 5, 1974) order to launch a major offensive into PRG zones. In addition, PRG attacks have been on the periphery of PRG zones, where, they claim, GVN attacks have been heaviest. As the Washington Post reported on November 25, for example,

"These battles are highly publicized by the South Vietnamese, but they occur in remote areas where no one lives. [PRG battle orders contain] defensive phraseology . . . in line with the current Vietcong policy of emphasizing the defense of their own claimed zone."

All of this is not to suggest, of course, that the PRG and DRV have not themselves committed numerous specific violations of the ceasefire agreements. *It certainly suggests, however, that they might not have acted "without provocation."*

Finally, whatever has happened on the battlefield, one central fact remains: Neither the U.S. nor the GVN have shown a willingness to allow the PRG to participate in the political process in South Vietnam. And until this does happen, there can be every realistic expectation that the PRG and DRV will feel forced to seek military solutions.

The U.S. is in a position today to seek political compromise in South Vietnam. It supplies 80% of the GVN's resources, including virtually all of its military arms. By either simply leaving the Vietnam morass, or synchronizing its aid to a serious GVN attempt to shift the battle to the political arena, the U.S. can at least discover if the PRG is indeed also willing to compete politically.

By following its present policy, the Nixon Administration is ensuring an annual drain on American resources of billions. It is also ensuring no progress in the search for U.S. Missing in Action, and the likelihood of new MIAs and POWs in the year to come. For unless a political solution is reached, there is little reason to doubt that 1974 will bring a resumption of U.S. bombing.

Saigon were being treated "shamefully." According to the Times,

"Previously . . . Mr. Thi had said that better guarantees for freedom of movement of delegates to the Four-Party Joint Military Commission were required." The Times article continues: "Reports from Saigon said that eight North Vietnamese members of the cease-fire team were injured when a crowd threw rocks at them as they arrived at the airport at Ban Me Thout in the Central Highlands.

"Communist members of the commission in Saigon are housed in former American billets inside heavily guarded Tan Son Nhut airport and have not been allowed any contact with other South Vietnamese or with the foreign press." (NYT, 2/11/73)

5☆ The Saigon Government has announced the formation of the "People's Front to Safeguard Peace and to Realize the People's Right to Self-Determination." Chairman of the Front is President Thieu. The Saigon government claims that non-Communist opposition elements concurred in the formation of the "Front," but there is little evidence to support this. Opposition legislators "made known their unwillingness to participate and their disbelief in the political universality of the new group," according to the Times.

South Vietnam Premier Phan Huy Quat, who attended the meeting, "said that some speakers had called on the President to loosen governmental restrictions on the activities of political parties and the press, but had received no assurances from Mr. Thieu." (Quote from Times, not directly of Quat.) (NYT, 2/18/73)

6☆ President Nguyen Van Thieu asserted yesterday that North Vietnam planned to infiltrate 'millions of people' into South Vietnam to shift the power balance in the elections called for in the Paris Peace Accords.

"Western sources seemed to be unaware of any captured Communist document, prisoner interrogation or other source of information to corroborate this charge. One source said that no such evidence existed." (NYT, 2/24/73)

7☆ Foreign Ministers of the PRG and the Saigon government agreed in Paris to hold talks on the political future of South

Vietnam. The talks are to begin between March 5 and March 10 in Paris, but both sides agreed that the talks should be moved to South Vietnam "as soon as possible."

The two sides are apparently headed for serious difficulty in agreeing on a neutralist delegation to the "three component" National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, which will be charged with developing a political settlement.

The Times article reports:

"Previously the Vietcong had indicated that they and Saigon would each pick half of the 'third force' group. Today Mrs. Binh said that could not be done because the middle group would then 'not be equal' in authority to the other two." (NYT, 2/24/73)

8☆ General Duong Van (Big) Minh made public an open letter to the International Conference on Vietnam, scheduled to open in Paris on Feb. 26. According to the Times,

"In his open letter General Minh said that there was a third force, or 'entity', that opposed the Thieu Government and the Communists and comprised the majority of the people of South Vietnam. It 'is the key to peace', he said."

