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Buddhist Leaders Arrested in Vietnam



Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, age 77, Executive Director of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. Police moved him to a remote temple in Quang Ngai province on Dec. 29, 1994, two days after he began a hunger strike.



Venerable Thich Quang Do, age 66, General Secretary of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. Arrested in Ho Chi Minh City on Jan. 4, 1995. Authorities say he will be tried as a "delinquent" for "inciting disturbances." (Photos reprinted from Que Me, Tet 1995).

Editorial

The Twentieth Anniversary and Human Rights in Vietnam Today

Twenty years after the fall of Saigon, Vietnam seems in some ways to be turning full circle. The egalitarian philosophy of Marxism has been virtually abandoned as Vietnam's economy becomes increasingly open to the private market. The Soviet bloc nations that once supported the Socialist Republic of Vietnam no longer exist; instead SRV leaders have been forced to turn toward international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Asian Development Bank; as well as multinational corporations for aid and trade. Vietnam's economy has improved as a result, and the average person has more freedom to go about his or her daily life than a few years ago -- more freedom to worship, or move from one city to another, for example.

However, serious problems of human rights violations remain in Vietnam. Corruption among high ranking government officials is widespread; as is environmental destruction and exploitation of Vietnam's cheap labor force by foreign corporations. Of particular concern are the severe repressive measures that have been instituted against advocates of democracy, and continued restrictions aimed at the clergy of the various religions in Vietnam.

Vietnam's 1985 Criminal Code provides for severe punishment of broadly worded "crimes" of non-violent dissent under the heading "Crimes Against National Security" (chapter 1). For example, "sabotaging the material-technical bases of socialism" is punishable by 12 to 20 years in jail; "causing divisions" between the people and the government, or between religious believers and state organizations, is punishable by 5 to 15 years imprisonment; "anti-socialist propaganda" is punishable by 3 to 12 years in prison, or up to 20 years in "especially serious cases"; fleeing the country "with the intent to oppose the people's government" is punishable by 3 to 12 years imprisonment, or up to 15 years for escape organizers; "spreading decadent culture" is punishable by 6 months to five years in prison or up to 12 years in serious cases. Even crimes that would be outlawed in almost any nation, such as treason (punishable by 12 to 20 years in prison or death), are worded in such a way that they could include non-violent dissent, since "intent to oppose.. the socialist system and the state of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" is considered treason.

The process of "Doi Moi" or renovation began in Vietnam with the Sixth Congress of the Vietnamese

Communist Party in Dec. 1986. It is this campaign that has led to a more open society in Vietnam. Yet at the same time, since 1988 several political trials have been held for dissidents in which the above-mentioned criminal code has been applied. Amnesty International, Asia Watch and other human rights organizations have protested the unfair nature of these trials and the severe penalties meted out. These trials appear to have accelerated since the fall of Eastern European communist nations in 1989 and the Vietnamese Communist Party's enactment of Resolution 135 against anyone who advocates multi-party democracy in Vietnam.

(continued on page 31)

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Vietnam Journal

Hello. Remember us? It has been a long time, over a year, since we last published. Unfortunately, those of us involved with *Vietnam Journal* have lacked the personal time required to publish it more regularly, and give each issue the attention it deserves.

Vietnam Journal is published by the Vietnam Human Rights Group. Editor of *Vietnam Journal* is Stephen Denney. Coordinator for the Vietnam Human Rights Group is Diem Ngo. Staff assistance for *Vietnam Journal* is provided by Buu Ha, Phu Bui and Diem Ngo. Printed by Chuc Le. Printing costs covered by the Federation of Young Vietnamese Volunteers. All work is labor donated.

Readers might notice a new slogan under our masthead: "For Human Rights and Development." Now that Vietnam is pursuing capitalist reforms and opening up to multinational corporations while maintaining a one-party regime, the relationship between human rights and developmental issues such as ecology or the gap between the rich and poor should become more obvious and we hope to provide more coverage to the latter in future issues.

We intend to publish at least three issues of *Vietnam Journal* this year. Subscription is \$8/year domestic, \$12/year overseas (mailed airmail). Please make checks payable to Vietnam Journal.

We have moved back to Burlingame. Our address: Vietnam Journal, P.O. Box 1163, Burlingame, CA 94011-1163 USA. E-mail: sdenney@uclink.berkeley.edu; tel: (510) 548-2692.

Government Crackdown on Buddhist Leaders

On December 29, 1994 one of the most prominent Buddhist monks in Vietnam, Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, was arrested by security authorities in the central province of Quang Ngai and moved to a ruined temple in a remote mountainous region of the province. One week later, on Jan. 4, his close colleague Venerable Thich Quang Do was arrested in Ho Chi Minh City.

The arrests sparked protest from human rights groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Asia, as well as several prominent Congressmen and Senators. Vietnam's Foreign Ministry denied that Ven. Thich Huyen Quang had been arrested; but acknowledged that Ven. Thich Quang Do had indeed been arrested and would be tried:

"1. Regarding the case of Citizen Dang Phuc Tue, also known as Thich Quang Do, who was arrested for inciting disturbances and violating Vietnamese law, he will be tried in accordance with Vietnamese law. This will be the trial of a lawbreaking Vietnamese citizen and not the trial of a monk. This reflects the justice of law and ensures the equality of citizens before the law as stipulated in the SRV Constitution.

"2. Regarding the case of Citizen Le Dinh Nhan, also known as Thich Huyen Quang, let us clarify that he was never missing. Because he often caused inconveniences to other monks in his pagoda and to the local people, the monks and novices and the local people asked the administration to transfer him to another monastery to put an end to this situation. At present, he is practicing his monkhood at the Quang Ngai Pagoda in Nghia Hanh District, Quang Ngai province." (Voice of Vietnam, Jan. 23, published in FBIS-EAS 95-017).

What are we to make of this statement? That Thich Quang Do is to be tried as "a lawbreaking Vietnamese citizen" and not a monk, for "inciting disturbances" says something about the government's attitude toward Buddhism. The "disturbances" he has supposedly incited revolve around his continued protests against the government's human rights violations, particularly its treatment of Buddhists.

As to Thich Huyen Quang, according to a Nov. 15, 1994 letter of Ven. Thich Huyen Quang, police surrounded his pagoda that month and all his helpers were expelled. The local police prohibited all monks, nuns and lay helpers from approaching his pagoda. This directly contradicts the government version cited above, and the question is therefore whom we should

consider more credible: Ven. Thich Huyen Quang or the one-party regime which has held him under house arrest for over twelve years for his public dissent.

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As we have noted many times before, Venerables Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do were both nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978 by Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams, who had won the prize for their peace work in northern Ireland. At the time they were nominated, they were both in prison, detained from April 1977 through December 1978 along with four other top leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. Venerable Huyen Quang is Executive Director of the UBC and Venerable Quang Do is Secretary General.

The Unified Buddhist Church was a major force for peace and reconciliation in Vietnam during the years of the war, and developed close links to international pacifist organizations such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Its leading spokesperson abroad, Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, was also nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize -- by Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1967. Established in 1964, the UBC brought together sects from both major traditions of Buddhism (Theravada and Mahayana) and was considered the leading representative of Buddhism in the country. However, following Vietnam's unification on April 30, 1975, the new regime undertook a systematic effort to destroy the UBC, culminating in Nov. 1981 when the government organized a conference officially unifying all Buddhist sects and organizations into one Buddhist church, the Vietnam Buddhist Church, which declared in its founding charter that it was the only legitimate representative of Buddhism within Vietnam and in relations with other countries overseas.

A statement issued by the Ho Chi Minh City Fatherland Front Committee, published in Saigon Giai Phong on Nov. 14, 1994 (FBIS-EAS 95-37) declared:

"..The (Vietnam Buddhist) congress also agreed on adopting the 'Vietnam Buddhist Church', as the sole legal body representing Vietnamese Buddhism in all domestic and international relations. As such, it was officially recognized by the State and became a member-organization of the Vietnam Fatherland Front.

"Since the creation of the Vietnam Buddhist Church, any persons still claiming to act on behalf

of a Vietnam Unified Buddhist Church in any manner are merely individual troublemakers violating the Charter of the Vietnam Buddhist Church and the laws of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam."

This statement is rather far from the truth. In fact, the congress split the UBC leadership. Some, such as Venerable Thich Tri Tuu, decided to cooperate with the state-sponsored church, and Venerable Thich Tri Tuu became its president. They apparently felt they had no other choice if they were to preserve Buddhism in the country. It is ironic that the government now uses their consent to justify persecuting Buddhist clergy who do not support the state-sponsored organization.

Venerables Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang strongly protested the state church and were not allowed to attend the congress. They correctly foresaw that this church would be used by the regime to undermine true Buddhism in Vietnam, to void it of its authentic nature and role as a moral conscience in society. Placed under control of the Fatherland Front, its establishment became a rationale for the persecution of Buddhist monks and nuns who continued to protest injustices in the society. The Vietnam Buddhist Church has never functioned as an independent voice for Buddhism in the society; instead it has been treated as a mere appendage of the Vietnamese Communist Party, its leaders expected to participate in the various mass mobilization campaigns organized by the Fatherland Front.

