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President: Mr. Carlos SOSA RODRIGUEZ
(Venezuela).

AGENDA ITEM 77

The violation of human rights in South Viet-Nam

1. Sir Senerat GUNewardene (Ceylon): On behalf of the Government of Ceylon and other co-sponsors of the item under consideration, along with fifteen sister-nations of Asia and Africa and the Caribbean region, and also as a humble servant of the African-Asian group, at whose request this item has been inscribed on the agenda, it is my privilege, indeed my duty, to place before you the case of the violation of human rights in South Viet-Nam.

2. At the very outset I should like to tell Member nations that the decision of the African-Asian group was not arrived at light-heartedly or in an emotional atmosphere; it was a deliberate decision of the group after consideration of the relevant facts. It engaged the attention of no less than ten meetings of the group. It was only at the third meeting that we arrived at the decision to send a delegation, headed by the Ambassador of Liberia, Mr. Barnes, and comprising representatives of Senegal, Algeria, Afghanistan, Cambodia and Ceylon, to see the Secretary-General and to convey to him the concern and distress of the group with regard to the happenings in Viet-Nam. Immediate action was taken by the Secretary-General. Our concern was conveyed to the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam, and his reply was obtained. I shall have occasion later to comment on the letter and the reply. We were in full possession of the facts, and the case of the Viet-Name President was placed before us. At the fourth meeting we heard the acting permanent observer of Viet-Nam. We are prepared that he be given a chance to state his case. Having heard the Viet-Nam point of view, we took a decision at the fifth meeting to inscribe the item on the agenda. This is how the Press communiqué of 3 September 1963 reads:

"The African-Asian group of the United Nations met today under the chairmanship of Mr. Gershon Collier, Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, and the question of the violation of human rights in South Viet-Nam was discussed. The decision was taken that this matter should be inscribed on the agenda of the eighteenth session of the General Assembly and that priority should be asked for the debate. The decision was taken in view of the importance of the matter to the whole group."

It also states:

"The Permanent Representative of Ceylon was requested to take the initiative to have this matter inscribed on behalf of the African-Asian group, and assurances were given of the general concern of all delegations in this matter."

3. In spite of the fact that we have taken a decision to inscribe the item on the agenda, at the sixth meeting we heard the leader of the Viet-Name delegation. He was given the fullest opportunity of explaining the point of view of his Government. At the seventh meeting the request for the inscription was finalized, and at the eighth, ninth and tenth meetings we completed the details. So it will be seen from the recital of the facts that the African-Asian group has considered this matter with more than ordinary care before we thought it right to bring it before the Assembly.

4. I should now like to tell you exactly the position taken by my Government. The question of Viet-Nam was certainly not a new one so far as Ceylon was concerned. Viet-Nam, Ceylon, Laos, Cambodia, Burma, Thailand and the Buddhists of India and Pakistan belong to what is known as the Hinayana or southern school of Buddhism. Therefore Ceylon is intimately connected with the whole group and certainly has reason to have more than a passing interest in the affairs of Viet-Nam, bound as we are by the same cultural links, by the same religious ties and by common ways of life. After the demise of the great Emperor Asoka of India, under whose auspices missions were sent to all parts of the then known world, Ceylon became the spiritual home of the Buddhists. The real home of the Buddha was Nepal. I am sorry that I missed Nepal from the list for we share the same inspiration and have the same ties with that great country. Ceylon, as I have said, became the spiritual home of the Buddhists and sent missions abroad. Those missions were sent to countries like Laos, Cambodia, Viet-Nam, Indonesia, China, Tibet and to various other places. Therefore our cultural links have gone on through the centuries. Ceylon happens to be a place where pilgrims from those parts of the world flock to visit the many shrines and other places to which pilgrimages are made. Therefore Ceylon has a deep and abiding interest in the preservation of the Hinayana for many historical and emotional reasons.

5. Ceylon was aware of what was happening in Viet-Nam for some time. In point of fact Ceylon recently sent out several Buddhist missions and we became personally aware of the parlous plight of the Viet-Name Buddhists. For the last three years the Viet-Nam question has engaged the attention of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress and many Buddhist organizations have appealed to the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mrs. Bandaranaike, to take action in the matter and to see that something is done to bring relief to the long-suffering Viet-Name.

6. In point of fact, every political question paled into insignificance in Ceylon in the presence of the Viet-Name crisis. When the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, decided to launch the campaign in order to get international intervention so that relief might come to the Viet-Name, she spoke with the united voice of Ceylon. Every single political party and every single Buddhist organization in the country participated in the campaign and welcomed it. The interest shown by the Prime Minister in this question is seen by the fact that we have in our delegation—specially sent to associate with me in emphasizing the interest of Ceylon in this question—a very distinguished Buddhist leader of my country, Mr. P. de S. Kularatne of Ananda College, at one time head of the Buddhist educational movement, president of the Buddhist Congress, now the accredited leader of the Buddhists of Ceylon, and a member of Parliament.

7. Neither the African-Asian group nor indeed the Assembly should be surprised by the attitude taken by my Prime Minister. She was following a consistent policy, a policy that was followed by that great statesman, her late husband, Mr. Bandaranaike, of revered memory, whose name is not unfamiliar to the nations of the world. We have always tried to play a mediatory role. Members probably know with what zeal the Prime Minister of Ceylon, Mrs. Bandaranaike, acted with respect to the Sino-Indian question. So our role in the Viet-Name crisis is of a similar nature. It is purely mediatory in order that elementary justice should be attained for the suffering Buddhist community of Viet-Nam. We have no axes to grind; we have no differences at all.

8. It is true that we do not diplomatically recognize South Viet-Nam, nor in fact, North Viet-Nam. We have no diplomatic representation. Nevertheless there is functioning in Ceylon the South Viet-Nam/Ceylon Friendship Society, headed by no less a person than the president of the All-Ceylon Buddhist Congress, who has recently resigned, of course, on account of the happenings in Viet-Nam. We also have a consulate for South Viet-Nam in Ceylon. We therefore have certain avenues of information. I might also tell representatives in confidence that we have many friends in diplomatic missions in Viet-Nam whose good offices have also been sought. Therefore, when the Prime Minister of Ceylon directed me, as representative of our country, to take this matter to the international level, it was done with a great deal of care and caution, taking into account all relevant factors.

9. My first duty necessarily was to obtain the moral and active support of the African and Asian nations, because this is a question that particularly affects that region more than any other. It is not that the question of human rights is one that is of interest only to a particular section in the Assembly or to a particular number of nations. But the Asian and African nations naturally would be the most interested in a question of the violation of human rights in a country that is in their region. Our position has always been that the violation of human rights in any part of the globe is an affront to humanity itself. It is a challenge to mankind, a challenge that must be accepted by mankind itself and therefore by the world community.

10. I have explained to the Assembly the reasons why Ceylon has intervened in this matter with the assistance

of the other countries. I should now like to deal with the state of affairs in Viet-Nam as we have discovered it.

