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American Embassy,
Bangkok, Thailand.

January 21, 1959.

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

SUBJECT: Vietnamese Refugees in Thailand

PARTICIPANTS: Luang Chart Trakarn Kosol, Under-Secretary, Ministry of Interior
Leonard Unger, DCM

DATE: January 21, 1959.

COPIES TO: Political Section
Special Assistant
Department of State: SEA
American Embassy, Saigon

In the course of a discussion on the Vietnamese refugee problem Luang Chart said that although 40 some thousand Vietnamese refugees resident in Thailand have now filled out a questionnaire for the Thai Government, out of this total only 98 have indicated a desire to return to South Vietnam. In reply to my question he said that something over 200 arrests had been made of Viet Minh leaders among the refugees. It was too early, however, to make any judgment as to what effect this would have on the orientation of the refugees in general. He confirmed my earlier information to the effect that a great majority of the refugees have never lived in North Vietnam but are rather persons of Vietnamese ethnic origin who were resident in what is now Laos. Luang Chart appeard to accept that any large scale repatriation of refugees was unlikely but if this is the case the Thai Government apparently continues to contemplate some moving or dispersing of the refugees away from the Northeast. He recognized that this had the danger of spreading the Viet Minh "disease" much wider through Thailand.

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Leonard Unger

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