That this was the case became apparent almost immediately with the Feb. 1982 arrests of Venerables Thich Quang Do and Thich Huyen Quang and their banishment from Ho Chi Minh City. Over the next ten years their voices of dissent were heard occasionally in statements smuggled out abroad. Meanwhile all pagodas and other Buddhist institutions were forced to affiliate themselves with the Vietnam Buddhist Church in order to continue functioning.

However, those who cooperated with the state-sponsored church also experienced problems. In April 1984 VBC President Thich Tri Tuu died shortly after a police interrogation and several monks and nuns closely associated with him were arrested. Two of these monks -- Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu, were sentenced to death in a 1988 trials, their sentences subsequently commuted to twenty years imprisonment. They were accused of plotting the overthrow of the government (which the monks denied; they claimed they were only working non-violently for human rights in the society). Both are considered "prisoners of conscience" by Amnesty International.

In 1992 supporters of the Unified Buddhist Church began to challenge the government more openly. Venerable Thich Quang Do openly defied local police authorities by leaving his place of house arrest for Ho Chi Minh City where he lived relatively quietly for the next two years. Venerable Thich Huyen Quang began issuing several statements of strong protest, his first in a funeral speech for Venerable Thich Don Hau in Hue (it was at this funeral that the title of Supreme Patriarch of Buddhism was passed from Ven. Don Hau to Ven. Huyen Quang). We have published those statements in past issues of this newsletter, and have also reported on the arrests of Buddhists who openly supported these protests (see the Amnesty International report in this issue).

In August of 1994 Venerable Thich Quang Do wrote an open letter to Communist Party leader Do Muoi, along with a 44-page "white paper" strongly criticizing the government's legacy of repression. We are publishing his open letter in this issue, along with press releases from the Vietnam Committee for Human Rights and International Buddhist Information Bureau which provides background information on the events leading up to his arrest. Also in this issue are reports from Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch/Asia on this latest crackdown. Finally, a review of Sister Chan Khong's autobiography, *Learning True Love* provides some insight into the effort of many Buddhists in Vietnam for a more just and compassionate society.

* * * *

In recent years, Buddhists and other religious believers have experienced greater freedom under the Communist Party's "doi moi" policy -- more freedom to worship, to carry out some social work activities and to train clergy, although there are still many restrictions. At the same time, however, Party leaders greatly fear any challenges to their political authority and punish dissident religious leaders in the name of ensuring "stability" in the society.

In fact, such repressive measures are counter-productive to Vietnam's long term stability. If Vietnam is to develop naturally, it must be based on the full and genuine participation of all elements of the society. True national reconciliation cannot occur when basic human rights are systematically violated by the regime. It is time for Party leaders to dispense with their heavy-handed efforts to control Buddhism and other religions through state-sponsored organizations while punishing clergy who dissent. They should instead seek genuine understanding and dialogue with the different religions of Vietnam.

Open Letter of Venerable Thich Quang Do to Do Muoi

(Hanoi Editor's note: Eglises d'Asie is a biweekly newsletter of the Foreign Missions of Paris. The following is translated from the French translation of Ven. Thich Quang Do's open letter. The full original Vietnamese version, along with several other relevant documents, was published in the Tet 1995 issue of Que Me.

Eglises d'Asie - No. 191 - 16 January 1995

Vietnam

Letter of Venerable Thich Quang Do to the Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party

(EDA editor's note: Four months before his arrest, Venerable Thich Quang Do, the second ranking leader of the Unified Buddhist Church, sent a letter to the secretary general of the communist party. To this letter was attached an important forty-page expose on the relations between Buddhism and the State. The Vietnamese text was published by Tin Nha [Homeland News], Nov. 1994. Translation by the editorial staff of Eglises d'Asie).

Saigon, 19 August 1994

Mr. Secretary General,

I the undersigned Thich Quang Do, Buddhist monk, desire to present to you the following facts. On 19 August 1945 (or the 12th day of the seventh month of the year of the Rooster), exactly 49 years ago from today, my religious master, Venerable Thich Duc Hai, in charge of Linh Quang pagoda, in the commune of Thanh Sam, Ung Hoa district, Ha Dong province, was assassinated by the communists in a meadow adjoining the communal house of Bat village, two kilometers from his pagoda under the pretext that he had betrayed his country. The one I call "Su Ba" in religion (meaning the elder of my master), Venerable Thich Dai Hai, in charge of Phap Van pagoda, Bac Ninh province, was arrested by the Communists in 1946 and he died as a consequence of his arrest. He was accused of belonging to a Vietnamese nationalist party. My ancestor in religion (in a certain way my grandfather), Venerable Thich Thanh Quyet, in charge of Tra Lu Trung pagoda, Quan Truong district, Nam Dinh province, was classified in the category of the infamous to be brought to a people's trial when the communists

penetrated his place and declared that he had been using the opium of religion to lure people into sleep. Terrified, my ancestor in religion hung himself in order to be spared the humiliation of a people's trial.

And then it was my turn. I was incarcerated in Phan Dang Luu prison, Ba Chieu, Gia Dinh, from 6 April 1977 until 12 December 1978. Then, from 25 February 1982 I was exiled to the commune of Vu Doai, Vu Thu district, Thai Binh province, for activities "both religious and political". From 10 February 1982, my mother, was exiled to the same place for what infraction I still do not know. She died tragically of malnutrition and cold in the month of January 1985. I then found myself alone. I thought that I myself was innocent, I could not keep on that way for an unlimited duration in this exile which has been unjustly inflicted on me. On 22 March 1992 (after ten years and 27 days of exile), after I informed the Hanoi security authorities I set out for Saigon and arrived there 25 March 1992. On 20 April, I received an order from the Security services of the city telling me I was to be expelled back to the north. I did not comply, not for the love of the South or the fear of the North -- I can lead my religious life anywhere and I do not fear austerity-- but because the law should be applied correctly. I am innocent, in full possession of my civil rights. No one has the right to expel me arbitrarily as happened in 1982. If I am guilty than people can apply the law to me, take me to court to judge me; I will abide by the decision of the tribunal. I am a conscientious citizen and I aspire only to live under the law, according to the provisions of the law. My only desire is to be treated that way. This would be a great fortune for me.

Mr. Secretary General, if I have mentioned the traumatic death of the two who are closest to me in this life as well as the imprisonment inflicted on me during those years, it is only in view of justifying my right to speak on behalf of the victims of communism, as I did in the document entitled "Remarks", which is attached to this letter. In this document I apologize to my master and denounce the great errors of the Vietnamese Communist Party toward our people in general and toward Buddhism in particular. I assume entire responsibility for what I am saying. I am ready to endure the consequences including dramatic death as happened to my ancestor of Su Ba, my master in religion, my mother, in the manner of Quan Ky Tu who died in the hands of Trinh Vuong.

Should I die, nobody would prevent me from expressing my own profound conviction, namely that the communists will not survive very much longer. This conviction was not borne in me today. It came to me at the age of 18, precisely on 19 August 1945, at ten in the morning, when I saw my master with his hands tied behind his back with steel wire, two signs hanging over his neck, one on his chest, the other on his back, carrying the inscription: "Traitor to the Fatherland." He was at the center of the communal house yard. On each side of him were gathered men carrying batons, knives, sickle and rakes. In front of him, on the veranda of the communal house was a group of persons, the presumed "judges" of the people's court. They ordered my master to kneel down on the ground and to bow his head while the court declared him guilty. My master refused. Then one of the judges descended from the veranda and came so close as to almost touch him: "You are a traitor to our fatherland and you are still obstinate in your attitude!" He punched him in the jaw. A sliver of blood oozed out from his mouth and trickled down from his chin to his chest, reddening the sign hanging over his chest. As soon as the sentence was pronounced they took him to the meadow which was located in front of the communal house. Blood continued to drip down his chin, reddening his tunic and falling onto the courtyard soil. When the group arrived at the meadow, my master was forced to lie down on his side. A man shot him three times in the temple of the head and the red blood surged out horizontally. My master died rapidly. The blood, the image of my master dying with his hands bound, the two bloody signs with the inscription "traitor to the fatherland," the tunic soiled with blood, the two feet smeared with blood, the blood scattered all over the green meadow -- so many images which now 49 years later are still imprinted in my memory as clearly as the images of yesterday's nightmare.

In my pain, with my tears rolling down from both my eyes as I sat on the green grass of the meadow, I contemplated the body of my master, and then I knew that Communism would not last very long. The reason is in its advocating hatred, class struggle, pitting one against the other in struggle, the murder of one's neighbor. All this is evil, and evil does not last; history has never ceased to demonstrate this truth. The love of good and the hatred of evil are inscribed profoundly in the psyche of most people. That which people detest cannot subsist long. The 74 years of existence of the Soviet regime do not constitute a long period of time in comparison, for example, to the 215 years of the reign of the Ly

dynasty of Vietnam, which according to professor Hoang Xuan Han, has enjoyed the longest rule in the history of Vietnam.