11. Viet-Nam was a Buddhist country, is a Buddhist country, and will continue to be a Buddhist country, whether one likes it or not, where 80 per cent of the people happen to be Buddhists. There is a tendency today to bring down this figure. To be frank, those who advance that reason do not realize that it is an argument against those who advance it. When an 80 per cent majority of the population suddenly dwindles down to 1.5 million, the first question is how did this come about? Until the early nineteenth century Viet-Nam continued to be a Buddhist country, a living Buddhist force. It came under colonial occupation for well over a century. The pretext for Western occupation was that these fanatical Buddhists of Viet-Nam molested and tortured Christian missionaries. That was the reason for the Western occupation of Viet-Nam. In spite of it, Buddhism began to grow and develop in that country. There is no doubt that there was a Roman Catholic orientation and there is no doubt that those in power belonged to that faith. There is no doubt that there were definite advantages in a colonial age to embrace the faith to which those in power belonged. This is common to all the countries in the world. Nevertheless, I do not propose to make the charge that there was oppression during the colonial régime. It may be that various advantages accrued to those who belonged to that faith, and therefore no great difference was made with respect to the number of Buddhists that constituted the population of the country.

12. The present independent Viet-Nam has been in existence for nine years now. It would be quite a criticism if 80 per cent of the population had suddenly dwindled to 1.5 million. This is a very changeable figure. At one time it is 1.5 million, and at another it is 35 per cent of the population. A distinction is also sought between practising Buddhists, real Buddhists, and nominal Buddhists. I cannot beat that argument. How many of those who belong to other religions can say that they are real Christians or real Moslems or real Hindus, practising Hindus or practising Christians or nominal Christians or otherwise? I am afraid we would have to undertake some research to discover this. I do not think it is necessary at all. The fact remains that 80 per cent of the people of South Viet-Nam are identified as Buddhists, and until this crisis took place nobody ever challenged it. All the journals in the world, and all the information centres conveyed the information that 80 per cent of the country was Buddhist.

13. What was the position of this majority of the population at the end of nine years of independence? The same old ordinance No. 10, which relegated the Buddhist community into second-class citizenship, no doubt enacted during the first régime, is still in operation. Although they would not say that Roman Catholicism was a State religion, Roman Catholicism alone is regarded as a religion under ordinance No. 10. The Buddhist community, even though it is a very large one, is regarded as a club or an association—can you imagine it? The Buddhist community is a club. That is the ordinance; that is the law of this civilized land, in this civilized age, in this civilized world. It is a club. If you belong to a club, it means that you are subject to various restrictions; you cannot perform any duties without the special sanction or permission of the Government; you cannot have a Buddhist ceremony without the permission of the

Government. I am sure that a man is entitled to call himself a Buddhist, to manifest himself as a Buddhist and carry on certain Buddhist practices, so long as they are not inconsistent with morality—and I do not think that anybody has ever argued that Buddhism teaches anything which is against morality. A Buddhist community cannot buy land; the permission of the authorities must be sought. A Buddhist community cannot put up a school; the permission of the authorities must be sought. A Buddhist community cannot put up a Buddhist institution; the permission of the Government has to be sought. By various methods the Buddhists have been relegated to the position of second-class citizens in a country to which they belong.

14. It is indeed a sad reflection that after so many years, ordinance No. 10 has not been withdrawn so that Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or Moslem should be able to practise his religion in the manner he wishes and not be subject to restrictions that are imposed by reason of this law.

15. In fact, the local authorities have even gone to the length of handing Buddhist shrines and sacred lands to Roman Catholic missions for their institutions because the law allows it. The local authority has the sanction.

16. Not content with that—although, as I said, Roman Catholicism is not the State religion, for all purposes it is—you will find the Buddhist community being compelled to put up arches in honour of the Virgin Mary and Buddhist children and their parents having to parade under those arches. You will find that all Government servants are expected, if not ordered, if they want to save their skins, to attend masses on the President's birthday and that of his powerful brother, Ngo Dinh Thuc, and so on. Every civil servant, whatever his religion may be, is expected, as a matter of course, to attend these functions and ceremonies.

17. Discrimination is shown to the Buddhists in every way, in every sphere of activity. As a community they are discriminated against. That is the position of the Viet-Nameese Buddhists. No wonder they remained silent all these years, under foreign occupation, the country torn by internecine warfare. No wonder they were so demoralized as a result of repression through the years. The wonder is that they had the spirit or the soul for the vocal expression of their own grievances. But the spirit of man can never be crushed. That is what the greatest nations in the world must know. That is what the most powerful dictators must know—that the spirit of man can never be killed. That spirit will be rekindled—and a rekindling has taken place. That is a sign of the times, of which a due warning note must be taken.

18. There are six Roman Catholic holidays in the year and one Buddhist holiday in the independent Republic of Viet-Nam. Even on that holiday in 1957 the Government of the day banned celebrations. Perhaps it was meant to be a show or trial of strength to see how the Buddhist community would react. The reaction was speedy, instantaneous and spontaneous. Never before in the history of Viet-Nam was Wesak celebrated in greater grandeur.

19. Well, the matter was forgotten for a while. But the ban was there. The celebration took place in spite of the ban. The ban had not been removed, remember. Wesak is celebrated all over the world wherever Buddhists live, in Washington or wherever they may be. We of the Buddhist countries hoist the Buddhist

flag for Buddhist ceremonies. In New York we have Buddhist ceremonies, in Paris, in London, in all parts of the civilized world, wherever there are Buddhists. And no government ever puts a ban on the hoisting of flags or celebrating in the way we want. But in the free country of Viet-Nam we are not expected to celebrate Wesak in that way.

20. Discrimination indeed. But, of course, where the Roman Catholics are concerned not only are their holidays celebrated, not only are the Buddhists enjoined to celebrate with them, but all the machinery of the State is available to them. Army trucks, information services, transport machinery, every blessed thing is open to them. If they want to put up a building or any kind of structure for their purposes, all the governmental machinery is open. But not to the poor Buddhists, who want to celebrate in their own way, their own humble way, with their own money, their own resources. What else is it but discrimination of a pitiable nature?

21. A Buddhist priest is enjoined not to take life in any form or in any manner. But even young Buddhist priests are conscripted into the army. Conscription is the law of the land. I am sure that nobody would object to conscription, but I cannot understand Buddhist priests being conscripted, young Buddhist priests who have been conscripted in thousands. Priests who have taken a vow not to bear arms, not to destroy life, are called upon to bear arms. Even in the army there is discrimination. Young officers have complained that they are not allowed to celebrate Wesak, even though they give sufficient notice in asking for leave. Not only that, 70 or 80 per cent of the army are Buddhists. There is a Roman Catholic chaplain and a Christian Protestant chaplain, but no Buddhist chaplain.

22. Of course, the Buddhists are not so dense as not to know what is happening. Various nations send food for distribution. The food is distributed through the office of Archbishop Ngo Dinh Thuc—of course there is some war material, but even the food sent for distribution becomes saleable and the funds obtained are used for purposes not intended by the nations that send the food. In the matter even of distributing food supplies there is an emphasis. Where the Roman Catholic is, he is welcome to it; where the Buddhist is, it is not quite so. Surely the nations of the world never expected it, but that is how it operates there even as to food distribution.

23. There is, of course, a beautiful Constitution. A better Constitution you cannot get. The Constitution gives freedom of worship to all people in Viet-Nam. We have experience with beautiful constitutions. They are foolproof, excellent, and nobody can grouse. But the question is whether the Constitution is functioning in that manner.

