

Brother of Hanoi Official Explains Why He Defected to the South

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, South Vietnam, June 7—The twin brother of a diplomat in North Vietnam disclosed today why he had defected to the Saigon Government after nine years in the National Liberation Front in South Vietnam.

At a news conference, Mai Van So, a 53-year-old Southerner, spoke of increasing disillusionment with the Liberation Front and of friendly treatment by the Americans and South Vietnamese when he was a prisoner of war.

Apparently he was somewhat out of favor with the Vietnamese Communists.

Mr. So's brother is Mai Van Bo who was in Paris from 1961 until December, 1970, as North Vietnam's general representative there. It is not known here whether Mr. Bo was recalled to Hanoi because of his brother's capture and defection or because it was normal to replace a diplomat after nearly a decade in France.

Mr. So, then a major, was captured in Haunghia Province in December, 1969, by soldiers of the United States 25th Infantry Division. A Saigon Government official said that his defection had been kept a secret for so long because he was carrying out "concrete missions," details of which were not disclosed.

The defector, who lives in Saigon with his wife and two daughters, receives the usual allowance given by the Government in its so-called Open Arms

program. According to Lieut. Col. Nguyen Huu Thien, director of operations for the Open Arms Ministry, it has a good opening for Mr. So.

"Frankly," Mr. So said through an interpreter, "I had been very depressed and intended to defect, which is why the American troops captured me so easily. I was very surprised by how well the Americans treated me. I had a room with television and was given newspapers. There was good food, and this good place to live. So much food was given to me I could not eat it all."

He added that he did not disclose his intention to change sides until he had seen how prisoners were treated by the South Vietnamese, whom he also praised, as well as by the Americans.



Associated Press

Mai Van So, left, told yesterday of defection from Liberation Front after being captured in 1969. Twin, Mai Van Bo, was North Vietnamese negotiator in Paris.

His career as a Communist does not seem to have been a brilliant or outstanding one. His main importance was his ability to organize workshops where munitions were produced and to train cadres.

A member of the Communist party since 1950, he lost his membership in 1963. "The party had criticized me for becoming a capitalistic property owner and an exploiter of the proletariat while in Saigon from 1954 to 1960," he related referring to a period when he opened a factory in Saigon and stopped working for the party.

The Communists did not fully trust the southern members, Mr. So added, and permitted young, low-ranking

to the South

Asked by an Asian journalist, who said he had seen American soldiers collect the ears of dead vietcong and mistreat prisoners, why he defended Americans, he replied that he was only telling the truth.

He also mentioned the treatment he received from American Army doctors for a skin disease on his legs.

'I Was Very Moved'

"I was very moved when one American doctor used his own fingers to put medicine on my legs," Mr. So said. "I couldn't think of any French doctor who would do that."

Mister So, who did not give the location of the American camp where he only stayed for three days, said he was treated well because he was an officer. In 1966 he was a battalion commander. In the spring of 1968 he was an agent assigned to buy medical supplies from smugglers in Saigon.

North Vietnamese party members to supervise and give orders disregarded completely my personal opinion or situation."

As far back as 1960, he said, when he was ordered to help the party or face disciplinary measures, he was "very discouraged with the terrorism and compulsory labor methods used by the Communists, who d