Since 1975, another observation has imposed itself on me. If one believes in the law of natural selection, all that which constitutes a fulfillment of a natural need survives and even if it is buried someone will unearth it. On the other hand that which does not correspond with any human need always face self destruction. After having truly lived under a communist regime, I can affirm that this regime does not answer the needs of man. Morally, it oppresses and paralyzes. Materially, it impoverishes and starves. This is so true today, that they have been forced to go to the school of capitalism, following the wake of the market economy. Communism henceforth has no contents, it is only an empty void. If the Communism of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union has been scuttled, it is because it no longer responded to any needs. Nothing but Communism itself is waging the war, especially not Buddhism which on the contrary has never ceased to be exposed to attacks, persecution and attempts to destroy it.

According to the same law of natural selection, from a certain point of view, Buddhism responds to certain human needs. It is therefore difficult to make it disappear. The proof is in what has happened to the pagodas of North Vietnam formerly destroyed by the Communists, not the ones totally razed to the ground for ricefields but the ones which still kept their old foundations. The people have built straw houses over these foundations, and sometimes in the better off communes, they have erected brick buildings for a decent place of worship for the Buddhist cults. The books of prayer in Vietnamese language have been burned by the Communists who have considered them "decadent literature." Today the faithful from the North go to the South in order to buy these books, and then copy them by hand and pass them on to other people for worship. This is the proof that the people still need Buddhism, which is not the case of other cults: I remember well people were forced to hang in their houses the big portraits of communist leaders such as Karl Marx, Lenin, Stalin, Malenkov, Mao Tse Tung, Kim Il Sung.. but when I was exiled to the North in 1982, I did not find any portraits of these people, including those of party members. Kim Il Sung just died and the Vietnamese Communist Party devoted a day of national mourning for him last July 17 (...) Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese died from the effects of class struggle during the agrarian reform in 1956 in

the North. Not long afterwards, the Communist Party corrected its policy (it recognized it killed by mistake), but why has it not set up a national day of mourning for those who died? Who will carry on the mourning for the innumerable Vietnamese who have died at sea since 30 April 1975? If the entire Vietnamese people are called to observe a day of mourning, it should be for those victims and not for Mr. Kim Il Sung of North Korea.

Please receive, Mr. Secretary General, all my salutations.

- Thich Quang Do

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News: Reports and Comments (Continued)

40,000 Vietnamese in Germany Face Repatriation

Germany will provide Vietnam 200 million marks (US\$130 million) in development aid over the next two years in return for the SRV taking back 40,000 Vietnamese asylum seekers illegally residing in Germany. It will also extend export credit guarantees to Vietnam and ratify a bilateral cooperation agreement on air traffic, investment aid, shipping and taxation. The agreement was reached in accords signed in Ho Chi Minh City Jan. 8. However an impasse was reached in late February because the two countries could not agree on how the German aid intended for returnees would actually be spent. Bonn had frozen export guarantees and further development aid to Vietnam last September because this issue of repatriation had not been resolved between the two countries. Vietnamese officials have pledged to take back 20,000 nationals over the next four years and the other 20,000 by the year 2000.

"That there was a link between Germany's immigration problems and development aid is correct," said German Minister of State at the Chancellery Bernd Schmidbauer. He said they had not discussed with Hanoi any possible punishment of returnees on grounds of "illegally leaving the republic," a statute that still exists in Vietnam's Criminal Code. "These issues will be discussed during the negotiations on the agreement for the return of the citizens," he said. (Sources: Knight-Ridder Jan. 11; Reuters Jan. 8,11).

Comment: These Vietnamese will probably find it more difficult to adjust than the Vietnamese asylum seekers in Hong Kong who have been living in prison camps for several years. We have already received complaints of Vietnamese asylum seekers who have been involved in pro-democracy movements and may face imprisonment on their return.

Filial Piety and National Reconciliation: Thich Huyen Quang's Vu Lan Message

Editor's note: The following was translated by Quang Tu, and released by the Executive Council of the Vietnamese American Unified Buddhist Congress in the United States of America, 424 Ramona Avenue, Monterey Park, CA 91754. The Vu Lan, or Ullambana, season is an important time of the year for all Vietnamese emphasizing filial piety. Venerable Thich Huyen Quang expands upon this theme to call for true national reconciliation.

Memorandum from the Bicameral Council of the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation

Hoi Phuoc Temple, Quang Ngai
Office in Exile of the Council for Dharma Affairs
No. 079-VPLV-VHD

Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation
Council for Dharma Affairs
Buddhist Era 2538, Quang Ngai, August 8, 1994

MEMORANDUM

To: Leaders of All Levels of the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation, Nationwide and Overseas
Abbots, Superintendents, Monasteries, Buddhist Halls and Buddhist Youth Groups
Buddhist Disciples, Nationwide and Overseas

NAMMO SAKYA MUNI BUDDHA

Dear Venerable Leaders of the Congregation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

"Of all the virtues, Filial Piety ranks first." Fulfillment of the duty of filial reverence is a show of gratitude, devotion and freeing from suffering -- embodiment of the Buddha's Great Mercy. A Buddhist disciple should, day in and day out, fulfill this duty towards his parents, his Master, the Congregation, the Religion, and the Country. From this basis will love extend to mankind, to all beings who are considered as parents.

Great Mercy, broadly speaking, does not limit itself to taking care of parents by way of providing food and clothing, but also encompasses the Buddha's teaching of "free from suffering." The fulfillment of the duty of filial reverence goes beyond the boundary of taking care of parents when they are alive; such a

duty is not neglected after the parents pass away as well. Not only shall this duty be fulfilled to parents in this life but also to those in several past lives. However, the great vow of fulfillment of this duty cannot be considered terminated until the parents are totally freed from the cycle of reincarnation.

Through Great Mercy do we wisely apprehend the actual situation being experienced by Buddhism, by the Congregation, and by the Country. The growth or decline of Buddhism depends entirely upon the ups and downs of the Country. Vietnamese Buddhism aims at serving the people. At any period of time when the country and the people are in distress, Buddhism feels its duty to exercise energetically the spirit of Great Mercy in the task of salvation. In the past decades foreign influence and ideology were responsible for the division of the people and the downfall of our country. The deplorable consequence is a poor and backward country, a broken society abound with hatred, a depraved morality, a bankrupt culture; the tradition of our forefathers completely lost. More dangerous, Buddhism -- a marvelous doctrine -- has been repressed and terrorized. Throughout the past nineteen years our Congregation has been brutally maltreated, and such maltreatment keeps going in the second phase of the Buddhist calamity.

Numerous bonzes, nuns and Buddhist disciples have been forced to suicide, jailed and kept under surveillance in this prolonged calamity. Many martyrs torched themselves to death to awaken the conscience of those blinded by ignorance, attempting to break up the Vietnamese Buddhist block, manipulate it, and destroy the morality of the people. So long as Buddhism is kept in check, subjugated, monopolized by the government, and so long as restitution of the autonomy and activities of the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation does not take place, then the much bragged about "Freedom of Religion" is but a meaningless terminology.

On the occasion of this year's Ullambana season, it is urged that everyone, for the sake of the spirit of Great Mercy, follows the Great Maha-Maudgalaputra's example of "Free the Mother from Hell." Not only does Hell exist in a dark, somber world, but Hell also abounds everywhere in this confused, ignorance-blinded planet. The strong vow "Free the Mother from Hell" will not materialize unless there is a strong determination in the rank of the Sangha, a harmony among Buddhist disciples.

In the face of the present deplorable situation, experienced by the Congregation and Buddhism, and as an offering presented to this year's Ullambana

season, the Bicameral Council respectfully requests that your prayer and your activities point to the three objectives mentioned below, endeavoring to achieve at all costs the thirteen items outlined hereunder.

1. CONCERNING BONZES, NUNS AND VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST DISCIPLES UNDER THE VIETNAMESE UNIFIED BUDDHIST CONGREGATION

1. Depending on the local situation, solemnly and consciously organize the Ullambana Season ceremony. Always keep in mind the spirit of the martyrs, war dead heroes, and people of the nation who sacrificed their lives for freedom, justice, compassion and equality.

2. Make effort in religious practice, making the Congregation more solemn -- an element for Dharma propagation.

3. Develop a fearless, self-sacrificing and humble spirit -- a basis for religious expansion to serve the Congregation and the country.

4. Be clear-sighted about the scheme to break-up and divide Buddhism with an aim to destroy the potential of Buddhism.

5. Apprehend that each of us is a gem of the Congregation, of Buddhism, and of the people. Never let it tarnish.

6. Cooperate, side by side, with other religions in the campaign for restitution of freedom of faith, morality, culture and the removal of society vices.