24. Their Constitution says: "Sovereignty resides in the whole people". That is beautiful indeed—in the whole people. Sovereignty resides in the whole people—they are all sovereign people, they are all equal. But I have tried to demonstrate that some people are more equal than others. The Constitution says:

"All citizens, without distinction of sex, are born equal in dignity, in rights and duties and must act towards each other in a spirit of fraternity and solidarity."

They are wonderful words. Then it says:

"... The State recognizes and guarantees the fundamental rights of the human person in his in-

dividual capacity and his capacity as a member of the community. ... Every citizen has a right to life, liberty and security and integrity of the person."

The State gives the right for people to practice any religion irrespective of any consideration.

25. It is one thing to have a Constitution; it is another thing to implement that Constitution. My case is that a Constitution may be grand, but in actual practice, the Buddhists are discriminated against. They are treated as second-class citizens in their own country. It is a startling case of a majority being treated as a minority. We here are concerned about the rights of minorities, that there shall be no discrimination against minorities. I wonder what the world Assembly has to say when this discrimination is practised against the majority?

26. Of course, on paper it looks very good. Twelve or fourteen members of the Cabinet are Buddhists. This looks very good. The number of Generals are fourteen or fifteen. But the question is, who holds the sensitive spots? At this stage, although I do not want it to be in any sense political, I want the Assembly to realize how the machinery works.

27. The President, of course, is the Minister of Defence and Internal Security. The President has vested in him all the executive rights. Who comes next? His brother, Mr. Nhu, who is so much talked about these days. He is the chief political adviser. Is he only the chief political adviser? He is in charge of the Secret Police. He is in charge of the Republican Youth Movement. He is in charge of a special army maintained, equipped and trained with the funds of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), ostensibly for security purposes. He is in charge of the Information Services. He is in charge of what is known as the Strategic Hamlet Scheme in order to keep the non-communists from the communists. There are barbed-wire fences and they are kept together, as was done in concentration camps. And who is in charge of the money and everything regarding this most wonderful scheme? It is again this indubitable Mr. Nhu.

28. But that is not all. Mrs. Nhu is in charge of the Women's Organization, a para-military organization of 250,000. There are 250,000 members, but they are all officers. They are paid as officers. Therefore, to be a woman member of this para-military organization is of great benefit.

29. What country could you not hold under surveillance in that way? One man controls the Secret Police, the Security Forces, the media of communication, the Strategic Hamlet Scheme and the Republican Youth Movement. They are the drummers who go round and say: "If you Buddhists speak anything against the Government, you know what the consequences will be. You will be thrown into gaol." In point of fact there are at least 150,000 people in gaol, without trial—I repeat, without trial.

30. These are the stark facts. What do you want Ministers for then if all the power is vested in just two people. And what of the Buddhist Generals? Yes, they are glorified officers, the most powerful of them having been kicked upstairs. There is the Chief of Staff, working with the redoubtable Mr. Nhu. In order to please the Buddhist community, there is another move to make someone a Deputy Minister of Defence. What does it matter if he is called "Chief of Staff" or "Deputy Minister of Defence" when Diem himself is Minister of Defence, and there he is,

sandwiched between Diem the President and Nhu the political adviser.

31. The next General, the most powerful man, is made Assistant Chief of Staff. But he has no army to command. The man who was in charge of the Saigon Army was removed, he is military adviser to the President. It is a very pompous phrase: military adviser to the President and closeted with the President. But no army to command. Another General is put in charge of the anti-malarial campaign spraying liquid against mosquitoes. The only one powerful Buddhist General is isolated in the north where means of communication are not so very good. He is just in splendid isolation.

32. Who then runs the army? The army in Saigon is run by General Thun, a countryman, a Catholic from central Viet-Nam, from which the Diem family hails. There is a tough man in charge, Colonel Don, a Roman Catholic. He is with the Secret Police. What do you expect with the armies in their hands, with the police in their hands? What do you expect people to do?

33. It is all very glorious to talk in terms of names and designations. We who are in politics, we who are in public life, are not deceived by labels, by designations, but what people are able to do and what they are able to produce.

34. The Buddhist community may have jobs, they may have designations, they may have salaries, they may have, if they want, promotions. They just have to be stooges. There is no other way—in fact, no subtler way—of demoralizing and depressing a major community. That is a subtler way of doing it than a direct method.

35. What has happened during the last few years? What is the fate to which Buddhists have been reduced? Buddhist leaders have fled and left the country by the thousands. At least 100,000 of the half-million Viet-Nameese in Cambodia are refugees who have fled South Viet-Nam in recent times. There are 25,000 refugees in Paris, which includes former ministers, former civil servants, intellectuals, professors and professional men. Some of them are languishing in this country trying to eke out a miserable living. In their ranks are ministers. There is an ex-minister here that I know of. There are some in Hong Kong. These leaders are scattered in various parts of the world. But, of course, leadership cannot be suppressed in that way. It only gives rise to underground movements, and there is an underground movement of democratic Viet-Nameese from the south in Paris, the Democratic Party. They are anti-communistic and they are all ready to work for the motherland at any time. If you get a flight of intellectuals, a flight of people of character and stability, what do you expect that community to be able to produce?

36. The division of the country is also beautifully done. Central Viet-Nam is controlled by President Diem's brother, Canh. And, of course, Hué itself is controlled by the Bishop's boys, as they are known. They have part of the country, in that way, under the control of various members of the family.

37. Each country, it is said, gets the government it deserves. Each country has the right to have whatever government it wants. But the question is whether the government in question has suppressed the rights of the people, who deserve to be recognized as human beings, as individuals. The question is whether those people are not entitled to human dignity. My Govern-

ment charges that the Buddhist community has been denied that advantage—denied the possibility of enjoying life, liberty and security, which we all want.

38. In a state of affairs like that, it is not surprising that some day things had to break out. On 5 May 1963, the celebrations ended—the vast, grand celebrations of Archbishop Thuc, to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of his ordination. Everybody was there—large crowds—the streets were all decorated. There were arches in honour of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. There were parades of men, women and children. The Papal Flag was flying aloft. It was a sea of colour. Before the end of the celebrations, an effort was made to get the leader of the Buddhist community there—the President of the Hué Buddhist Association—to send a congratulatory message to Archbishop Thuc. This the leader of the Buddhist community refused to do. He could not possibly congratulate somebody who was always acting against their interests. He did not want to do it.

39. On 6 May, by a strange accident, Diem himself, by Directive No. 1195, banned flags. On 6 May, while the Vatican Flags were still flying, the ban was operative. And surely President Diem and his advisers knew that there were celebrations that fell on 8 May—to be exact, on 7 May, at midnight. And what was the excuse given? That President Diem, in the course of his tour, discovered religious flags, and his memory was thereby refreshed with regard to the ban on religious flags. Accordingly, the Buddhist community was asked not to put up any flags for its celebration—after his brother's function was all over—suddenly, on the eve of the Buddhist ceremony, the ban becomes operative. While the Vatican Flag was still flying, the ban was introduced against the arches and flags put up by the Buddhist people.

40. On 7 May, the leader of the Buddhist community, the President of the Buddhist Association there, cabled to President Diem, protesting against this directive. He sent a similar cable to the World Buddhist Fellowship. By way of reply, army trucks came and the soldiers pulled down the flags, trampled upon them, kicked them about. All the protests were in vain. Most unceremoniously all the flags were removed by army trucks.