Gen. Minh also wrote that the International Conference has an obligation to insure the political freedoms of all political elements in South Vietnam, in accordance with ARTICLE 11 of the Peace Agreement.

The Times reports that "People close to the General, who had threatened to oppose Mr. Thieu in the last presidential election but withdrew, indicated that Mr. Thieu must first restore democratic freedoms before General Minh would try to form a political action group." (NYT 2/27/73)

9☆ "Many tens of thousands of nonexistent refugees from Quang Tri Province are being fed at American expense." The number of "phantom" refugees ranges from 75,000 to 160,000, and \$1,000,000 a month is going to feed them. This major scandal involves kickbacks at all levels of administration of the refugee camps, with the highest rate of kickback at the level of camp chief. The chief is the "key person in the 34 camps in the Da Nang area, where 259,000 recorded refugees live."

The Star-News further reports:

"The American and South Vietnamese officials have been ready to accept refugee figures suspected of exaggeration because they lend credence to contentions that while the Communists can capture territory they cannot win control of the people. The idea that almost all the people of the province escaped southward also overcame qualms about the heavy bombing and shelling of Quang Tri after its fall, since the areas under attack could be depicted as depopulated." (Wash. Star-News, 3/8/73)

10☆ The PRG said that there could be no negotiations about elections in the political talks scheduled to open next week with Saigon, until the Saigon Government frees political prisoners in accordance with the Peace Agreement. (W. Post, 3/14/73)

11☆ Talks are scheduled to open in Paris next week on the political future of South Vietnam, but the "third force" is having trouble establishing itself. Opposition legislator Tran Van Tuyen has made efforts to unify the opposition to Thieu. According to the news report:

"His (Tuyen's) group of 29 members in the lower house wrote a letter to Thieu recently asking release of political prisoners, social reforms, press freedom, and serious implementation of the cease-fire agreement. The group claimed to speak for the 'silent majority'.

"Not only did Thieu ignore the letter but he also used the government's censorship power to insure that the local press did not report it." (Wash. Star-News, 3/14/73)

12☆ The Saigon Government has decided to resume elections of village councils in the near future. This would make the village councils the only locally elected body in the government. The elections are to be held only in government-controlled villages. Any villager can run for office except those with legal charges against them. This qualification excludes communist candidates, and is against the provisions of the Paris Peace Accords, guaranteeing political freedoms.

Elections of village councils and hamlet chiefs were abolished in August 1972. According to the Times report, "It was widely felt last year that his (Thieu's) restrictions on elections weakened the villagers' sense of local autonomy

and consequently their allegiance to the Saigon Government."

(Note: Reinstitution of village council elections is cosmetic, since the election of lower-level hamlet chiefs will continue to be banned, as will the election of provincial officers. The hamlet chiefs will continue to be appointed by province chiefs, who are "directly responsible" to Thieu, according to the article.)

The Saigon Government made no effort to consult with the PRG on their action, on the basis that "all our laws and regulations remain in effect pending a political settlement in Paris with the Communists." (NYT, 3/17/73)

13☆ "The decision to resume the village council elections . . . apparently caught the U.S. Embassy by surprise, and political analysts there were reluctant to comment on it.

"It is known, however, that Thieu's advisors have been warning him that he must take steps to satisfy the U.S. Congress that his government is beginning to move in that direction."

The Post article also points out, "Government statutes contain long lists of matters in which the elected village councils are to be involved, but their functions are almost entirely advisory. The council members elect village chiefs, but most of the chief's administrative functions were transferred by last summer's decree to a deputy chief for administration, who is appointed by the province chief, or military governor." (W. Post, 3/17/73)

14☆ According to the article, 22,000 refugees from Quangtri Province are scheduled to return to the lower part of the Province, which is controlled by Saigon. The surrounding hills are occupied by North Vietnamese troops. The Post reports:

"The government has decided to go ahead on a tentative basis for several reasons.