7. Always bear in mind that "Great Mercy" and not hatred, should develop the basis for the movement for restoration of the Vietnamese Unified Buddhist Congregation and freedom of religion. We are working for the good of the people rather than for the interest of a group of persons. We are working for the survival of Buddhism and the Congregation and not the fame of any individual.

2. CONCERNING BONZES, NUNS AND VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST DISCIPLES OF THE VIETNAMESE BUDDHIST CONGREGATION UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE GOVERNMENT

In the face of the intention of the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to destroy the Buddhist Congregation -- a people-founded, deep-rooted tradition -- in an attempt to substitute for it a Government/Party-led Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation, you were forced for a particular reason under an obligatory circumstance, to side with the Government for the sake of survival and salvage of Buddhism. However, you have underestimated the

basic aspect and the dignity of a twenty-century old Vietnamese Buddhism.

The purpose of a government is to serve the people, and in the process serve the culture, religion and the faith of the people. There is no such thing as a religion condescending to serve the government. In the good days of the past, a king called upon a temple in order to take refuge with the Three Jewels and not to order bonzes to do something for him. Now the Government controls the Sangha by force and makes Buddhism their instrument -- an action against the developed religious tradition of the Master Patriarchs and the Martyrs. Furthermore, this action violates the will of all the people in the present democratic and progressive era.

In view of the above, the Bicameral Council:

1. Earnestly requests you to observe the path of the past Patriarchs, think of your religious partners who were living with you under the same roof of the temple. It is a high risk and enormous task to save the Buddha's Dharma to the present day. By so thinking you will notice how grandiose are the high-spirited vow and the radiant path taken by the Buddha's successors.

2. Requests you, on the occasion of the Ullambana season, to submit a petition to the Government demanding the immediate release of your religious partners who are languishing in jail cells or kept under surveillance in remote areas. For whatever reason, the gratitude towards religious partners cannot be forgotten. Besides the binding religious affection, there still remains an obligation to the countrymen. How can we love strangers while remaining indifferent to our kin?

3. CONCERNING THE AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Our people are tolerant, peace-loving, ready to forgive any repentant people.

The present situation offers you a good opportunity to turn to the people. On the occasion of the Amnesty Day of the lunar year, also the Ullambana season, we request you to perform the Pravaraana (last day of the annual retreat) of the Buddha. This is a 26-century old traditional rite during which, at the last day of the annual retreat, bonzes and nuns make known their sins, proceed with repentance to purify the mind, to acquire energy for the mind for the task of serving all beings.

Repentance is not a way to just commit sins and repent later. Repentance requires of the sinner to recognize his/her sins, and then make up his/her

mind to not commit the same sins again. The repentance shall take place before the public to prove one's sincerity. Afterwards, the sins will be atoned for through concrete actions.

The concrete actions required of the government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to carry out immediately are:

1. Respect civil rights by allowing the people to enjoy the basic rights to freedom as outlined in the International Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.

2. With respect to Buddhism and other religions of Vietnam, grant immediately freedom of religion and freedom of faith in consonance with the democracy of mankind, rather than complying with the strategem of the Party or the Constitution of the Party.

3. Release unconditionally all religious prisoners throughout the country who are detained or kept under surveillance in villages far away from their relatives and the public.

4. Provide the opportunity to intellectuals in the technical and religious fields, within the country and abroad, to participate in the reconstruction of Vietnam, turning it into a prosperous and modern country.

If all the people are regarded as one's own relatives, brothers and parents, then the term "Filial Piety" may serve as a good basis for salvation of the country, and the term "countryman" may actually be defined as "brothers of the same race." So long as you refuse to consider this idea, to carry out the above four points, you will always be regarded as not being part of the family, because you lost the key to the door of love and tolerance of the Vietnamese people.

May the Three Jewels bless you all. Let us pray for the Congregation to achieve its restoration, and let us pray for all the people to be happy and prosperous.

NAMMO MAHA-MAUDGALAPUTRA

(signed and sealed)

THICH HUYEN QUANG

Acting Head, Council for Dharma Affairs

cc: - All levels of the Congregation - For action
 - All levels of the Vietnamese Buddhist Congregation within the network of the Government's Fatherland Front and the Department of Religion
 - All levels of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam
 - File

Documents: Background Information on Buddhist Arrests

I. Human Rights Watch/Asia Report

Editor's note: We received the following from Mark Girouard of Human Rights Watch/Asia:

Attached are the summary and recommendations from a report on the suppression of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam released by Human Rights Watch/Asia in March, 1995.

To order a complete copy of this sixteen page report, call the Human Rights Watch publications department at (212)986-1980. There is a \$3.00 charge for the report, plus \$.60 for shipping and handling. Concerned individuals may want to write letters to their Congressional Representatives (name, House of Representatives/Senate, Washington D.C.) or to President Clinton or send telegrams to the President at 20500 White House Washington D.C.

Further Information, Contact:

Dinah PoKempner, Human Rights Watch/Asia Tel: (202) 371-6592; Fax: (202) 371-0124.

March 1995

VIETNAM: THE SUPPRESSION OF THE UNIFIED BUDDHIST CHURCH

SUMMARY

The Vietnamese government's recent detention of two prominent senior monks is the latest step in its campaign to suppress the Unified Buddhist Church, the main Buddhist organization in south and central Vietnam prior to unification of the country in 1975. With the detention of UBC leaders Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do on December 29, 1994 and January 5, 1995 respectively, nearly all of the church's senior leaders are now in detention or under house arrest. These cases of detention were immediately preceded by the arrests of several others, including the arrest of five Buddhists for efforts at organizing flood relief charity in the name of the Unified Buddhist Church.

The most recent cycle of confrontation with the Unified Buddhist Church dates from 1992, when Thich Huyen Quang renewed his protest at the government's 1981 dissolution of the church and demanded that it be allowed once again to function. The government's response was to search pagodas for copies of his demands and interrogate and in some cases arrest perceived supporters of the monk.

Tensions have steadily escalated since then, erupting in both peaceful and violent public demonstrations that have met with firm suppression by the state. At present, at least two dozen Buddhists have been detained by Vietnam since 1992, thirteen of whom are known to still be in detention or under house arrest. The whereabouts of five Buddhists taken into police custody are unknown. Human Rights Watch/Asia is concerned that many of these prisoners are being held for expression of their political or religious beliefs, in violation of international law.

The unrest in the Buddhist community underscores the contradictions in Vietnam's policy towards freedom of religion. Although the government has taken a more open approach in the last few years, allowing greater freedom of worship, the restoration of pagodas and churches, and a renewed if limited involvement by religious orders in social work activities, it maintains strict control over virtually every aspect of religious life. What has precipitated government action against the Unified Buddhist Church are the calls by its senior leaders for the government to recognize the church, to allow it autonomy in managing its religious affairs, to return its properties confiscated after 1975, and to release religious and political prisoners. These demands have been framed in blunt language that is highly critical of the Communist Party, but they essentially represent complaints that are shared by other religions in Vietnam.

Vietnam's 1992 constitution does not guarantee "freedom of religion" in the fullest sense, but rather "the freedom to believe or not to believe in a religious faith." (Article 70) This same article in the constitution warns that "no one can violate the freedom of faith or exploit it in a way that is at variance with the law and state policies." Domestic regulation also reflects this basic approach. Article 5 of a Council of Ministers Decree on Religion (Decision 69/HDBT) of 1991 explicitly prohibits "all activities, under the cloak of religion, which undermine the independence of the country and the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam or cause damage to the integrity and unity of the people, or interfere with civil obligations." Freedom of belief is protected, as well as all "lawful and beneficial" religious activities. But the government is vested near total control over these activities. The only religious activities that do not require governmental permission are those that are "usual," "sche-

duled" and registered" (Article 8). Permission is required for virtually anything else, including training seminars, meditation sessions, retreats, general meetings, conventions, major repairs, remodeling or construction of places of worship, charitable activities, operation of religious schools, ordinations, promotions and transfers of clergy, operation of monasteries, and any international activities (Articles 8 to 14 and 16 to 25).

These restrictions do not comport with Vietnam's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Vietnam acceded in 1982. Article 18 of the covenant guarantees freedom of thought, conscience and religion. It provides that the right includes "freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest [one's] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching." Freedom of religion is subject only to those legal limitations that are "necessary" to protect public safety, order, health, morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Moreover, many of Vietnam's religious prisoners appear to be held not for common crimes or violent acts, but for peacefully expressing views which are inimical to the policies of the government and the Vietnamese Communist Party. One such view is that religious organizations should be free to determine their membership, training, and religious practices without government interference.

Members of the Unified Buddhist Church have also criticized what they believe to be abuses by the Communist Party, including the arrest and of political and religious prisoners.

The government maintains that the Buddhists it has arrested are not detained for being monks, or for their religion, but as ordinary persons who committed common crimes. Authorities refer to accused monks by their secular rather than religious names, and require clerical defendants to appear in street clothes rather than their robes.