41. On 8 May came the religious celebrations, starting at 6.30 in the morning. They took just a short time. There was a procession from one pagoda to another, carrying the Buddhist relics. It was a quiet and orderly procession, peaceful in every way. There were in the procession some banners protesting against the order, as well they might have—protesting against the cruel directive that they should not have Buddhist flags. The chairman of the committee asked the Buddhist leaders why those flags were there. The answer was: "We removed all the banners possible that had the protests against the Diem Government in the matter of flags, but there were a few left—they were quite entitled to it."

42. There was the usual broadcast in the evening. Some 10,000 people collected in the market square. It was the usual thing to broadcast those celebrations. But the broadcast was stopped. First, it was stated that there were technical difficulties. The people were impatient; they were prepared to stay on until the so-called technical difficulties were attended to. Then came the order by the President that the broadcast was to be stopped. Naturally, the people became restive. Fire hoses were used. Army trucks, with secret police and special forces, opened fire. Eight

people were killed on the spot, and another died later, and more than twenty were injured.

43. What was the story? When this happened, the Government was unaware of the fact that there were foreign eye-witnesses and that the foreign press and other foreigners of standing had taken photographs. The Government took the position that this was one of the wicked things done by the Viet-Cong gang. They used to throw plastic bombs at groups of people, and now it was said that the same thing had been repeated, a plastic bomb was responsible for the killing of these unfortunate people, and the Government was not responsible at all. It was said that it was the communists, far away on the North Viet-Nam border, who were responsible for it. Of course, that was not accepted. The people saw who had done it; they saw who had opened fire.

44. In order to discredit that whole theory put forward by the Government, I have with me affidavits signed by three foreign doctors. I also have photographs, for exhibition, of those people, making it quite clear, without any shadow of a doubt, that this unfortunate affair was the result of shooting ordered by one of the secret police. The name is known—but, for the purposes of this debate, it is not necessary to mention it.

45. Naturally, people felt that the Government had committed two crimes. First, they were forbidden to celebrate in the way they wanted. Secondly, when they protested against that, people were killed as a result of firing by the army. Would you expect any people not to be agitated and excited in those circumstances?

46. This went on for some time. Naturally, two meetings were scheduled for 9 May. However, the sense of responsibility of the Buddhist leaders was such that they calmed the crowd and told the people to put off both meetings. It was a very sane suggestion—that they should wait for twenty-four hours before taking any kind of action. They were promised that there would be a large public meeting on 10 May, when a manifesto would be adopted and sent to the Government.

47. Feeling was running extremely high, particularly in view of the fact that we understand the authorities had said that a plastic bomb of the Viet-Cong was responsible for the injuries.

48. A meeting was held on 10 May at which they adopted a manifesto. In that manifesto they made only five demands—the very bare minimum. Because this shows how fair-minded the people were, I shall tell the Assembly what were those demands. First, rescind the order forbidding the flying of Buddhist flags. Secondly, give the Buddhists equal rights with the Catholics—they did not ask for superior rights, only for equal rights. Thirdly, stop the arbitrary arrests of Buddhist followers in Hué and halt the pressures on them. Fourthly, grant the Buddhists the right to worship and propagate their creed. Fifthly, pay compensation to the families of the Buddhist followers who had died in the Hué disturbance.

49. Could anyone complain about that manifesto? It was adopted and sent to the Government. But there was no change in the position at all. They waited for some time, to find out whether anything would happen. Of course, feeling was running high, emotions were aroused, people were being arrested, and the police and the Government were committing acts of repression all the time.

50. On 21 May a memorial service was held in a number of towns—not only in Hué and Saigon, but in a

number of other towns—for those who had been killed. In Saigon, 600 monks and nuns marched solemnly in procession. This attracted the attention of the Government. The Government thought that it was an act against Government orders.

51. On 28 May, there was another peaceful procession of Buddhist priests and monks in Saigon. The Government now felt that the emotions of the Buddhists of Viet-Nam could not be restrained any longer. On 29 May, therefore, the Government issued a statement clarifying its attitude toward religious freedom. That went no further than the assurance which had already been given on 15 May.

52. On 30 May, the Buddhist leaders started a forty-eight-hour fast in the main pagoda at Saigon. Outside the National Assembly, the bonzes and the nuns staged a sit-down strike until evening, and then proceeded to the pagoda to continue their fast.

53. The forty-eight-hour fast ended on 1 June. By then, all the pagodas had been enclosed with barbed-wire fences. They were cut off from water supplies. Water could not even be brought to the people, the monks and nuns, who were locked up inside. But the faithful came in the thousands—more women and children than anyone else—to pray behind the barbed-wire fences. By the thousands they came to perform their religious ceremonies.

54. On 3 June, while these innocent people, including women and children, were still praying, they were set upon by the police and the army. Poisonous gases were actually sprayed on these people. Again, I have an affidavit from the doctor who attended them, stating that sixty-two persons were suffering from third-degree burns as a result of poisonous gases which had been used. The question was asked: where were the poisonous gases obtained which were used? The answer was that this was some liquid supplied by the United States Army. But I am quite certain that the United States Army did not supply this kind of liquid to be thrown on these innocent people who were praying. As I have said, sixty-two people were injured. I have affidavits about this.

55. The Government felt that things were not going so well. On 4 June, an announcement was made of the appointment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee with a Buddhist as head of it. But, while the announcement was being made, the students were becoming active. The Secretary of the Buddhist Student Association was beaten beyond recognition. He was asked to state that the leader of the Buddhist Sangha in that area was a communist, and he refused to do that. That leader is now seeking asylum in the United States Embassy. As I have said, he was beaten beyond recognition. I have affidavits to show what happened. Similar treatment was accorded to the Secretary of the Saigon Buddhist Association. He is now behind prison bars, charged with creating trouble. How long he will be there one cannot know.

56. In spite of these events, the Buddhist leaders were so reasonable that they were prepared to come to a meeting with the Inter-Ministerial Committee in order to discuss the procedure to be adopted at meetings of that Committee.

57. On 11 June, there occurred that sensational event which rocked the whole world. Thich Quang Duc performed the act of self-immolation. It was a sacrifice made for the many, out of compassion for the many. I have here the original testament written and signed by

him, in which he stated that he was committing this act for the sake of the many, that he was sacrificing himself in order that Viet-Nameese Buddhists might get their legitimate rights to practise their religion as Buddhists.

58. It was a solemn act done in all solemnity; four other monks and a nun followed. It created world-wide interest. What was the comment made by Mrs. Nhu: "If I had my way I would beat the bonzes ten times over; I will clap my hands when each monk barbecue show occurs."

59. Can you beat that for inhumanity, for cruelty? A man gives up his most precious, sacred life as an act of sacrifice for the good of the many, out of compassion for the many, for his people. Even such an act may evoke world attention. It shows the mentality of those at the helm of affairs there. It might be said that Mrs. Nhu is a private citizen entitled to her views. But she is a member of the National Assembly. She is in the inner circle of the palace and she is in charge of the women's movement and the para-military organization of women. She is not quite a private individual; she is the wife of the most powerful person in the Government, the power behind the throne if not the power itself.