"One is to make at least a token gesture toward shifting the emphasis of its planning in the northern region from war to peace. Another is to get the refugees out of the crowded camps and back into productive activity. The government also wants to demonstrate the viability of as much of Quangtri as has been retaken, and to satisfy the desire of the

refugees to go home.

"These considerations outweighed the reluctance of South Vietnamese military officials and some high-ranking Americans to put the refugees back in the path of a possible North Vietnamese attack." (W. Post, 3/19/73)

15 ☆ Strong differences surfaced between the PRG and Saigon delegations in Paris, where they are discussing elections to decide the political future of South Vietnam. The Saigon delegation is pushing for immediate elections for those offices presently provided for in the Saigon Government's constitution.

According to the report, Saigon spokesman Nguyen Trieu Dan "also made it clear that Saigon required agreement on the kind of elections to be held—for existing offices, which is what Saigon wants, or for a constituent assembly, as the Vietcong insist, before the national council is established. The council, he said, would only organize and hold the elections, not define them." (Note: In other words, Saigon is trying to freeze out neutralist "third force" elements, from deciding the nature of the elections.)

The PRG, on the other hand, wants the NCRC to be established first. Then the Council, with the participation of the neutralist "third force" elements, would determine the nature of the elections.

First item on the agenda proposed by the PRG is the guarantee of democratic liberties and "realization of national concord," points not even mentioned in Saigon's proposed agenda. (NYT, 3/20/73)

16 ☆ Saigon is starting to resettle 100,000 refugees from the northern-most Quang Tri, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai Provinces to unsettled land near Saigon, 300 miles to the south. According to the Times,

"The people to be moved south originally lived in areas of Quang Tri, Quang Nam and Quang Ngai Provinces occupied by the Communists during their offensive last year and are therefore considered by the Government to be unacceptable for resettlement."

Saigon claims that the resettlement is "voluntary." The Times reporter's interviews with some of the refugees in the resettled sites disclosed that they were convinced to resettle

near Saigon by the village priest. It was not reported how many of the resettled refugees are Catholics.

The Times article quotes a Kennedy aide:

"Shouldn't these people have the option of being allowed to go back to their original villages even if they are occupied by the Communists?" asked Jerry Tinker, a staff aide to Senator Edward M. Kennedy's Subcommittee on Refugees. Mr. Tinker and three other subcommittee aides have been making a tour of refugee camps.

"It is also apparent that Dr. Dan [Saigon's Minister in charge of refugees] is putting pressure on the refugees to get out of the camps, but how much pressure constitutes force?" Mr. Tinker asked.

"What bothers us is that the refugees are still being used as pawns in the political struggle," he added. He said it appeared that the Government was thinking in terms of using its areas of control and their votes to defeat the Communists in the proposed elections." (NYT, 3/22/73)

17 ☆ American officials have strongly protested the shift of 7,500 refugees—half of whom are hill tribesmen—from a refugee camp in Pleiku Province to neighboring Kontum Province. The camp to which they are being shifted contains 17,000 refugees and is already suffering from typhoid, contaminated water (which is in short supply) and inadequate shelter.

"American officials say that the refugees were moved for political reasons. Lieut. Col. Buu Hap, the province chief of Kontum and the man who directed the move, said in an interview yesterday that he wanted the people back in their home province to facilitate hamlet and village elections, which he said would be held some time in April."

