

# **In Thieu's Prisons**

( Testimony )

Hanoi — 1973

# **In Thieu's Prisons**

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE  
HANOI — 1973



## Foreword

*Police control of the entire population has been at all times a keystone of all colonial domination. The more this colonial rule runs into vigorous and widespread resistance, the more numerous the jails and camps the harsher the treatment of prisoners and the more cruel the tortures. One understands that American neo-colonialism, on this score, has far surpassed French colonialism, and that Nixon-Thieu have shown themselves to be even more cruel than Eisenhower-Diem and Kennedy-Diem.*

*In 1969 Nixon gave up his attempt to reconquer the vast liberated rural and mountain areas. He simply ordered the systematic and uninterrupted bombing of those regions so as to compel millions of peasants to move to the towns and occupied territories. On this population thus forcibly concentrated, and in order to step up the recruiting of mercenaries, Nixon-Thieu have imposed a regime of terror.*

*Their aim is to paralyse all patriotic activities by liquidating militants and suspects, jailing all opponents, real or supposed, terrorizing the population, and forcing upon it the administration rigged up by Washington. Their aim is also to try*

to persuade revolutionaries to give up their ideal and put themselves in the service of the United States.

To this end, a whole apparatus of repression, a whole network of prisons and camps, a whole system of physical and moral torture have been set up and "modernized" by American experts and massive financial and technical aid. French, and especially British, colonial experience — with Robert Thompson appointed supreme advisor to Nixon—has been turned to account and "improved upon" by specialized American services.

How big this repressive apparatus? How does it work? How many political prisoners are there? Where do matters stand after the signing of the Paris Agreement? What is Washington's responsibility in this affair? To those questions asked by millions of anguished people in the world, this publication tries to supply an answer based on a wealth of testimony. Observers and victims report on what they have seen, heard, suffered, endured. Let us hope that their courage and sufferings will at least serve to awaken in all the kind of vigilance that is so necessary with regard to American neo-colonialism. Until now, chiefly its warlike face has been known. We must also unmask its repressive face. To the bombs, napalm and phosphorus, one must also add the whole system of prisons, tortures, ill-treatments and terror measures in order to have a comprehensive grasp of this neo-colonial policy. And also in order to fully assess its defeat in Viet Nam and in Indochina.

May 1973

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PUBLISHING HOUSE  
HANOI

## **Contents**

<b>Foreword.</b>	
<b>The Repressive Apparatus.</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Functioning of the Forces of Repression.</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>How Many Political Prisoners Are There ?</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>How the Prisoners Are Treated.</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Thieu and the Paris Agreement.</b>	<b>110</b>
<b>The Responsibility of the United States.</b>	<b>141</b>



# **The Repressive Apparatus**

## **The police**

A pervasive and repressive police network now operates at every level of south Vietnamese society. More than a dozen military and civilian agencies are legally authorized to make arrests. But, as one Vietnamese Senator observed "anyone in Viet Nam with a gun can pick people up." Though the national police network includes both military and civilian branches, there is little difference in objectives and procedures between the two. In 1971 the police bureaucracy was removed from the regular civil service and made into a separate military command. Its head, an army officer, is now responsible to President Thieu, rather than a civilian ministry. This combination of civilian police and military functions reflects the views of Robert Thompson, President Nixon's top advisor on counter-insurgency. It also serves the objectives of US Agency for International Development which funds most of Saigon's police activities.

## **The National Police**

The largest south Vietnamese police agency is the National Police force. It has increased from 16,000 men in 1963 to over 120,000 by the end of 1972, and further increases are planned.



Representatives of the National Police are now stationed in every district in South Viet Nam.

The growth and sophistication of the National Police has been accomplished by a decade of American planning, advising and funding. US economic assistance to the National Police has grown steadily over the last four years. With this funding the police have developed techniques of control which have now reached totalitarian dimensions. Responsibilities of the National Police force now range from identifying and keeping dossiers on every citizen over 15 to the interrogation of most prisoners.

### **The Special Police**

The Special Police, a branch of the National Police, are responsible for eliminating NLF cadres and repressing all movements for peace and neutrality. They are especially feared and hated because of their practice of infiltrating opposition political groups and torturing arrested suspects. The mass arrests of 1972 were carried out by the Special Police.

### **The Active Service Police**

This service forms part of the National Police Force for administrative purposes, but actually receives orders directly from the President's office, from the American Central Intelligence Agency, from the Chiefs of Staff of the south Vietnamese Army, and from the American Special Forces.