Nevertheless, Vietnam's 1985 Criminal Code includes national security offenses which are often interpreted to punish simple acts of nonviolent dissent. Among the charges recently posted against religious prisoners have been "undermining the policy of unity" by "causing divisions between the religious and non-religious and separating religious followers from the people's government and social organizations" (Article 81(1)(c)) and "making, storing or circulating anti-socialist documents or cultural products" (Article 82(1)(c)). Detention for peaceful expression of views violates the individual's right to freedom of expression under the International

Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 18) and is inherently arbitrary (Article 9), regardless of whether local law is invoked to justify such detention.

This report examines the relationship between the Vietnamese government and the Unified Buddhist Church, looking first at its historical context and then discussing in turn the arrests, protests, and acts of detention that mark heightened conflict since the church leadership renewed its demand for autonomy in 1992. The Vietnamese government has not allowed foreign visitors to have direct contact with the UBC leadership. For this reason, the events described in this report are based on secondary sources, including sources in the Buddhist community, and public statements and film footage supplied by the Vietnamese government. We have endeavored to confirm the description of events from multiple sources wherever possible and to represent conflicting accounts.



Venerable Thich Quang Do at his place of exile in Thai Binh province, 1991 (photo from *Que Me* magazine).

The campaign against the Unified Buddhist Church is causing tensions throughout Vietnam's Buddhist community, as members of the state-supported Vietnam Buddhist Church come under pressure to hide their sympathies for the dissident monks or to denounce them. For their part, the leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church, isolated and embattled, have issued ever more detailed and blunt denunciations of the Communist Party's practices and policies, inviting head-on confrontation. In this atmosphere of increasingly desperate confrontation, tragic acts of

protest such as self-immolation have taken place.

Human Rights Watch/Asia calls on the Vietnamese government to take steps to de-escalate the conflict and reopen a dialogue with all elements in the Buddhist community. To fulfil its commitments under international law, the government should release without delay all persons, including Buddhists, who have been detained because they peacefully expressed their religious or political views.

The legal charges, specific grounds for detention, and place of detention should be made public in all cases where the government takes individuals into custody. Where there is no legal charge against an individual, that individual should be freed of all restrictions on movement and residence, and should be permitted to meet and associate with anyone he or she chooses.

The international community, and especially nations which provide substantial financial contributions to Vietnam's development and humanitarian needs such as flood relief, has a special responsibility to advocate peaceful resolution of this conflict, in a manner consistent with international law. Human Rights Watch/Asia calls on governments to urgently express concern over the recent detentions and arrests of Buddhists, both on a bilateral basis and through multilateral and international organizations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Human Rights Watch/Asia calls on the government of Vietnam to:

- Immediately release all persons, including Buddhists, who have been detained for peacefully expressing their religious or political views.
 - Confirm the location of those Buddhists being held in police custody, the legal charges under which they are being held, and the specific grounds for their detention. The government should make this information available concerning Buddhist monks Thich Quang Do, Thich Khong Tanh, Thich Tri Luc, Thich Nhat Ban, and Thich Giac Nguyen, and lay Buddhists Dong Ngoc and Nhat Thuong. Where there is no legal charge against an individual, that individual should be freed of all restrictions on movement and residence, and should be permitted to meet and associate with anyone he or she chooses.
 - Permit immediate medical access to detainees and prisoners with health problems, including Thich Huyen Quang, who requires medication and treatment for high blood pressure, and Thich Hai Tang, who suffers from an undiagnosed stomach problem.
- Additionally, Human Rights Watch/Asia calls on

the international community to:

- Urge Vietnam, in both private and public forums, to release religious prisoners and to specify any criminal charges against members of religious organizations who are being held for common crimes.
- Urge the government of Vietnam to open a dialogue with leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church to reduce tensions and lessen the likelihood of violent confrontations.

* * * * *

II. Amnesty International Report

Amnesty International
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
Recent Arrests of Buddhists

FEBRUARY 1995

AI INDEX: ASA 41/02/95

DISTR: SC/CO/GR

Twenty-three monks and lay Buddhists have been arrested since the end of October 1994 by the Vietnamese authorities and several others have been called in for questioning on more than one occasion.

These arrests and the events leading to them, as described below, show the continuing repression of Buddhists in Viet Nam and are in flagrant contradiction to the Vietnamese Government's assertion of freedom of religion. Amnesty International believes that two of those arrested are prisoners of conscience, detained solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and religion, and is calling for their immediate and unconditional release. Amnesty International believes that the others arrested are probably prisoners of conscience, but is not yet able to make an accurate assessment because of lack of information. It believes that the Vietnamese Government should undertake an independent review of their cases and release them immediately if they are found to be held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and religion.

The first arrest was made on 29 October when Thich Long Tri, Abbot of Vien Giac Temple, Hoi An arrived in Ho Chi Minh City in order to head a relief mission for the victims of floods in the Mekong Delta where over 400 people died and thousands of others were made homeless. The Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV), a religious organization banned in 1981, organized a relief convoy which was

to depart from Ho Chi Minh City on 5 November, but the authorities deemed the relief mission to be "subversive" and detrimental to "religion and national solidarity". Thich Long Tri was held for a day before being expelled from Ho Chi Minh City and is now in detention.

On 5 November, leaders of the mission were allegedly warned to call off the operation: 60 monks and nuns and over 300 lay Buddhists were prevented from carrying out the relief mission and the following day three monks and two civilians were arrested. Thich Nhat Ban, Thich Khong Tanh (Abbot of Lien Tri Temple, Ho Chi Minh City), Thich Tri Luc (Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue), Pham Van Xua (Buddhist name: Nhat Thuong) and Mrs Nguyen Thi Em (Dong Ngoc) are held in Ho Chi Minh City and are not allowed to have visits from their families. It is also reported that the monks are not allowed to wear their monastic robes. To Amnesty International's knowledge, they still have not been charged with any specific offence. Although the government denied these five arrests, the Committee of the Fatherland's Front in Ho Chi Minh City declared on 10 November that the authorities had "smashed this plan", referring to the UBCV relief operation.

Both Thich Khong Tanh and Thich Tri Luc have previously been arrested and adopted as prisoners of conscience by Amnesty International: Thich Khong Tanh was detained from October 1992 until October 1993 for protesting against the treatment of Buddhists and calling for the respect of religious freedom. Thich Tri Luc had spent over two months in detention in 1992 on the same charge. Both were also accused of leaving their pagodas without a travel permit. In addition, Thich Khong Tanh spent nine years in detention between 1976 and 1985 for protesting against the order to register young monks for military service.

On 10 November the police raided Tu Hieu Temple in Ho Chi Minh City and confiscated all relief goods: the Abbot and treasurer of the relief mission, Thich Nguyen Ly, was arrested. He had been under police surveillance prior to his arrest and had been summoned by the police on several occasions.

It is also feared that a number of other civilians connected with the relief mission remain under investigation and that further arrests could occur.

Amnesty International wrote to the Vietnamese Government in November 1994 to express its concern about these arrests and to request further information but, as of February 1995, has received no response.

This wave of arrests culminated in the detention of the two leaders of the UBCV. Thich Huyen Quang (secular name Le Dinh Nhan), Supreme Patriarch of the UBCV, was arrested on 29 December after starting a hunger strike to protest the arrests and harassment of members of the UBCV; Thich Quang Do (secular name Dang Phuc Tue), Secretary General of the UBCV, was taken into detention on 4 January after a search of his temple, Thanh Minh Pagoda, in Ho Chi Minh City. The Vietnamese Government first denied both arrests: however, a statement released by the Foreign Ministry on 25 January said that Thich Quang Do would stand trial for provoking trouble contrary to Vietnamese law" and that he would be tried as "a Vietnamese delinquent and not as a Buddhist". The statement referred to Thich Huyen Quang's arrest as a simple transfer to another temple "because he often disturbed the other monks at his pagoda and local people" who had then requested his transfer. He is now under house-arrest in Quang Phuoc pagoda, Nghia Hanh district, Quang Ngai province.

Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do are vocal critics of the government's policy on religion and have been under house-arrest since 1982. Amnesty International considers them prisoners of conscience.

In response to international protests about these arrests, including a resolution by the European Parliament in January 1995, the Vietnamese Government stated that they had "no reason to carry out a policy of discrimination against Buddhists" and accused the monks of "plotting] provocative activities that undermine national unity and the people's authority" and of colluding with "reactionary overseas Vietnamese". The government consistently refers to members and supporters of the UBCV as politically-motivated trouble-makers who disrupt public order or aim to overthrow the government.

Discontent among Buddhists is not restricted to outlawed organizations but is also mounting among members of the officially approved Vietnam Buddhist Church (VBC). Disturbances erupted in Hue on 27 November 1994 when several monks and students disrupted the opening ceremony of the Buddhist Elementary School held at Bao Quoc Pagoda. The protesters claimed that they had come peacefully to hand in a petition protesting at the political content of the school's curriculum and the discriminatory enrollment criteria. Several people were injured in the ensuing confrontation and the police soon announced they would be filing charges against those involved under Article 198 of the Criminal Code.