The Times further reports "The American [official] said there had been reports that the Communists were repopulating northwestern Kontum and he speculated that the Government might be trying to offset this by resettling the refugees." (NYT, 3/24/73)

18 ☆ Gen. Duong Van Minh said in an interview that the "third force" constitutes a majority of the people of South Vietnam, and that both the PRG and Saigon, by their signatures on the Paris agreement, recognize that the two

together do not represent all South Vietnamese. The Times further reports:

"General Minh, who was chief of state after the overthrow of President Ngo Dinh Diem in 1963, said that so far only the radio broadcasts of the National Liberation Front had given recognition to the fact that a third force exists." (NYT, 3/25/73)

19 ☆ Truong Dinh Dzu, who received 18% of the presidential vote in 1967, was released from prison. Dzu was imprisoned shortly after the '67 elections on a check fraud charge. Later, he was accused by a military tribunal of advocating neutrality and negotiations with the Vietcong. According to the AP dispatch in the Times,

"The release was viewed as an attempt by President Nguyen Van Thieu to improve his public image before his visit next week with President Nixon and United States Congressional leaders in San Clemente, Calif., and Washington." (NYT, 3/27/73)

20 ☆ Thieu has launched his new "Democracy" Party. The Star-News reports:

"Speaking at the Democracy party's first national convention, Thieu said the main objective would be to compete with the Communists in the national elections required under the Paris agreement, and to 'point out to the people the Communist danger'." (Thieu's last statement leaves great doubt as to his desire for national reconciliation, as called for in the Paris peace accords.)

About 1,000 delegates to the convention elected Thieu as party chairman. Most of the delegates are local government officials. The party has close to half a million members. The news article goes on to say:

"According to knowledgeable South Vietnamese, organizers from the presidential palace have ordered the powerful province and district chiefs, who are appointed by Thieu, to enlist all local government officials and functionaries under them as party members." (i.e., Thieu is making the state serve the functions of his party.) (Wash. Star-News, 3/29/73)

21 ☆ Meeting, in Paris, the Saigon and PRG delegations presented rival plans to bring about a new government in

South Vietnam. Saigon dropped prior insistence that elections be within the framework of the existing Saigon constitution; the vagueness of the Saigon plan led to speculation that they would agree instead to the election of a constituent assembly, long a goal of the PRG.

The main point of difference between the two parties involves prior conditions to be met before the elections are held. The PRG insists on restoration of political liberties and establishment of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord prior to elections, while troop demobilization is lumped together with the occurrence of the elections. The Saigon government, however, insists that North Vietnamese troops be withdrawn from South Vietnam prior to the holding of elections.

The Post quotes NLF spokesman Nguyen Van Hieu to say that the Saigon proposal "totally ignores the present situation in South Vietnam, violates the spirit and letter of the Paris (cease-fire) accord . . . and poses afresh problems settled in them, such as the so-called questions of North Vietnamese troops in the South." (Note: Hieu's first point on the "present situation in South Vietnam" presumably indicates that Saigon's proposal attempts to freeze neutralists out of substantive decision-making on the nature of the elections, etc.) (W. Post, 4/26/73)

22 ☆ The Saigon Government announced that it will hold elections for the Senate on August 26. The elections will be subject to the rules of the present Saigon Government Constitution, which means that the PRG cannot participate. (NYT, 4/27/73)

23 ☆ A new organization in South Vietnam, called the Coordinating Committee to Reclaim Liberty, Democracy and Peace, is due to announce its formation. The organization is headed up by Gen. Minh, Sen. Vu Van Mau, an An Quang Buddhist representative, and other prominent politicians who oppose Thieu. The Organization is being formed too late to become a recognized political party under the stringent rules for political parties laid down by Thieu last year. But organization leaders are hopeful that negotiations in Paris between Saigon and the PRG will result in a relaxation of political liberties.

Sections of Thieu's political party restriction law were recently rebuffed by South Vietnam's Senate, but the lower house will probably support Thieu. (NYT, 5/2/73)

24 ☆ The Times reports that General Minh "made an apparent bid for leadership of a third force political movement today by offering his own program for South Vietnam's political future . . . The Minh program appeared closer to that proposed by the Vietcong last Thursday than the one proposed by the South Vietnamese Government at the same time."

