

INDO

Congressman Is Told of Beatings in Saigon Jail

NYTimes FEB 28 1975

By JAMES M. MARKHAM

Special to The New York Times

SAIGON, Feb. 27—Representative Paul M. McCloskey Jr. said today that a young woman accused of being a Communist agent who had infiltrated the press had told him in a Saigon prison that she and other prisoners had been beaten "very much."

Mr. McCloskey, one of eight Congressmen visiting South Vietnam, told newsmen that the prisoner, 19-year-old Tran Thi Phuong Thao, had made the statement in Vietnamese through an American interpreter.

At their request, Mr. McCloskey, republican of California, and Senator Dewey F. Bartlett, Republican of Oklahoma, were permitted by Saigon authorities to visit 19 prisoners who the Government claims are members of a Communist ring that infiltrated and subverted the Saigon press.

Some Held to Be Reds

On Feb. 3, the Government closed down five of the six Vietnamese-language Opposition newspapers, charging that it had uncovered Communists on their staffs. Two days earlier, nine papers had published an attack on President Nguyen Van Thieu issued by a Roman Catholic led anticorruption movement.

Many informed Vietnamese, some of whom are not particularly hostile to the regime, considered the "discovery" of the

2 Americans Tour Prisons Where 19 Suspected as Red Agents Are Held

ring a political pretext to silence opposition. But the two Congressmen said that they had been told by American diplomats that the United States Embassy's files showed that "some" of those arrested were Communists.

Mr. McCloskey said that after touring two prisons, accompanied by the commander of the national police, a number of ranking police officers and a Government television crew, he asked if he could talk to Miss Thao alone. She and the other 18 prisoners, in the presence of the police officers, has said they had been treated well.

The Congressman said that he and a Vietnamese-speaking Foreign-Service officer spoke briefly with Miss Thao, who had said she was a law student at Saigon University and had no idea why she had been arrested. Mr. McCloskey said that he had asked her "if she rested in the privacy of a sepa-

was really O.K." The question was whispered, in Vietnamese; the whispered answer—"They have beaten us very much."

The California Republican said that later in the day, at a meeting with Mr. Thieu, he raised the question of Miss Thao's possible mistreatment. The President, he said, responded that Communists would say they had been tortured.

Mr. McCloskey had initially planned to take Senator Ton That Dinh, a former general who heads the Vietnamese Publishers Association, on the tour to positively identify the 19 prisoners. The police did not let the Vietnamese senator into the prison, on the ground that the request for this had been received too late.

Meeting With Vietcong Set

SAIGON, Feb. 27 (AP)—The Vietcong delegation here said today that it would meet Sunday with eight Congressmen who are on a fact-finding mission in South Vietnam and Cambodia. A Vietcong spokesman said the Americans had asked for the meeting.

REMEMBER THE NEEDIEST