

Red Agents and Prisoners

The Viet Children of War

Da Nang, South Vietnam

"I am so frightened," the 12-year-old boy who had worked for the Viet Cong whispered over and over.

He and an 11-year-old girl, who had also worked for the Viet Cong, were interviewed separately here in the presence of two men of the special police branch in charge of intelligence and interrogations.

Both children managed to whisper to a private Vietnamese interpreter that they had suffered physical abuse during long periods of interrogation by the South Vietnamese.

The interviews, which lasted an hour and a half, were arranged by the Da Nang police chief Nguyen An Vinh because he wanted to show how the local communists recruit the very young and expose them to risks.

Both children — who had been in custody for three months — were unusually pallid and had deep circles under their eyes. Both

showed signs of almost uncontrollable nervousness. They constantly clasped and unclasped their hands or plucked or rubbed the material of their pajama-type clothing.

INTERVIEWS

Supervising the interviews was Dand Von Song, who heads the special police branch here. At one point, when Song and another policeman in the room were distracted by a messenger bringing in papers for them to look at, the boy, whose name is Nguyen Dinh Chinh, whispered:

"After my capture (by South Vietnamese forces) I was tortured on the first night. They poured water up my nose. They used electricity on me, too. Very painful. No sleep that night."

There was not time for him to give additional details. When asked if the children had been beaten or maltreated, Song said in Vietnamese: "No, no. There are no marks on their bodies."

LIVING

The boy said he was arrested on March 28 in Da

Nang, where he was living. A port city in the northern part of South Vietnam, Da Nang has a major American air force base on its outskirts.

When he was arrested, the boy was carrying nearly 12 pounds of explosives, two detonators and two M-26 grenades on a mission for the Viet Cong.

He was to meet an older Viet Cong agent. The two were to blow up one of the headquarters of an American bomb squad in downtown Da Nang.

The boy has been at the Da Nang provincial interrogation center since the end of March. Officials would not say when he will be tried.

"The interrogation of the boy has not been satisfactory," according to Song, who did not elaborate. The children were interrogated to help police find out who and where their leaders are.

FISH

"We use little fish to catch big fish," Song said.

As he was led away, Nguyen Dinh Chinh saw the next prisoner coming in, but did not show that he recognized her. She is 11-year-old Pham

Thi Hoa, who once lived near him.

Described by song as "very stubborn," the girl said her mother "gave me away when I was very small." The policemen said she had lived with a succession of important Viet Cong members, who treated her like a daughter. The girl's home was a bunker under a bamboo bush.

When she was arrested five months ago at a Da Nang bus station, Pham Thi Hoa was carrying a letter to a Viet Cong agent.

She whispered that she has been beaten when first put in the Provincial Interrogation center. She is now in the detention center.

HAIR

"That girl is very stubborn, but we have discovered her weak point — she is very afraid of having her hair cut off," Song said.

The second policeman said he had offered to adopt her. He repeated the offer. The girl gave him her same answer:

"I prefer to be in prison." As the girl was led away for the noon meal, Song said

San Francisco Chronicle
Mon., June 28, 1971

Women Jobs

Washington

American women engineers who graduated in June, 1969, were offered positions at an average of \$801 a month.

Associated Press

good-by to the visitors and said:

"Now don't write an anti-war story, write how the Viet Cong exploit children."

N.Y. Times Service