More than 20 provincial offices come under this branch of the police. In Saigon alone there are eight offices, employing 80 to 120 people each, not counting the personnel of the 200 to 300 bureaus and all the informers.

## **The Order Police**

The Order Police, another branch of the National Police, are charged with assisting in the quelling of "demonstrations, disorders, and riots..."

## **The National Police Field Forces**

The National Police Field Force (NPFF) is "a para-military police unit engaged primarily in combating the Vietcong Infrastructures (VCI) in rural areas in South Vietnam." <sup>(1)</sup> The US Army calls it a "relatively new and major police adjustment in counterinsurgency work" <sup>(2)</sup>. Their equipment, including tanks and artillery, is identical to that used by the south Vietnamese military forces. Most of their material support comes from the US Department of Defense. The NPFF now numbers more than 25,000.

## **Official Saigon Police**

The employees of this headquarters can be divided into two categories: uniformed police and plainclothesmen who are granted the right to make arrests. The right becomes an illegal source of income since the innocent but well-off (merchants, restaurant proprietors) are arrested and forced to contribute large sums in order to ensure their release.

## **The Bureau of Military Security**

The Bureau of Military Security is implanted in every unit of the Army and its sphere of action extends to areas surrounding military

---

(1) *Twenty-Second Report*, by the Committee on Government Operations, October 17, 1972, p. 19.

(2) *Area Handbook for South Viet Nam*, Department of Army Pamphlet 550-5, p. 414.

installations. These units cooperate with the Provost Marshall's Office which on several occasions has directly intervened in the civilian domain, in particular with regard to the arrest of newspapermen and students. The Bureau of Military Security has the right to take action against pacifist intellectuals considered anti-militarist on the basis of their writings or public statements.

### **The Secret Service**

The Secret Service, which works under the direct orders of President Thieu, carries out arrests and executions in all sectors of society. Secret Service agents make use of hired assassins recruited from the Saigon underworld and paid "by the job" Public opinion in Saigon holds the Secret Service responsible for assaults on well-known opponents of the regime.

### **The Central Intelligence Service**

It is headed by American experts and operates on a clandestine basis. At present it is run as a joint American Vietnamese operation.

The American CIA controls the Central Intelligence Service and also coordinates the operations of the Active Service Police, the Bureau of Military Security and the intelligence bureau at Army headquarters. The Central Intelligence Service is thought to be the center for secret and double agents.

### **The Resources Control Program**

All of these branches of the National Police benefit from the Comprehensive Resources Control Program which has been developed with the aid of American technology. It is designed to "regulate the movement of people and goods" and "restrict the

flow of information and supplies.”<sup>(1)</sup> The Resources Control Program uses the latest technological equipment and techniques for control of the population.

The , National Identification Registration Program (NIRP) is under the Resources Control Program and aims to identify and register everyone over 15 years of age.

The project has succeeded in filing almost every Vietnamese into an advanced data bank which was overseen and directed by elements and officers on loan from the FBI. Included in every individual's dossier is a photograph, fingerprints from both hands, a description of the person and “biographic data,” including political opinions, personal feelings about the GVN cadres, wealth, family status and any hearsay or reputation offered by friends, relatives or informers.

### **Family Census Program**

A similar program is the Family Census, which registers all pertinent data on members of a particular family. A group photo of the entire family is also included. A US document prepared for use by American advisors emphasizes that it is vitally important for the National Police to obtain information concerning families since “This can be useful in exploiting family sentiment to obtain his arrest...”<sup>(2)</sup>

Holmes Brown and Don Luce,  
*Hostages of War*, Indochina Mobile  
Education Project, pp. 4-6

---

(1) Richard Pollack, *Public Safety in Viet Nam. The New Mercenary Force*, July 4, 1972, p. 4.

(2) An Analysis of Provincial Security Committee, (SOP-3), *Congressional Record*, April 21, 1971, p. E 3331.