Article 198 provides for up to seven years' imprisonment for the Crime of disrupting public order". Two monks involved in the incident, Thich Thai Hung and Thich Hanh Duc, were arrested in December.

In a related incident, Thich Nhu Dat, member of the Thua Thien - Hue VBC Executive Board, and 12 novices were called for "working sessions" at Security Police Headquarters on 7 December and are still detained today. In an eight-page letter Thich Nhu Dat had complained about the enrollment policy of the school and the "civic studies" to be taught together with Buddhist scriptures.

Complaints such as these reflect the general discontent over the strict control that the authorities exert over religious practice, whether Buddhist or Christian. According to guidelines published by the Government in December 1993, religious bodies have to inform the authorities about the enrollment or ordination of clergy. "The principal criteria for the choice of the candidates is their good performance of their civic duties. The course of civic education must be integrated into the programs of the schools ... and considered as a major subject" (No. 500HD/TGCP, 4 December 1993). Strict rules also control the publication of religious texts.

Freedom of expression and freedom of religion are guaranteed by Articles 69 and 70 of the 1992 Constitution. Despite these guarantees the Vietnamese Government continues to arrest and detain monks and lay Buddhists solely for peacefully exercising their rights. To Amnesty International's knowledge there are currently at least 36 Buddhists in detention, including the 23 described above. Some monks have been detained since the late 1970s and early 1980s. Amnesty International calls on the Vietnamese Government to respect the right of all its citizens to practice the religion of their choice as enshrined in its Constitution and in international law.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Please send letters and telegrams:

- expressing concern at recent arrests and lack of freedom of religion despite safeguards in the 1992 Constitution;
- calling on the authorities to release immediately and unconditionally Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do;
- urging the government to undertake a review of these recent arrests and to release all those imprisoned if they are found to be held solely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and religion;

- urging the government to ensure that all those arrested are detained in accordance with international standards and are allowed access to a doctor, lawyer and family members.

APPEALS:

- Mr. Nguyen Dinh Loc, Minister of Justice Ministry of Justice 25 Cat Linh Ha Noi Socialist Republic of Viet Nam
- Mr. Bui Thien Ngo, Minister of the Interior Ministry of the Interior 1 Tran Binh Trong Ha Noi Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

COPIES:

Mr. Vu Quang, Chairman
Commission for Religious Affairs
National Assembly (Quoc Hoi)
35 Ngo Quyen
Ha Noi
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

- and to diplomatic representatives of Viet Nam in your country

LOCAL PUBLICITY:

| Please try to obtain local publicity about these cases.

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT. 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

* * * *

III. Press Releases of the International Buddhist Information Bureau.

Editor's note: The International Buddhist Information Bureau (IBIB) is designated as the overseas press office of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam. The two press releases we reprint below provide background information on the arrests of Venerables Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do. These were sent to us by Penelope Faulkner of the IBIB. Address:

International Buddhist Information Bureau
25, rue Jaffeux- 92230 Gennevilliers - France
Tel : (33-1) 47.93.10.81
Fax : (33-1) 47.91.41.38

Email : 100302.3100@compuserve.com

IA. International Buddhist Information Bureau
For Immediate Release
December 3, 1994

1. Security Police surround UBCV Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang's Pagoda following Relief Mission arrests
2. World Federation of Buddhists in Bangkok adopt Resolution in support of the UBCV.

The International Buddhist Information Bureau has just received two letters from Vietnam reporting that Security Police have once again surrounded Hoi Phuoc Pagoda, Quang Ngai, where Venerable Thich Huyen Quang, Patriarch of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam (UBCV) has been detained under house arrest since 1982. Ven. Huyen Quang, who suffers from high blood pressure, is again dangerously ill, but has not been allowed to see a doctor or receive any visits since the Pagoda was surrounded in early November.

The first letter, from the "Quang Ngai Buddhist Sangha for the Protection of the Faith", states "Hoi Phuoc Pagoda is completely surrounded. Venerable Thich Huyen Quang is very ill - his blood pressure is alarmingly high, yet Security Police refuse to let a doctor enter the Pagoda to give him treatment. Buddhist monks from the neighboring Tu Quang Pagoda were prevented from making their regular visit, and Buddhist followers from Quang Ngai were harassed and frightened away ..." According to the letter, two Buddhist monks and two lay-Buddhists, Thich Nguyen Man, Thich Dong Hoa, Ly Nam and Nguyen Dinh Truc who came to inquire about Ven. Huyen Quang's health, "were arrested at the Pagoda gate and subjected to three days non-stop interrogation. Security Police made them sign a paper declaring that they would have no further contacts with Ven. Huyen Quang... If the Government refuses to let Ven. Huyen Quang see a doctor or receive medical treatment, they must bear full responsibility for his fate".

The second letter, dated 15.11.1994, is from Ven. Huyen Quang himself, addressed to UBCV Secretary General, Ven. Thich Quang Do in Ho Chi Minh City. It confirms : "For the past two weeks, Security forces have kept the UBCV's Office [i.e. Hoi Phuoc Pagoda] tightly surrounded. All helpers have been expelled, even those who were helping out temporarily for 6-7 days. Monks, nuns and Buddhist followers are forbidden to approach the Pagoda. I don't know

who to ask to treat my illness...". Evoking the restrictions imposed by permanent Police surveillance and by his state of health, in his letter Ven. Huyen Quang issues Ven. Quang Do with a "Procurator" to assist in the leadership of Church affairs, empowering him to head "the struggle for religious freedom and human rights... and bring this second wave of repression against Buddhism to an end".

Earlier this year, in January 1994, Ven. Huyen Quang was subjected to similar Police pressure following his protests over the unfair trials of Ven. Tri Tuu, Hai Tang, Hai Chanh and Hai Thinh in Hue, causing Buddhists deep concern about his health. Surveillance was eased in the following months, and he was allowed to receive medicines and occasional visits from local Buddhists. The recent Police action is believed to be an attempt to silence Ven. Huyen Quang's appeals on behalf of the UBCV Relief Mission for the Flood Victims in the Mekong Delta.

Thich Quang Do, age 66, who now resides in Thanh Minh Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh City, was one of the first UBCV leaders to confront the Government over questions of religious persecution. First arrested on 6.4.1977 together with Ven. Huyen Quang, he was acquitted on 9.12.1978 following an international support campaign, during which Irish Nobel Peace Prize winners Betty Williams and Mairead Maguire nominated both monks for the Nobel Peace Prize. On 2.3.1982, he was again arrested, this time for protesting against the Government's establishment of the Viet Nam Buddhist Church. On 2.3.1982 he was banished to a remote village in Thai Binh, North Vietnam, and detained under house arrest without charge.

In 1992, former Interior Minister Mai Chi Tho visited him and offered him an appointment in the State-sponsored Church at Quan Su Pagoda in Hanoi. He refused, then broke out of house arrest and went back to Thanh Minh Pagoda on 27.3.1992.

On 14th October this year, Thich Quang Do reaffirmed his opposition to State control over religions by issuing directives to UBCV dignitaries all over the country to "to put back all "Unified Buddhist Church" signs over all Church institutions, pagodas etc... Anyone who dares to tear them down will be committing a violation of the right to religious freedom, a flagrant violation of domestic laws and internationally-recognized legal principles!".

* According to a communique from the UBCV Relief Mission for the Flood Victims in the Mekong Delta received in Paris today, the monks and Budd-

hists arrested in connection with the Relief Mission. Venerables Khong Tanh, Nhat Ban, Tri Luc, Thien Bo, and lay Buddhists Nhat Thuong (Pham Van Xua), Dong Ngoc (Nguyen Thi Em), Phan Cong Minh, Nguyen Cao and Hoang Trong Khanh are still detained without charge at the Security Police's Municipal Bureau, 3 C Ton Duc Thang Street, Ho Chi Minh City. Relatives have been allowed to bring clothes and food- parcels, but have not been allowed to visit the detainees. The report says that Mrs Dong Ngoc is in very poor health and that, for the past ten days, fifteen Buddhist monks and lay Buddhists, all members of the Relief Mission's Organization Committee, have been repeatedly summoned for interrogation by local agencies of the Security Police, the Fatherland Front, the Religious Board and other government agencies in Ho Chi Minh City.

The report also describes the confiscation of the Missions' relief supplies at Tu Hieu Pagoda on November 10th 1994. At 8:00 am, Ven. Thich Nguyen Ly, Superior monk of Tu Hieu Pagoda, was summoned to the Police Station in Ward 8. He was received by Security Police and seven monks from the State-sponsored Viet Nam Buddhist Church, Dat Hao, Van Lien, Giac Linh, Hue Van, Thien Luong, Thien Tai, Hien Duc who ordered him to hand over the relief supplies to the Board of Religious Affairs so that the operation could be carried out under Government sponsorship. He refused, saying that the supplies were not his, but belonged to the UBCV. The Police held Ven. Nguyen Ly at the Station until 6:00pm. In the meantime, "at 11.30 am, taking advantage of Ven. Nguyen Ly's absence, the seven monks from the State-sponsored Church along with 200 Security personnel drove up in Police Jeeps and surrounded Tu Hieu Pagoda. They proceeded to steal all the relief supplies and take them away in lorries..."