60. The Inter-Ministerial Committee sat on 14, 15 and 16 July and you can imagine the reasoning of these people; I cannot understand how reasonable they were. In fact the agreement they reached, to my mind, is just as humiliating. Nevertheless, in the interest of peace and harmony, they were prepared to reach an agreement. What was the agreement? The sum total of the agreement is this: on national days the national flag must be flown; on Buddhist holy days the Buddhist flag can be flown. If a Buddhist flag is flown in certain places, on a gate or on a porch or outside, the national flag must be flown aloft or the national flag must be hoisted on the right while the Buddhist flag must be on the left, outside, and the Buddhist flag must be two-thirds the size of the national flag.

61. Can you imagine anything more petty, more humiliating, more disgusting than this? Permission is given to manifest the religious symbol, the emblem, and it is said it has to be put up on the left side and it must be two-thirds the size of the national flag. As far as paper flags and streamers or Buddhist flags are concerned, they can be displayed only inside the compound or inside the pagoda. What kind of deeds, what kind of humiliating things were agreed to? These were agreed to. Even so, even this humiliating agreement was not implemented. I have decided at the moment, because of the time it will take, not to read to you all the documents. A brochure will be sent out by the delegation of Ceylon which will contain all the relevant documents.

62. I know that a friendly Government like the United States Government was trying to use its good offices to see that the agreement at least was implemented. No implementation took place. On 26 June having waited for ten days, the temples now had to be restored for worship. None of these things were done, they were still barricaded, still behind barbed wire, there were still policemen in sight, still army men in sight, still no winter supply and still no succour for the poor unfortunate Buddhist people.

63. On 26 July, patience having been exhausted, the supreme head, Thich Tinh Khiet, wrote to the President of Viet-Nam a letter pointing out that there was no implementation of even this humble, humiliating

agreement. Nothing happened. On 1 July, the Buddhist leader of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, Thich Thien Minh, wrote to the Vice-President that there was no implementation. Nothing happened. Naturally, feelings were roused. Everybody was beginning to demonstrate. The Government found itself in an unfortunate position. On 20 August at midnight, one of the most heinous acts that any civilized government can do was committed. All the pagodas in Saigon, in Hué, throughout the whole country were attacked by the soldiers of the police. They rushed into these places, took over thousands of monks and damaged the furnishings, the sacred altars, injured many people. This was a governmental attempt to get control of the temples. On 20 and 21 August they did this fell deed which was so much havoc. Can you imagine anybody's susceptibilities not being aroused when their sacred places are being invaded by the military and police, when guns, carbine and ammunition are being used there, when all types of things are used to take out unoffending monks and nuns who are housed in these pagodas?

64. Of course, the government authorities thought that was the end of it. Why? Because the temples are now under their control. And I can assure you I can advance to you a theory which I am sure it is possible to establish on the information we have. This was done to clear the temples of leadership so that they may create the new leaders, the new priests. There is information that three thousand robes have been made in order to create the monks to be placed in these pagodas, the new leaders. This was the object of this fell act. Those harmless people would always be under the surveillance of the paid hirelings who were placed as monks in these temples. This challenge was accepted not in time. Thousands of people have been under arrest, thousands of monks were carted away. The students took up the cause. The students of Saigon University and Hué University began to demonstrate. Because the students at Hué were allowed to demonstrate, the Roman Catholic Rector of Hué University was dismissed by the Government because it was not a case of Catholics and Buddhists, but a case of just, human rights.

65. Forty-seven professors, all the deans of the faculty of Hué University, five Buddhists and the rest of them Catholics, joined in the protest, not merely over the dismissal of the Rector but the way that the Buddhist problem was handled—the denial of rights to the Buddhist people of Hué area. Roman Catholic professors joined in it. The protest spread from Saigon University to high schools and all over.

66. Then again a fell blow struck the students. There came the army trucks—unfortunately, United States Army trucks were used for this fell purpose. Thousands of students were taken away. An announcement was made by the Government that those who were under twenty-one would be sent to what are called "educational centres" for reorientation—I don't know what they are, correction centres are used in other parts of the world. But those who were over twenty-one would be drafted into the Army. All the students, whether they liked it or not, would be drafted into the army, of course, to be kept under the eyes of the officers. And those under twenty-one would be sent to correction centres.

67. The student meetings did not stop at the universities; they went to the high schools. The boys and girls began to demonstrate. In one case 600 students of the

high school demonstrated—400 of them were girls. They were also treated the same way. The student demonstrations went on increasing in strength. Those of us who know Asia, those of us who know Latin America, those of us who know the Middle East, know that when a movement passes on to the students, the university students and the high school students, it becomes a national movement. That is what it has become in the independent country of Viet-Nam. It has become a national movement, the cause having been taken up by the students.

68. What greater proof do you want than this, that as a result of the repressions, Madam Nhu's father, a very esteemed friend of mine, a distinguished man of great character, could not bear it any more. He had sent repeated communications to the Government that the Buddhists were not being treated properly and well, that it was time that they took remedial measures; it was time that the Government disowned his daughter's protestations. The Ambassador tendered his resignation. He said he would no longer serve a Government that behaved in this manner. The raid on the temples was on 21 August, on 22 August he tendered his resignation. His very distinguished wife, who was a permanent observer to the United Nations—the mother of Madame Nhu—most of you I am sure had the pleasure of meeting and knowing her, tendered her resignation too. The whole Embassy staff in Washington tendered its resignation as a protest against the repression of the Buddhists of the country.

69. The Foreign Minister tendered his resignation, which was not accepted. He shaved his head; he said he was becoming a monk and he went on a pilgrimage to India, praying that some relief might come to his countrymen, to his fellow Buddhists.

70. Are these the acts of madmen—people immolating themselves? People of religion, people of character, people of great literary fame are amongst those who immolated themselves. Are these diplomats and ministers just lunatics or fanatics? It came to a stage when they could not, as human beings, countenance that this Government should subject the Buddhist community to this harsh treatment.

71. Again, in August, when the Foreign Minister was going away, he was considered a hero by the student population and even by the local police. The resignation of the Foreign Minister was considered a welcome step even by the local police and the student population.

72. The United States Government pleaded in vain for conciliatory methods so that this repression should stop. You are aware of the statement made by President Kennedy referring to the repression, asking for humane methods to be adopted by his allied Government.

73. From the students the protest went even to the professions. The Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of Hué University, when he wanted to get the professions to pass resolutions, was arrested and locked up. A former Minister of Justice and two distinguished members of the Bar, who wanted a resolution to be adopted by the Bar protesting against these infringements, were locked up.

74. Therefore, it had gone to the Buddhist monks and the nuns, to the Buddhist leaders, to the people at large, to the students, to the professions and to the Catholics themselves. In fact, the Catholic Church has reason to say, "Save us from our friends."

75. Of course, when I was outlining the state of affairs in Viet-Nam, I omitted to mention one important detail; the important detail is known as the Centre for Personalism. Every Government servant has to attend these classes run at Dalat in the district of Mr. Nhu. These are all classes taken by the Catholic clergy. It is Catholicism plus the personality cult. Everybody has to attend. It is compulsory that every Government servant attend these "personalism" classes.

76. Even those subtle methods did not pay. What kind of subtle thing can pay when it comes to people's religious beliefs, when it comes to people's emotions? Even they did not work. In fact, even the Catholic population was shocked.