## Other Forces of Repression

But the police is not alone in carrying out that task which is virtually the sole task of all the wheels of Thieu's administration and State apparatus. It is helped by a series of other "services" namely :

—The rural authorities first, who have also the right to arrest people and who play a precious auxiliary role since the whole administration down to village level is now appointed by Thieu ;

—The people's militia, recruited in the urban centres, mainly among idle children from 12 to 16 who, armed with automatic weapons, are entrusted with the task of cracking down on students' demonstrations and rallies (see **Thoi Bao Ga**, published by Viet Nam Resource Center, Cambridge, Massachussets, March - April 1972) ;

—The army, which has every right to arrest people and plays important police role in the countryside where the various police services are less implanted than in the towns. All soldiers can thus apprehend and question whomever they wish ; as no authorities are present, all pressure can be brought to bear to make the arrested peasants confess that they belong to the NFL unit last operating in the region, or that they collect money for the Front, or simply that they are "in contact with the enemy." The Committee for the Reform of the Detention Regime in South Viet Nam which runs a home for released prisoners tells who are these "suspects" incarcerated by the army : they are ordinary citizens arrested during "search and destroy" operations jointly made by the US army and governmental army. Others have been rounded up in so-called "Phoenix" or "Wan" pacification campaigns, for they are suspected of being NFL sympathizers ;

— The civil guards (*Dan Ve*) volunteers who are even more dreaded than the soldiers. They draw half a soldier's pay and are armed with light weapons and hand grenades. Poorly paid, they live from the exploitation and looting of the people of the rural areas where they conduct patrols. They work under the direction of the head of the province (a militaryman) and have jails and torture chambers of their own. After questioning the prisoners are handed over to the national police in small towns or provincial capitals.

Excerpt from *Saigon — Les prisonniers*  
Front Solidarité Indochine, Document N° 6,  
First quarter 1973, pp. 19-20.

# The Functioning of the Forces of Repression

## Fascist Laws

*With a view to crushing all forms of opposition, the Saigon regime relies upon such laws as never existed in any other country. In fact these laws only serve as a legal cover, for repressive operations are carried out in a wholly arbitrary way. It's pure and simple terror.*

The south Vietnamese government and its American advisors have attempted to defend the legality of all these arrests. But the list of punishable violations, the regulations governing evidence, and the methods of sentencing reveal a system designed to permit the imprisonment of anyone the government wants to get rid of.

Decree-laws are issued by the executive branch of the government. They are supposed to be approved by consent of the legislature but irregularities often attend this procedure. For example, the latest set of decree-laws granted what one newspaper called "unlimited power" in the areas of defense, security, economics and finance.

They were passed in a special session of the Senate which was held after curfew when all of the opponents of the bill were absent.

Holmes Brown and Don Luce  
*Op. cit.*, p. 1

#### N u m b e r 93/SL/CT

*Article 1* : By this Decree are outlawed private persons, parties, leagues, associations that commit any acts of any form which are directly or indirectly aimed at practicing Communism or Pro-Communist Neutralism.

*Article 2* : Shall be considered as Pro-Communist Neutralist a person who commits acts of propaganda for and indictment of Neutralism ; these acts are assimilated to acts of jeopardizing public security (Note of the translator : The act of jeopardizing public security is punished by Article 91 para 3 of the South Viet Nam Revised Code of Criminal Laws with a maximum penalty of 5 years imprisonment).

#### N u m b e r 004/65

*Article 16* : Is sentenced to solitary confinement with hard labor for life any person who excites the mob by organizing meetings or demonstrations with the purpose to disturb the security of the state.

#### N u m b e r 004/65

*Article 17* : Is sentenced to hard labor for a term of years any person who commits any act in order to undermine the anti-communist spirit of the country or to cause harmful effect to the struggle of the people and the Armed forces.



Number 018/64

*Article 1* : During the state of Emergency and from the date of promulgation of this Decree-law onwards, the following measures will be applied :

Order the detention of or assign residence to those elements who are considered as dangerous to the national security.

Number 004/66

*Article 22* : Those persons who gather in assemblage of two more and attack, resist or obstruct the public force personnel in their duties shall be punished with death.

The killing of offenders in self-defence shall be excused.

Though these laws allow the south Vietnamese to arrest almost anyone who expresses active or verbal opposition to official policies, the Saigon regime issued another decree-law which grants it even more power. This article is known in Viet Nam as the "an tri" law. Because it requires no trial and no appeal is permitted, it is the most frequently invoked Decree-law.

Number 004/66

*Article 19* : Those persons considered dangerous to the national defense and public security may be interned in a prison or designated area, or banished from designated areas for a maximum of two years, which is renewable.

Translated by Holmes Brown and  
Don Luce, *Op. cit.*

## Arrest

It is also impossible to tell how many of those arrested really have communist connections and how many are simply opposed to the government