The Times report continues:

"General Minh's proposal, like the one submitted by the Vietcong, called for an immediate end to all fighting, immediate restoration of all democratic freedoms, immediate freeing of 'all civilian prisoners and political detainees' and permission for all exiled Vietnamese to return home. It made no mention of foreign troops in South Vietnam or of a specific timetable leading to a national elections." (NYT 5/2/73)

25 ☆ The Saigon Government is going ahead with plans to hold nationwide elections for South Vietnam's Senate. According to the Post report,

"The Senate is the one political institution in the country that retains any independence from President Nguyen Van Thieu, rebuffing him on some of his most controversial proposals. Many of the president's opponents are not up for re-election this year, but enough of them are that a sweep for pro-government candidates could give Thieu control."

South Vietnam's laws require that the ground rules for each general election—in particular, the requirements for candidates' eligibility—be set anew by the National Assembly. Last week the Senate rebuffed Thieu and loosened up the conditions for candidate eligibility, which could make the contest somewhat real. According to the Post, Thieu may not fight back too hard on this issue, "because he is anxious to avoid a one-party election and to show the United States that South Vietnam can stage a valid, contested election."

On the NLF's position, the Post says:

"The NLF's position is that any such elections are invalid and 'fraudulent', because, under the Paris cease-fire

agreement, the only legitimate elections are those organized by a three-part National Council of Reconciliation and Concord and taking place in Communist-controlled areas as well as government zones." (W. Post, 5/7/73)

26 ☆ PRG delegates in Paris proposed a plan for a new cease-fire in South Vietnam. The plan calls for agreements between commanders in the battle field on zones of control and on corridors for military transport. The Saigon representatives rejected the plan, claiming that there is a "reciprocal lack of confidence" between the two sides. Saigon instead wants a package-plan for an over-all political solution, including elections. (Note: issues of substance concerning elections and troop withdrawals would presumably be decided in the Saigon scheme prior to the establishment of the National Council, thus freezing out neutralist elements.) (NYT, 5/10/73)

27 ☆ Duong Van Minh has called on the Saigon Government to scrap all laws oppressive to "non-Communist" elements opposed to Thieu Government. He also called for the release of all political prisoners. A Saigon spokesman denied the existence of political prisoners, but admitted the existence of laws restricting individual liberties. He justified the latter on the basis that the "country of Vietnam is now on a war status."

According to the Times article,

"General Minh was particularly critical of a May 12 law that he said 'lays down the detailed measures for sending to concentration camps, assigning forced residence or banishing the elements considered dangerous to national defense, national security and public order.' He said it was unfavorable to peace." (NYT, 6/5/73)

28 ☆ About 40,000 refugees from Binh Dinh Province in central South Vietnam are being sent back into their home areas. The Times reports:

"Saigon's objectives in this move, according to United States and Vietnamese officials here, are to reduce the burden of feeding so many people and to repopulate the area so that the Government will control the majority of votes in any future election.

"But at the same time it appears that the Government is alienating many of the refugees by coercing them into moving and failing to provide even the most elementary relief supplies and security."

The Times article suggests that Saigon means to militarily contest the area, when it states that the refugees "are constantly caught in the crossfire between Government and Communist troops each encamped only a few hundred yards away." (On this point, see articles below dates 12/12/73 and 12/24/73.) (NYT, 6/5/73)

29 ☆ The National Assembly in Saigon has approved regulations governing the Senate elections to be held in August. The Assembly-approved regulations scrapped, "with Thieu's consent", the requirement that [non-Communist] candidates must belong to a legitimate party, and the ballot fee requirement of \$30,000, which was reduced to \$2,000.

Thieu was willing to make concessions on the party requirements for candidates and the filing fee, to give the appearance of a legitimate electoral contest, the Post reports. But the news article points out that other provisions in the bill proposed by Thieu virtually assure that Thieu's people will win the 31 contested Senate seats:

"By insisting that only two slates of 15 members each be chosen, Vietnamese politicians believe, Thieu has weighted the scales in favor of an organization large enough and rich enough to finance and campaign for that many candidates. And he has made it difficult for small independent groups to come up with enough candidates of their own."

