July 11, 1979

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

Kool said. "But then they came one a week, and then once a day, to threaten us. It became clear there was no future for us or people like us in Vietnam. It was either leave or die."

"So we sold all our belongings, gave the police the money they demanded, and we left."

Kool's account echoes the stories related by the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Chinese who have been forcibly deported by the Vietnamese authorities over the last year. There is a collective tale of being forcibly deported at the gunpoint, systematically fleeced by Vietnamese officials of practically everything they owned. No one knew of internal relief organizations or Western intelligence operations or the refugees themselves—how much of the gold collected from the "boat people" goes into the pockets of corrupt policemen and soldiers, and so much ends up in the hands of the government in Hanoi.

What seems certain, despite Vietnamese denials, is that the deportation policy has been implemented nationwide and that it has at least the tacit consent of the Communist Party hierarchy in Hanoi. Its ultimate aim seems to be the destruction of Vietnam's entire ethnic Chinese population, which stood at about 1.8 million when the Americans withdrew in 1973.

"There can be no longer any doubt that there's a well-organized refugee racket operating in Vietnam," James K. Reid, director of the September 1978 report, said. "It may have originally been organized by private individuals, but now there is overwhelming official encouragement and active official aid."

"This couldn't be happening without the blessing of the Vietnamese government."

Refugees here contend that the deportations are directed by Hanoi's Interior and Finance ministries and have reportedly ordered local police to collect an "exit tax" from every refugee. This operates on a sliding scale: the tax is much higher in the south, where ethnic Chinese businessmen still have caches of gold hoarded since pre-communist days, than in the north, where it has been comunization since 1975. The apparent evidence is that the Vietnamese government has sanctioned the Chinese for other types of exploitation. Vietnamese American officials here and in Washington say that the evidence indicates that the refugee trade is directed by Vietnamese intelligence. But Charles Freeman, deputy U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, said that Vietnam has set up a boat-building industry specifically to move ethnic Chinese out of the country.

"The Vietnamese government has clearly expanded its policy of assisted departures for those it no longer considers desirable participants in Vietnamese society," Freeman testified before a congressional committee.

Considerable light has been shed on Viet- nam's role in the refugee trade by testimony given in the Heng Kong trial of the captain and crew of the freighter Kay Pong, one of the first boats to transport ethnic Chinese out of Vietnam. The defendants face up to four years in jail and $3.5 million in fines for smuggling illegal immigrants into Hong Kong.

One of the organizers, Kwok Wah-leung, testified that immigrants last week that he arranged the ship's departure at a government building in Ho Chi Minh City, where clerks routinely processed the passengers' exit formalities and collected the gold collected from them. The 3,318 passengers later boarded the freighter through a burrowed-wire security fence, a new trick, and changed their names on an official manifest, Kwok said.

Other refugees say that anyone who tries to avoid this formal processing, and escape without paying the departure tax, does so at great peril. Last December, Vietnam's marine police reportedly sank a boat loaded with 220 refugees off the coast of Haiphong, then machine-gunned the survivors. The reason for the massacre? The boat ran out of fuel as they were returning to Haiphong before paying off the authorities.

The refugee racket is so lucrative that it is rumored to be one of the few government-industry businesses that are making a profit. Hong Kong police uncovered $1 million in gold hidden in the engine room of the Huey J. Miller, a freighter that was intercepted only a sixth of the gold paid by the passengers for their escape. By demanding up to 12 taels of gold ($3,500 per tael), Vietnamese authorities stand to earn nearly $3 billion by the end of the year, according to a Hong Kong government source.

Refugees have already overtaken coal as the leading export of Vietnam's threadbare economy. Ford said, and the money continues to pour in.

International banking sources here report, that overseas Chinese desperate to help their relatives in Vietnam remitted $242 million to the Bank of Vietnam in April, the last month for which figures are available. Much of that money was designated to pay the boat passage for fleeing ethnic Chinese.

The importance of the refugee trade to Vietnam is evident in the statistics. The April bank remittances from overseas are reportedly more than half of the revenue from Vietnam's total exports for all last year—$416 million.

Money extorted from the refugees has apparently been used to pay for Soviet arms and machines. An American source here said that the Vietnamese last month made a down payment of $100 million in gold, in addition to the $242 million already spent on Soviet arms and other supplies that are being pumped into the Soviet Union at the rate of $3 million a day. Another possible sign of the Soviet connection in the refugee racket is that gold still being held by Vietnamese government marines has cropped up in Soviet gold sales in Europe, according to a European banker here.

Vietnam's avarice, however, does not seem to be the primary motivation for the purge. The veiled-net racial animosity between Vietnam and neighboring China has always made many Vietnamese synchronous of the ethnic Chinese spread throughout the country. For the xenophobic Vietnamese government, China's invasion this spring provided the final excuse to eliminate the troublesome Chinese minority.

"Ever since the blood flowed between Viet- nam and China, all Chinese have been regarded as a fifth column," Haiphong bricklayer Xie Chenguang said. "Although most of us had lived our lives in Viet- nam, their fatherland and that we were traitors. The government has stirred up so much hatred against the Chinese that an ordinary man cannot survive.