77. Martial law was declared on 28 August 1963. Things were certainly not improving. All the pagodas throughout South Viet-Nam had been enclosed and through the length and breadth of the land. After the 21 August raids, steps were taken to create a new leadership of the temples, for the temples to be handed over to the stooges of the Government. Can any Government create leaders, Buddhist leaders? Can any Government take over temples? That is exactly what was attempted as an accomplished fact.

78. On 1 September, after this deed was done—the plan was a little too neat, it might have been better if it had been a little more clumsy—a neat wiping out of all the temples and the temples to have new leaders, new trustees and new caretakers, the Xa Loi Pagoda, the headquarters of the Buddhist leadership and the centre of Buddhist activity, reopened. The keys were given to Buddhist lay leaders—the priests are well out of it.

79. A new president was nominated by the Government, but the Buddhists refused to accept him. Then the answer came quickly. The Government said: "If you are not prepared to accept the president we nominated, we shall nominate the presidents of the committees and we shall run the show." That is what happened. In the biggest and most important pagoda the Government imposed on the Buddhists a new leader and a new president. On 16 September, the whole scheme was settled, with the temples in the safe charge of the newly created leaders.

80. They also set up a committee for the purification of Buddhism, for pure Buddhism. When has anyone heard of the president of a country or a government establishing a committee for pure Buddhism? I do not think there is anything to beat that. Has a government the right to rule the souls of the people and to show them in what way they should purify their souls, in what way they are going to worship, and to tell them who are to be their spiritual advisers? I have never heard of anything like that anywhere, but that was done. That committee for pure Buddhism set up under government auspices telegraphed here that no action was necessary, everything was fine and splendid and the Buddhists were satisfied. Well, that is the state of affairs that obtained.

81. It is relevant at this stage to read to you, for documentary purposes, the message sent by the Secretary-General on 31 August 1963 to the President of the Republic of Viet-Nam:

"I have the honour to inform your Excellency that the Asian and African Member States of the United Nations, through their representatives to this Organization, have come to see me to express their

grave concern at the situation that has arisen in the Republic of Viet-Nam, and have asked me to request Your Excellency's Government to take all necessary steps to normalize the situation by ensuring the exercise of fundamental human rights to all sections of the population in the Republic.

"It is in the light of humanitarian considerations, to which we all as members of the human family are bound, that I have felt it my duty to transmit the above request, adding to it my own personal appeal to Your Excellency, as the head of the Government of Viet-Nam, to find a solution to the questions which are so deeply affecting the population of our country, in accordance with the principles laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." [A/5542, section 1.]

82. The answer of the President is most interesting. He is a Roman Catholic President of Viet-Nam, and he is now going to be the saviour of Buddhism and launch a campaign for the purification of Buddhism. I, as a Buddhist, can only repeat: "Save us from our friends." He wrote:

"I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your recent message in which you were kind enough to inform me of the concern shown by the representatives of African and Asian States Members of the United Nations with regard to the situation in Viet-Nam.

"I thank you for the opportunity this gives me to clarify fully the Buddhist question, to which your message refers.

"First of all, I can assure you that there has been no suppression of Buddhism in Viet-Nam since the establishment of the Republic. . . . The Buddhist question is not a question of suppression, but a phenomenon of the development of Buddhism, a growing-pain of Buddhism,"—indeed, a growing-pain of Buddhism—"which should be viewed in its historical context, that of an under-developed, newly independent country—a country in other words, which is short of cadres and of financial resources but desirous of rapidly asserting itself."—you have to assert yourself to practice your religion, this is a most interesting story—"In this unduly rapid development, Buddhism, like other movements, both public and private, is suffering from a shortage of cadres both qualitatively and quantitatively, and this offers the East and the West an opportunity to infiltrate, if not to impose their own cadres who try to take over the leadership." [*Ibid.*, section 2.]

There are no foreign elements at all in charge of these temples. They are Viet-Nameese Buddhists, and nobody else. The answer continues:

"This results in ideological deviations, which in practice are reflected"—this reminds me of language heard in other contexts—"in techniques of political agitation and propaganda and in the organization of riots and coups d'état for the benefit of foreign interests."—I do not know what foreign interests have benefited—"This is the tragedy of Buddhism in Viet-Nam; it will no doubt be the tragedy of Buddhism in the other countries of Asia.

"We hope that instead of allowing themselves to be poisoned by an international conspiracy of the East or the West against the Republic of Viet-Nam,"—you see, there is an international Press conspiracy because the Press of the world high-

lighted the events—"the fraternal African and Asian countries will benefit from the experience in our country and forestall the crises which they will possibly have to face.

"Every Government is in duty bound to uphold public order and also to ensure that alien cadres both from the East and the West, with their specific ideologies and policies, do not mar the original purity of Buddhism and the other movements. In other words,—"this is what pains me most—"the action taken by the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam in connexion with the Buddhist question has no other objective than to free the Buddhist hierarchy from all outside pressure and to shield the development of Buddhism from any external influence that works against the interest of the Buddhist religion and against the highest interest of the State." [Ibid.]

In fact, the State has now taken over the Buddhist religion. I am sure there are no such provisions in the Constitution and that there is no such arrangement whereby the State can take over the religious hierarchy. The reply continued:

"I am also happy to be able to inform you that a solution has already been found to the Buddhist question—they wipe out the temples and nominate new leaders—"which bears witness to the merits of the policy pursued by the Viet-Name Government. Freed from the evil influence of agitators and adventurers, the Buddhist hierarchy has resumed charge of the Buddhist community of the Pagodas throughout the territory of Viet-Nam." [Ibid.]

I might also add that the monks and the nuns who were removed in military trucks on that eventful night are being released, but they are not allowed to go back to the temples, and where they have gone, goodness knows. No one knows what has happened to these people. The reply ended:

"I request you to be kind enough to communicate this message to the distinguished representatives of the African and Asian States Members of the United Nations." [Ibid.]

83. The position, then, is this: the President's aim is the purification of Buddhism. Is that a governmental duty? Can the purification of Buddhism come from the Catholic President of the country? Can the purification of Buddhism come from any other source than the Buddhist people themselves? Can the Sangha be reformed? There are Buddhists in Ceylon, but our Government dare not reform the Sangha by governmental edicts and legislation. The reform of the Sangha must come from within, and not from without. Would the Catholic Church allow the reform of the Catholic Church to be carried out by the dictator president of any Catholic country? Would that ever be tolerated? Does it mean that the Buddhists can accept standards which do not apply with equal force to the Catholics and to people of other religions? That is really a travesty of justice. This is a repression of a nature that a civilized doctrine cannot recall; it is a denial of human rights that will shock every human being anywhere in the world. It is because of this state of affairs that we, the African-Asian group of Member States, have come to ask the Assembly for a sympathetic understanding of the problem.

84. We are not out for sensation, we are not out for kudos, we are not out for emotional outbursts. All we want is that the legitimate rights of the Buddhist population of Viet-Nam should be restored to them. Equal

rights are what they ask for. They are not asking for a privileged position because they are in a majority. They are asking only for such rights as are enjoyed by the Roman Catholics, the Protestants, the Muslims, the Confucians, the Taoists and everybody else. They ask for no more; they ask only for equal rights and that the humiliations and suffering that they have gone through for years be removed from them. They ask that they be allowed to practise their religion, that they may be able to be proud of their religion and to call themselves Buddhists, and to display the fact that they are Buddhists, without suffering an inferiority complex about it.