* The Vietnamese Government has denied confiscating relief supplies or removing UBCV banners from vehicles in the Relief convoy. However, annexed to the above report is a copy of a "Report on the Confiscation of Incriminating evidence", signed by Phung Thi A Chau from the 8th Ward Religious Affairs Committee, Doan Van Ri, Chairman of the 8th Ward People's Committee, Nguyen Van Nhung, Chairman of the 8th Ward Fatherland Front Committee and Nguyen Van Quang, a Security Police officer from the 8th Ward. The Report, dated 9 November 1994, describes the confiscation of "banners measuring 1 meter by 2.2 meters, bearing the inscription "Unified Buddhist Church Rescue Mission"

in green letters on a yellow background..."

2. Buddhist delegations from all over the world meeting at the 19th Conference of the World Federation of Buddhists (WBF) in Bangkok from November 22-28 unanimously adopted a Resolution in support of the UBCV movement for religious freedom in Vietnam. The Resolution mandated the WBF (a) to send a letter to the Vietnamese authorities, calling on them to cease repression against the UBCV, and (b) to send an International Buddhist Delegation to Vietnam to visit Venerables Huyen Quang, Quang Do, Duc Nhuan and other UBCV dignitaries.

* * * *

B. International Buddhist Information Bureau (address above)

For Immediate Release

5 January 1995

Unprecedented Security sweep continues in Vietnam: Thich Quang Do, Secretary General of the Unified Buddhist Church is arrested in Ho Chi Minh City

The Unified Buddhist Church in Vietnam (UBCV) has just informed the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights that Venerable Thich Quang Do, Secretary General of the UBCV was arrested at Thanh Minh Pagoda, 90 Tran Huy Lieu Street in Phu Nhuan Ward, Ho Chi Minh City at 3.15 pm on Wednesday 4th January 1995. The Pagoda was raided by Security Police only a few days earlier on December 31, 1994. Ven. Quang Do's detention closely follows that of the UBCV Patriarch, Thich Huyen Quang, who was arrested last week in Quang Ngai.

Ven. Thich Quang Do (secular name Dang Phuc Tue, born in Thai Binh, North Vietnam on November 27, 1928), is a well-known writer and scholar, and one of the UBCV's highest ranking dignitaries. He was named by the former Patriarch Thich Don Hau to assist Thich Huyen Quang at the leadership of the UBCV after the Patriarch's death in 1992. One of the foremost advocates of UBCV's movement for religious freedom, Ven. Quang Do was first imprisoned with Ven. Huyen Quang in 1977, tortured and detained in solitary confinement for 20 months, then released in December, 1978 as a result of international pressure. Both monks were nominated in 1978 for the Nobel Peace Prize, and are adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

In 1982, Ven. Quang Do was sent into forced exile in Thai Binh, North Vietnam and detained under house arrest because of his strong opposition to the

creation of the State-sponsored Vietnam Buddhist Church set up in 1981. His mother, then aged 84, was exiled with him. She died of hunger and cold in 1985. The reason given for his arrest was that "by carrying out religious activities, you are ipso facto carrying out political activities". Ven. Quang Do persistently claimed the right to a fair trial, and wrote to the authorities on 9.1.1984 : "I should be judged in public for the crime which caused you to decide my banishment, to see if the punishment inflicted on me is proportional to the crime. If it is sufficient, give me back my freedom. If not, increase the sentence. As far as the death penalty if my crime has merited it..."

A relentless critic of Government policies, Ven. Quang Do has nevertheless been held in respect by the Communist authorities. In March 1990, Mai Chi Tho (then Minister of the Interior) visited Ven. Quang Do at his exile home in Thai Binh and invited him to become Abbot of Quan Su Pagoda in Hanoi, a Pagoda belonging to the State-sponsored VBC. He refused, saying "If you release me, you must let me go back to the place where I was arrested". In 1992, although he had not been formally released from house arrest, he left North Vietnam and returned to his former residence in Thanh Minh Pagoda, Ho Chi Minh City.

In Ho Chi Minh City, Ven. Quang Do continued to campaign for State recognition of the UBCV. In defiance of the Government prohibition of UBCV activities, he put up a sign over Thanh Minh Pagoda's entrance inscribed "Exiled Secretariat of the Unified Buddhist Church" and called on Buddhists all over the country to restore UBCV signs on Pagodas which had been torn down after the creation of the VBC in 1981 (10.10.1994).

In October 1994, Ven. Quang Do strongly condemned the arrest of UBCV monks organizing the Rescue Mission for flood victims in the Mekong Delta in a "Declaration" to the authorities : "What crimes has the UBCV committed ? What crimes have Ven. Huyen Quang and myself committed ? The Government should make it plain and clear, and punish us by law if we are guilty. But the victims of the floods have committed no crime, and our Rescue Mission is a humanitarian act... By impeding the UBCV relief operation, the Government is gravely violating basic civil rights and democratic freedoms, there can be no doubt about it !".

In August 1994, the Government attempted to strike a bargain with Ven. Quang Do. Officials from the Ministry of the Interior visited him at Thanh Minh Pagoda and offered to give Thich Huyen

Quang and himself important posts in the State-sponsored VBC if they agreed to dissolve the UBCV and integrate it into the State-sponsored body. The monks both refused. Later that month, he clarified the UBCV's position and his own viewpoint in a letter to Communist Party Secretary General Do Muoi, along with an audacious, 44-page critique entitled "Analysis of the Errors of the Vietnamese Communist Party in regards to the Nation and to Buddhism in Vietnam". In his letter to Do Muoi, Ven. Quang Do described his experiences of persecution under successive periods of Communist rule :

"49 years ago [in North Vietnam], my Master, Thich Duc Hai, was publicly executed by the communist authorities at 10.00 am on 19.8.1945... My uncle Thich Dai Hai (the Dharma brother of my Master), Superior monk of Phap Van Pagoda (Bac Ninh) was arrested by the communists in 1946 and died shortly afterwards... in 1954, my Dharma Grandfather, Thich Thanh Quyet, Superior monk of Tra Lu Pagoda in Nam Dinh, was accused by the communists of "using religion as the opium of the people"... Knowing he would be subjected to public denunciation, he hung himself ...". "My turn to be imprisoned by the communists came on 6.4.1977, then again on 25.2.1982, when I was exiled to Vu Doai village in Thai Binh... on 10.2.1982, they condemned my mother to share my fate... Suffering from a chronic lack of food and severe cold, she died in January 1985... I was detained under house arrest for 10 years and 27 days.." "The reason I am telling you about the tragic deaths of those I loved most, or about my own incarceration over the past ten years is because these experiences qualify me to speak out on behalf of all those who have suffered under communism. In the "Analysis" which I am sending you enclosed, my aim is to vindicate my Masters, and elucidate the grave offenses committed by the Vietnamese Communist Party against the Vietnamese people in general, and against Buddhists in particular".

The arrest of Patriarch Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do marks a turning point in the long-running conflict between the UBCV and the Communist authorities. Following the imprisonment of UBCV dignitaries in Hue and Ho Chi Minh City over the past 18 months, virtually all the UBCV leadership is now in prison or under house arrest. The Government appears determined to deploy all efforts to suppress the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam once and for all, in disregard of its binding human rights obligations to the international community.

Religion and Human Rights in Vietnam: Four Priests Speak Out

Editor's note: In this section we are presenting the views of four Catholic priests in Vietnam on the subject of Church-State relations. The first two documents are from the bishops of Nha Trang and Hue, respectively, as presented to the World Synod of Bishops, held at the Vatican in October 1994. These are summaries of the bishops' presentations published in the official Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* Nov. 2, 1994. The next two documents are from two dissident priests, both of whom have been punished in the past for criticizing government policy toward Catholics and other religions. Father Nguyen Van Ly from Hue presents a more detailed and less guarded critique of church-state relations. His statement was posted in the Internet group, VNForum by Manh H. Nguyen (Dec. 20 1994).

Finally is Father Chan Tin's open letter to Vietnamese Communist Party Secretary General Do Muoi. Father Tin goes beyond the issue of church-state relations to discuss the more general issue of human rights in Vietnam. This critique was translated for us by a Vietnamese friend and we posted it on Internet (Seasia-L) on Aug. 17, 1994. It responds to a Party-member conference speech of Do Muoi on March 3, 1994. (See also *Eglises d'Asie Dossiers et documents* No. 1/1995, Supplement EDA No. 191, Jan. 1995 for more commentary on church state relations from Fr. Tin and his lay colleague Nguyen Ngoc Lan.)