The Post also reports:

"The government views the election as proof that it emerged from the Paris peace agreement with its political institutions intact, to be changed only if Saigon consents." (W. Post, 6/9/73)

30 ☆ Henry Kissinger and Le Duc Tho, meeting in Paris to negotiate new accords to facilitate the Paris Peace agreement signed in January, have temporarily broken off talks, but will resume them in a few days. An American official acknowledged that Kissinger and Tho had agreed on a new document, but Saigon has raised objections. According to the Times:

"The official suggested that Saigon's objections to the latest document should be dropped when he said that 90 per cent of the 'reflection' going on now should be done in Saigon and 10 per cent in Hanoi. This seemed to be an indirect way of saying that Saigon was 90 per cent responsible for the delay in concluding the current round of talks." (NYT, 6/11/73)

31 ☆ Thieu has been meeting with his top advisors to discuss strategy to be followed in the recent Paris negotiations to strengthen the Paris Peace agreement. Saigon government sources say that there should be a direct link between the establishment of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord, and a precise timetable for the holding of elections.

Saigon's hang-up with the Council is described by the Post: "It is understood that Saigon fears that without a precise agreement, the Vietcong will stall the balloting and the council will become, in effect, a coalition government, eroding Thieu's authority."

(Note: The Peace agreement states that the Council, consisting of neutralists as well as the PRG and Saigon, shall organize elections. Saigon's real hangup is undoubtedly the participation of neutralists, which could result in a coalition government, rather than a fear that the Council will go beyond its legitimate duties.) (W. Post, 6/11/73)

32 ☆ The Saigon Government's "Revolutionary Development Cadres," established by the CIA to help peasants build schools, get government loans, and to increase Government control in the country side, are being used almost exclusively to help organize Thieu's Democracy party. According to the Times, one of the first actions taken by Mr. Nguyen Van Ngai, a chief organizer of the Democracy party, "was to oust Col. Nguyen Be, the long-time director of the national training center for the cadres at Vung Tau. The colonel, an outspoken and independent officer who once commanded a Vietminh battalion, reportedly refused to have any role in the Democracy party."

The cadres have been heavy-handed with peasants; again, from the Times report:

"In villages in Long An Province, peasants report, the cadre members ordered them to attend the opening meetings of the village party chapter, and when some peasants stayed

behind to work in their fields, their identification cards were confiscated by cadre members and militiamen." (NYT, 6/12/73)

33 ☆ ("New Accord on Vietnam . . .") The U.S., North Vietnam, PRG, and Saigon signed a communique on June 13 calling for a new cease-fire. The communique also calls for a demarcation of "areas of control" as soon as possible.

Contrary to Thieu's desires, the new document makes no mention of North Vietnamese troops in South Vietnam, nor does it connect the formation of the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord with a definite date for elections, a point also strongly pressed by Thieu. Mr. Nguyen Xuan Phong, head of the Saigon delegation, said in a news conference, following signing of the communique, that, "the Government of the Republic of Vietnam is still the sole legal government of South Vietnam." This attitude is, of course, directly opposed to the spirit and the letter of the Paris accords, which recognize two administrations in South Vietnam. (NYT, 6/14/73)

34 ☆ ("Saigon Aide Finds . . .") Saigon's Foreign Minister Tran Van Lam said that the Paris communique leaves unresolved some of the crucial differences between Saigon and the PRG. According to the Times:

"Mr. Lam, speaking alternatively in French, English and Vietnamese, said that Saigon still insisted that the zones of control were to be established only for military purposes while the Communists refused to relent their demand that they be given political jurisdiction in their zones as well." (NYT, 6/14/73)

35 ☆ Le Duc Tho hailed the new Vietnam agreement as a "victory for reason." Tho was quite adamantly against setting up a specific timetable for elections. According to the Times,