85. It is for that purpose that we have come for your intervention, for your assistance and your help. A duty is cast upon friendly nations too, and in this connexion a very, very great role indeed must be played by the United States of America. After all, it must be remembered that Viet-Nam is an ally of this great Republic. Viet-Nam depends for internal security upon the United States of America. The great Republic of the United States of America believes in freedom, believes in the dignity of man, believes in equal rights, believes that every human being is entitled to practise religion in whatever way he or she wants. Is it then too much for us to ask that the good offices of the United States Government be made available in order to get relief for this long-suffering people?

86. The strength of the feeling in my country is so great, we are so convinced of the important part that the Government of the United States can play in the solution of this problem and we are so convinced that the United States holds the key to its solution, that a most unprecedented thing took place in Ceylon. In our country, before the annual budget, the Speech from the Throne is introduced, outlining the programme of the Government for the coming year. Public opinion was so strong that for the first time the Throne Speech was sent back for amendments to include the Viet-Nam item. This is the amendment to the Throne Speech that was adopted and unanimously passed by the Ceylon House of Representatives:

"... but whilst welcoming the efforts of Your Excellency's Government on behalf of the Buddhists of Viet-Nam, urges upon the Government:

"To take action in the United Nations and elsewhere to help the Buddhists of that country by enlisting the support of other Governments and public organizations to ensure that American troops are withdrawn from South Viet-Nam and the other provisions of the Geneva Agreement of 1954 enforced."

87. The Ceylon Government feels that, since South Viet-Nam has been the recipient of massive military aid from the Government of the United States of America; since the United States has assumed primary responsibility for the training and equipment of the South Viet-Nam army and provided financial assistance for its maintenance; and since furthermore, the United States has committed itself to the maintenance of members of its own armed forces in the territory of South Viet-Nam, this massive aid provided by the United States Government to South Viet-Nam in the military sphere must be regarded as an important factor in the continuance in power of the present South Viet-Nam administration. The Government of Ceylon appreciates that in certain situations the national security of a State may require the stationing of its troops on foreign soil. The stationing of such contingents and the granting of other military assistance

should not, however, provide a prop on which a local administration, enjoying little or no support and acting in a manner arbitrary and inimical to the interests of the majority of its own inhabitants, can lean for support. In this context, the Government of Ceylon takes the view that in the interests of the people of South Viet-Nam, the cause of religious freedom and the maintenance of the security of the area would be better served by the adoption of measures to deny such assistance, including measures for the withdrawal of foreign troops. The Government of Ceylon would also like to refer to the provisions of the Geneva Agreement^{1/} under which the introduction into Viet-Nam of foreign troops is prohibited.

88. That is the strength of the feeling in my country. We are not concerned whether there are American troops in Viet-Nam or not. We are not concerned with whether the Diem Government is to go on or not. We are concerned only that the Buddhists of Viet-Nam should enjoy their Buddhist rights. And if there is let or hindrance to the enjoyment of their Buddhist rights by reason of the strength the Government commands, particularly the strength it commands through assistance on the part of the United States Government, then I think it is for us to appeal to the United States Government to see to it that it either adopts remedial measures to normalize the situation or else refuses aid and assistance to a country that denies to the human being his fundamental human rights.

89. And this is not heard only in Ceylon. This feeling has been expressed even in this country; it has been expressed by the international Press too. That feeling has been expressed even in the Senate. Senator Frank Church, together with ten other members of the Senate, has given notice of a draft resolution on this subject. Even in the United States of America the feeling is strong that in the present state of affairs in Viet-Nam, any assistance, direct or indirect, constitutes encouragement to the suppression of the liberties of the Viet-Nameese people. If Americans feel this way, can you then blame us in Ceylon and other Buddhists in other countries for feeling the same way? Feeling with regard to this question has been aroused not only in Buddhist countries. Wherever Buddhists live, from Honolulu to every part of Asia, there have been demonstrations. In Pakistan, 500,000 people observed one day of fasting. In Paris, in Honolulu, in Indonesia, in China, in Taiwan, in the Philippines, in every part of the known world, this is how the Buddhist countries and the Buddhist peoples reacted to the repression that obtains in Viet-Nam. It is really a matter of world-wide interest.

90. I am also thankful to Christian countries, including Catholic countries, for echoing the same sentiment. If you read some of the editorials in Catholic journals—*Le Monde* in France, and *The Commonweal*, a Catholic magazine, here—you will see how Catholics themselves feel that a grave injustice has been done to the people. What more can I say than to tell you that President Kennedy, himself a Roman Catholic, did not mince words about it; that the Vatican has intervened—I am personally aware of this—that unofficial action was taken much earlier. The Vatican has openly expressed its concern, its distress, its anguish at what is happening, and is asking that an equality of opportunity will be given for people to practice their religions and that religious harmony will be restored.

^{1/} Agreements on the Cessation of Hostilities in Indo-China, signed at Geneva on 20 July 1954.

91. The appeal then comes not only from the Buddhists, but from the whole civilized world, from the Vatican, from the great country of the United States of America. I am sure you will hearken to this appeal. We are not out for any advantage. We beg only for fair, equitable treatment for our fellow Buddhists of Viet-Nam.

92. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): I gave the floor to the representative of Ceylon first as his country was one of the sixteen Member States which sponsored the request for the inclusion of item 77 on the agenda of the eighteenth session (A/5489 and Add.1).

93. However, before proceeding with the debate, I must inform the members of the Assembly that the Head of the Special Mission of the Republic of Viet-Nam to the United Nations has addressed to me two communications which I shall now read in French, the original language.

[The President continued in French.]

"New York, 3 October 1963

"Having noted the decision taken by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 18 September last to include in the agenda of the current session a question concerning the Republic of Viet-Nam, I have the honour to confirm to your Excellency the desire of my Government to be represented during the discussion of the above-mentioned question.

"Justice and common sense require that when a question directly affecting the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam is being discussed spokesmen appointed by that Government should be invited to present its point of view to the appropriate organ.

"Hoping that the General Assembly of the United Nations will grant our request, I have the honour to be, etc.

"/(Signed) N. P. BUU-HÔI"

The second communication reads as follows:

"New York, 4 October 1963

"I have the honour to request you to be good enough to bring the following to the attention of the General Assembly:

"My Government has requested me to extend, through you and the Secretary-General of the United Nations, an invitation to representatives of several Member States to visit Viet-Nam in the very near future in order that they may find out for themselves the true situation regarding the relations between the Government and the Vietnamese Buddhist community.

"The Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam would be grateful if you would be good enough to lend your good offices for the constitution of this mission.

"I have the honour to be, etc.

"/(Signed) N. P. BUU-HÔI"

94. Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ (Costa Rica) (translated from Spanish): Costa Rica asked to be included in the list of speakers in this debate because it has been following with deep concern and distress the series of incidents which have been taking place in the Republic of Viet-Nam, which are prejudicial to the right of the Buddhists freely to practise their religion. Costa Rica's record in the defence and promotion of human rights is well known, and we are proud of it. Conse-

quently, we cannot allow a case such as this, in which a fundamental right—the right of complete freedom of religious worship—is threatened and persecuted, to pass unnoticed. We are preparing therefore to investigate this case and, in order to stop the persecution of the Buddhists, to condemn those who are guilty, as strongly although not as eloquent as the representative of Ceylon who has given us details of all those incidents.