More than 200,000 ethnic Chinese fled or were forced across the border in China last summer, when Sino-Vietnamese relations began to deteriorate. New pressures were applied to eliminate the ethnic Chinese as soon as the month-long border war ended in March.

All Chinese, even Communist Party members and military veterans, were sacked from their government jobs. Ethnic Chinese were no longer permitted to work in factories or mines, or operate a business of any sort, or work at any of 12 occupations, from barber to barber shop owner, in which they might constitute a security risk.

Why were Chinese barbers considered security risks? "Because they might slit the throats of their Vietnamese customers," said Pan Yuanan, a young barber who emigrated from China with his wife, small son and newborn baby.

The noose tightened further around Viet- nam's ethnic Chinese in April, when all

VIETNAM REFUGEES FLEeced

OF POSSESSIONS

HON. ROBERT J. LAGOMARSINO
OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, July 11, 1979

Mr. LAGOMARSINO. Mr. Speaker, the following is an accounting of the forced departure of a Vietnamese refugee family, which appeared in The July 8, 1979, edition of The Los Angeles Times.

This exemplifies the pathetic situation in which the ethnic Chinese in Vietnam find themselves. They may either stay in the camp and be sent to as concentration camps, or pay the exorbitant fees charged for passage on flimsy boats to the high seas.

The testimony of these refugees confirms that the Vietnamese Government is realizing a great profit in deportation and other fees charged to the fleeing families—one of the most heinous government actions of all times.

VIETNAM REFUGEES FLEeced OF POSSESSIONS,
EXPelled

(By Linda Mathews)

HONG KONG.—For the family of Haiphong dentists or doctors to be taken away or to be more accurately sent to the midnight knock on the door came early in March.

Outside stood a Vietnamese police lieutenant and a crowd of people. They pushed their way into Kool's house and the lieutenant announced, "All Chinese are now being allowed to leave Vietnam. But the demand here now is for money."

Sitting at his desk that night, still weak from a month at sea, Kool, 45, told the story of the long odyssey that took him, his wife, and their children, to the second flight of Haiphong's brick wall—the family's home for four generations—to a makeshift refugee camp on the Hong Kong waterfront.

"The first time the police came, I didn't know whether to take their threat seriously,"
Chinese-language schools were shuttered and a nationwide nighttime curfew was imposed on the ethnic Chinese.

What was left of the Kool family to leave were the ominous nighttime visits by the police. "They wouldn't leave us alone," Kool said. "They told us we could either leave or have our faces burned." They were determined to push all of us Chineese out of Vietnam ... With no job, no schools, and no prospects, he and his family moved to the United States.

Kool said that once he told the police, with the help of a local Chinese lawyer, he would put them in touch with his Kool family. Kool sold his house and all his possessions. A self-taught dentist, typical of those who practice in Chinese communities, sold his practices in various Southeast Asian countries, Kool had very little savings.

To write the system of early exiles described in the family's finances, he said. Besides paying off the police, Kool also kicked in for the old fishing junk that a month ago bought for $20,000. The junk was used in the government-run fishery, a government-supervised fishing vessel.

A government-supervised fishing vessel was beached by authorities before it would supply the rice and other goods needed for the voyage, and the naval vessel that escorted Kool's boat beyond Vietnamese territorial waters decided to cut, too.

Kool said that, in his mind, there is little doubt that the deportations are officially sanctioned. On the day of departure, the police stood around and watched us board, taking our photographs and checking off our names," he said. "And the navy ship followed us for some distance as we left and shot over our heads ... I suppose they wanted to be sure that we were really gone."

What he got, in exchange for all their belongings, was a passage on a leaky 40-foot wooden junk that "always seemed in danger of sinking," the dentist said. He estimated that it could have comfortably held about 100 people, but the authorities loaded 223 aboard. "There was not even space for all of us to lie down," he recalled. "We sat up most of the way.

The boat, powered by a single sail, left May 1 and took exactly a month to reach Hong Kong. Fearful that the craft might be swamped by high seas, the passengers steered it close to the Chinese coast and sometimes bought water and supplies from passing Chinese fishing boats. Hong Kong authorities here suspect the other refugee craft, it probably put ashore in Chinese fishing villages. The passengers apparently fearful that they might be sent to China, will not say where they are headed.

To back up their threats, the Vietnamese reportedly have set up two camps for Chinese who are too stubborn to leave their homeland, too frightened to risk their lives at sea or too poor to pay the fare. The camps, almost always described by refugees as concentration camps, are said to be at Vinh Bao, near Haiphong, and at Nghe An.

I have heard of people who have been sent to these camps. They have been forced to do hard labor, to work as henchmen from northern Vietnam. "But I never heard of anyone who got out."

Vietnam's tactics seem to be having the desired effect. A Hanoi-based diplomat recently estimated that 200,000 Chinese have been expelled from northern Vietnam in the last 12 months, leaving about 50,000 there. Nearly half a million have fled the southern part of the country since 1975, roughly 300,000 in the last year.

As many as 1 million Chinese may remain in the south, though Cholon, once the bustling heart of Ho Chi Minh City's Chinese community, has been abandoned by the Chinese.

"Buses are boarded up, schools are closed and no one dares venture out after dark."