"[Tho] said no democratic liberties existed in the areas under Saigon's control. Therefore, he added, to speak of elections before the guns fall silent and liberties are achieved is 'putting the plow before the buffalo.'" (NYT, 6/15/73)

36 ☆ Candidacy lists closed on June 17 for the Senate elections scheduled for August 26. Two full slates of 15 candidates

each were entered by pro-Thieu forces. Anti-Thieu elements have entered only two slates. The two opposing slates represent an "old line" political faction, the Dai Viet, and a mixed group of political unknowns. (Votes will be cast not for individuals, but for slates. Therefore, each voter will cast two votes each.)

Many Senators whose terms are expiring are not running for reelection. The Post reports the reasons for one Senator's decision:

"Sen. Pham Van Tam, an outspoken critic of the president, issued a statement that he and some of his colleagues were not running because 'the Constitution does not exist any more under the Paris (cease fire) agreement of Jan. 27,' and because the National Assembly 'has been deprived of power and has lost its legislative role, and has become a decorative thing for an ambitious individual.'" (W. Post, 6/18/73)

37 ☆ The PRG and Saigon opened up new talks in Paris. The Saigon delegates proposed a four-point political plan for South Vietnam. The plan calls for: (1) North Vietnamese troops to withdraw from South Vietnam, beginning July 28; (2) On Sept. 11, the National Council of Reconciliation and Concord will be convened, by which date North Vietnamese troops will complete their withdrawal; (3) On Oct. 26, a new election law will be promulgated; (4) on Dec. 25 general elections will be held, to make Christmas a "day of joy."

PRG spokesman Nguyen Van Hieu said after the meeting, "The Saigon plan contains nothing new. It repeats the same old arguments and puts forward a new phony timetable." (W. Star-News, 6/28/73)

38 ☆ South Vietnamese labor leader Pham Van Hi, arrested a few months ago with no charges filed against him at time of arrest, has died in prison. The New York Times reports:

"Some Vietnamese familiar with the case charge that the union leader, Pham Van Hi, of the tiny association of private bank workers, was tortured to death by the police. But American officials say they have been assured by the Saigon Government that Mr. Hi committed suicide."

The Times also reports on political aspects of Mr. Hi's detention:

Mr. Hi's death and the detention of the five [other labor

leaders] have been interpreted by union leaders here as part of a broad effort to encourage defection from organized labor to President Nguyen Van Thieu's newly established Democracy party." (NYT, 7/4/73)

39 ☆ Thieu has called for an economic blockade of areas controlled by the PRG, particularly a blockade of rice and other food stuffs. (NYT, 7/24/73)

40 ☆ The Saigon Government attempted to turn Tran Ngoc Chau, an anticommunist politician imprisoned by Saigon, over to the PRG. Chau was an architect of the government's pacification program designed to establish government control of the countryside. From the Times report:

"Political analysts see President Thieu's strategy as an effort to render Mr. Chau politically ineffective even after his release.

"If he is turned over to the Vietcong, the reasoning goes, he is identified as a Communist and discredited as an independent neutralist." (NYT, 7/26/73)

41 ☆ The Saigon Government has been forcibly relocating peasants in the Mekong delta, to regions considered under the government's control. From 8,000 to 16,000 peasants are involved. The moves—which are short, from two miles to 400 or 500 yards—are designed to bring the peasants closer to government military positions. According to the Times, an American official is quoted as saying:

"When the ARVN went out and told the people they needed to resettle, many of the people immediately went back further into the VC area,' one of the Americans recalled. 'Others just said they would not move.'" The Times also reports that "when some of the people slipped back to their old land in Vinh Long Province, troops burned their houses." Again, from the Times: "It's hard to tell how many VC they've made by these forced moves,' an American commented."

The Times points out that in the last month, local government officials have been making "every possible effort to find rice and building supplies for the resettled people, hoping to win a degree of support from them before the Senate election late in August." (NYT, 8/1/73)