95. We have just heard the text of the second letter which the Head of the Special Mission of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam addressed to the President of the General Assembly. It is in keeping with the tradition of the United Nations to undertake an investigation such as has been proposed by the Government of Viet-Nam. Especially when the question involves the defence and promotion of human rights, the United Nations has always given serious and careful study to all the available facts before forming a judgment. My delegation would not wish it to be said, particularly in this case, that this Assembly refused to listen to one of the parties or carry out an on-the-spot investigation of what had taken place; or that the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam should be able to say that it proposed a full investigation by us into the exercise by the Buddhists of their right freely to practice their religion and that we refused.

96. It is for these reasons, in order to leave no doubt that this Assembly always acts in a responsible manner and that any case involving the defence of such an important right as that of religious freedom is no exception, that the Assembly is examining all the available evidence. My delegation believes that it would be a positive step to accept the offer of the Government of the Republic of Viet-Nam and to request the President of the General Assembly to appoint a fact-finding mission which should leave immediately in order that we may soon have its report. The President might consider seeking the views of this Assembly with regard to the procedure I have suggested.

97. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): The Assembly has just heard the statement of the representative of Costa Rica following my reading of the second letter forwarded to me by the Special Mission of the Republic of Viet-Nam to the United Nations. I believe that I might put the suggestion of the representative of Costa Rica to the General Assembly in the same terms in which he made it.

98. Consequently, I formally ask this Assembly if it has any objection to accepting, in conformity with the suggestion put forward by Costa Rica, the proposal of the Government of Viet-Nam, that, before proceeding with this debate, the President should appoint a mission of Representatives of Member States which will leave as soon as possible for the Republic of Viet-Nam in order to investigate the facts and submit its report to the General Assembly which would then proceed with the examination of the question having regard to that report. If there is no objection, I shall take it that the General Assembly agrees to this proposal and I shall act accordingly.

99. Mr. FEDORENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (translated from Russian): The Soviet delegation attaches profound significance to the debate on the question of the violation of human rights in South Viet-Nam. We therefore support the group of Afro-Asian countries in their action to have this question considered by the General As-

sembly in plenary session as a priority matter [A/5489 and Add.1-3].

100. The facts of the crude violation by the South Viet-Nam régime of elementary human rights and democratic freedoms is obvious and universally recognized. It is the duty of the General Assembly to take the necessary measures without delay to protect the lawful rights and interests of the people of South Viet-Nam.

101. The Soviet delegation fully supports the demands for the immediate cessation by the Saigon régime of the terror and repression being directed against the population of South Viet-Nam. The Soviet Union affirms its solidarity with the struggle of the patriots of South Viet-Nam for freedom and independence and for the unification of Viet-Nam on a peaceful democratic basis, and considers that the question of South Viet-Nam should be decided by the people of South Viet-Nam themselves without any interference whatsoever from outside.

102. The Soviet delegation does not object in principle to the idea of investigating on the spot the facts concerning the violation of human rights and democratic freedoms by the South Viet-Nam régime. We are convinced, however, that it would be quite wrong when settling this question to ignore the fact that at the Geneva Conference in 1954, in which representatives of the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, the People's Republic of China, the Soviet Union, the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, Cambodia, Laos and South Viet-Nam took part, special machinery was set up, namely, the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Viet-Nam.

103. This machinery is functioning, and it must be used. The Soviet delegation considers that it would be appropriate for the General Assembly to request the Co-Chairmen of the 1954 Geneva Conference, to whom the representative of Ceylon has appropriately referred here, to entrust the International Commission for Supervision and Control in Viet-Nam with the task of conducting an investigation into the facts behind the terror perpetrated by the Saigon authorities against the population of South Viet-Nam and of reporting on the results of that investigation to the Co-Chairmen, who in turn would submit the report in question to the General Assembly before the end of its eighteenth session.

104. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): The Assembly has heard the statement which has just been made by the representative of the Soviet Union, from which I take it that he disagrees with the suggestion made by the representative of Costa Rica. I cannot therefore submit the Costa Rican proposal to the consideration of the Assembly in the form in which it was originally made and I therefore ask the representative of Costa Rica whether he wishes to press his proposal. If he does, he should submit it in the usual manner in order that it may be placed before the Assembly for its consideration, in accordance with the normal procedure for this type of proposal.

105. The representative of the United Kingdom has the floor on a point of order.

106. Mr. THOMAS (United Kingdom): It was not my intention to intervene on this item today, and indeed I would not normally have chosen this moment or indeed this item in order to make my maiden speech

before the Assembly. But having regard to the suggestion made by the representative of the Soviet Union in that he referred to the position of my country and his country as Co-Chairmen of the Geneva Conference of 1954, I felt it was right that I should intervene briefly because my country is directly involved. I do not speak on a point of order, but in order to offer the views of Her Majesty's Government on this particular matter.

107. I should say that no notice was given to me or to my delegation that this matter would be raised, and therefore I have not had the opportunity to consider the question as carefully as I would wish to do. It is a matter which I think merits careful consideration, but I thought it was right that I should say that I have initial misgivings and doubts whether the matter which is before the plenary meeting this afternoon falls within the competence of the Co-Chairmen. The question which is before the Assembly is a question of human rights. Indeed, that is how the sponsors have presented it before this Assembly. I doubt very much whether the Co-Chairmen have any competence to deal with this matter or to refer the question to the International Control Commission.

108. As I have said, I have not had an opportunity to go into it carefully, but the competence of the Co-Chairmen derives solely from the 1954 Geneva Agreement. I would suggest that there is nothing in that Agreement which would give the Co-Chairmen the competence which is sought by the representative of the Soviet Union.

109. Therefore, I would suggest that, as there is this doubt, it would be wise for the Assembly to accept the offer which has been made by South Viet-Nam to have a mission investigate the conditions in Viet-Nam. I therefore would like to take this oppor-

tunity, which I have done at the earliest possible moment, to support what has been suggested to the Assembly by the representative of Costa Rica.

110. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): The representative of Costa Rica has the floor on a point of order.

111. Mr. VOLIO JIMENEZ (Costa Rica) (translated from Spanish: In my previous statement I suggested that the views of the Assembly might be sought in order to learn whether it agreed with the idea of setting up a fact-finding commission composed of Members of the United Nations, in accordance with the offer made by the Government of Viet-Nam.

112. There has been opposition to this suggestion, and since it is important that the Assembly should reflect upon the desirability of adopting this idea which is favoured I am sure, by the majority of the Members of this Assembly because of its positive character—we have already heard one opinion in its favour, I propose under rule 78 of the rules of procedure that the meeting be adjourned to allow my delegation to prepare a draft resolution on the matter to which I referred.

113. The PRESIDENT (translated from Spanish): The representative of Costa Rica has moved the adjournment of the meeting under rule 78 of the rules of procedure. Under that rule this motion must not be debated but must be immediately put to the vote.

114. I shall therefore immediately put to the vote the motion to adjourn the meeting, which has been made by the representative of Costa Rica.

The motion was adopted by 80 votes to none, with 5 abstentions.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.