I. Apostolic Plans are Adapted to Country's New Context

Statement of Bishop Paul Nguyen Van Hoa (Nha Trang, Vietnam)

The fact that this time the delegates of Vietnam's Episcopal Conference were allowed to arrive in time for the Synod -- unlike what happened on previous occasions -- is a good sign of renewal in Vietnam.

This discourse refers to numbers 16 and 29 of the *Instrumentum laboris*.

The history of the Church in Vietnam is marked by the presence of consecrated persons. The first missionaries to set foot in Vietnam, four centuries ago, were the Jesuits, the Franciscans, the Dominicans, followed by the Priests of the Foreign Missions of Paris.

Faced with the immense areas of the apostolate, shortly after their arrival in Vietnam, the missionaries founded by the *Society of Catechists* for men and the *Societies of Lovers of the Cross* for women. These

men and women observed celibacy and lived a pious community life. In answer to the Bishops' appeal, other religious congregations arrived in Vietnam from the middle of the 19th century.

Events in April 1975 (the victory of the communists in South Vietnam) and those which followed, put the Church and the religious institutes in a critical situation. But the religious weathered the storm and when the calm returned, they set to work restoring religious and community life, upset for a time, courageously adapting to the new situation through new ways of presence and action in a world where Christians and religious aroused suspicion rather than sympathy.

Since 1986, there have been changes in Vietnam, but they were to be *sui generis*: the wind of renewal started to blow upon Vietnam. The economic opening was a certainty; the religious opening was still somewhat hesitant. The religious institutes made the very most and even more of the room for freedom given them to reorganize, particularly with regard to initial and ongoing formation and to the adaptation of apostolic programs to the new context.

This is how sessions for doctrinal and pastoral renewal courses exist for women religious, and theology courses for men religious. These sessions and courses are due to the initiative of the Union of Religious, with the encouragement of the Bishops and the authorization of the State authorities. For a few years, here and there, some religious have been authorized by the local authorities to run nurseries and kindergartens and their success is a witness to the families' trust in them.

II. Church Still Lacks Full Freedom

Statement of Archbishop Etienne Nguyen Nhu The (Apostolic Administrator of Hue, Vietnam)

The high number of priestly and religious vocations is marked by generosity. The Vietnamese family is still relatively stable, especially in country areas. Parents willingly encourage their children to persevere in their vocations. The difficulties to which Vietnamese Christians are subjected encourage the purification of motives and prevent consecrated people from being content with a mediocre life. These problems in Vietnam also bring consecrated persons closer to one another and lead to their collaboration among themselves and with the clergy and the laity.

Religious life in Vietnam is suffering restrictions.

This gives rise to many problems, particularly with regard to formation; the lack of premises, means, personnel and the problems of the mission; congregations devoted to education and charitable activities cannot pursue their mission in accordance with their own charism because of the State monopoly in certain areas of work.

Despite a certain relaxation of the regime as from 1986, the Church in Vietnam is still far from having full freedom of action. In particular, the system of family registration restricts freedom of movement and residence. This creates difficulties for the organization of religious communities. In principle, religious institutes are authorized to receive those undergoing formation, but in practice authorization from the governmental authorities is still required in order to hold meetings.

Another difficulty: openness to foreigners is not always positive; if we are not careful, it risks in the long run destroying the country's traditional values and at the same time putting consecrated life at a disadvantage.

Vietnam is in full evolution: the passage from hard-core socialism to a more gentle brand. A new Vietnam is emerging. Whether we want it or not, this trend is irreversible. The market economy, with its tendency to earn as much as possible, contributes to widening the gap between the rich and the poor. Consumerism is spreading. Moral values are threatened. Faced with this situation, what should religious do to become a visible and credible sign among their people? How can we be more inculturated among our people, a people which has had a long tradition of moral and spiritual values?

III. Declaration on the State of the Vietnamese Catholic Church in Hue Archdiocese, Vietnam

Statement of Fr. Nguyen Van Ly

To: All people of good will of the world

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am not aiming at presenting the state of the entire Catholic Church or the state of religion in general in Vietnam, for I may not have some accurate details. However, from the general state of Hue archdiocese, you would be able to understand the state of the entire Vietnamese catholic church.

The Hue archdiocese has just gained a archbishop, temporary leader, for the archdiocese after six years of waiting; recently there has been an

ordination for five new priests after fifteen years of absence; the archdiocese has just obtained a permit to re-open the Grand Seminary after sixteen years of closing. Is it true that religious life is prospering? Free? No, absolutely not.

Following are some sketches on the state of Hue archdiocese as proof:

1. Hoan Thien Petit Seminary, 11 Dong Da, Hue, has been forcibly occupied since December 12, 1979 by the government, which has turned it into Nguyen Chi Dieu Junior and Senior High School. As a result, almost 300 seminarians have had to wander aimlessly and study at home instead. They can only wait for approval of their background and hope to be admitted to the grand seminary in a dripping manner as a grace of the government.

The entire Hue archdiocese and all the people of Hue knew so well that this petit seminary was a place to produce priests, but the government intentionally lied that it was only a private high school in order to confiscate it.

More than 100 seminarians who were evicted by the government from Hoan Thien Petit Seminary and the Grand Seminary from 1979 have been wandering many places; a number had to flee overseas to become priests. Currently, there are 15 seminarians wandering in Hue, waiting for approval to enter the Grand Seminary. When such approval will arrive is unknown. What crimes did these seminarians commit? Is this not religious oppression?

2. The right to nominate and appoint bishops, the right to offer the sacrament of confirmation, the right to ordain and appoint priests and the right to select seminarians belong to the church in theory -- the government does not interfere (Mr. Do Muoi's words) -- but in reality, everything depends on whether the government agrees or not ("The people have the right to do every legitimate thing, but they have to obtain the government's prior approval.") In the entire 255 years that the church was under persecution (1630-1885), although bishops, priests and seminarians had to be in hiding, sometimes they were even arrested and killed, but those sacred rights were never lost: The church was always in control in ordaining and appointing personnel within its discretion. Today, although reputed as "free," the church indeed is very passive; it has to open its palms to ask for the government's grace; it cannot ordain or appoint the personnel that it thinks deserving and needed. The government determines the number of grand seminaries allowed to stay open, the number of seminarians for each diocese, and the time for each admission exam. Thus grand seminaries are the

government's schools to produce cadres! What rights does the government have to determine those numbers? Whoever called by God will enter seminaries, the church will accept whatever the number it has the capacity to handle, the church will ordain whoever it thinks deserving. This is God's call, not Marx's call or Socialism's call! For the last 18 years, the government has made Hue archdiocese lose about 80 priests that the church could have produced otherwise.

The government blatantly interferes into the internal affairs of the church, using pressure to orchestrate and steer things at its will, following the cruel principle that "The government has to manage everyone," founding its actions on an excessive concept of power -- The government's law is supreme, aiming at a dark purpose of turning the church into a flexible instrument, a loyal servant, an obedient subordinate. All are covered within the rhetoric such as "Good life brings beautiful religion," "Freedom in order," "Obedience to God must accompany love for socialism." Because the church has not yet loved socialism, it is under all kinds of pressure. And the more the church is forced, the more it cannot love that tyrannical ideology that always forces everyone to learn it, to love it by any means. Every student, from first grade through college, has to thoroughly absorb the fundamental "truth": "To love the country today, one must love socialism." Tyranny over thought is the most horrible, most ominous kind of tyranny!

3. Former Temporary Leader [of Hue Archdiocese] Jacob Le Van Man was elected to that job by the Advisory Council pursuant to the church's law since 1990. For the last four years, the entire Hue archdiocese obeys him as the official leader, but the government intentionally denies approval, creating many obstacles and difficulties for the church. Is that not savage interfering into the affairs of the church? If he had committed any crime, the government would have arrested and tried him under the law. Had he been undeserving, the Advisory Council would have not selected him and the Vatican would have not approved the selection. Why is the government still not appeased? Is that because he still does not love socialism with all his heart? The status of Temporary Leader of Saigon archdiocese, Nicolas Huynh Van Nghi, is similar. What rights does the government have not to recognize them?

4. The selection of seminarians at both men and women seminaries has had to be done covertly under various forms. Until the time they took the life-time vow and became official monks and nuns, who among

these seminarians in the last 15 years have been allowed to be officially registered at the seminaries? Everyone has to "do seminary works in hiding." Seminary work is not a crime, why one has to hide? For a seminary to establish a new congregation in a locality as the church needs, it would be more difficult than walking to the sky. Immaculate Mother Convent (Phu Xuan, Kim Long) has facilities and buildings that the government has been renting for more than 19 years; no rent payment has ever been made and the buildings are still not returned [to the convent], although in theory the government says it is ready to return them. When? No place for seminary works even if one wants!

5. Parishioners from the new economic zones, from faraway parishes such as Quang Binh, Khe Sanh, Minh Dien, Nam Dong, A Luoi, each year at the time of Christmas and Easter, only hope to have a Mass, but such hope is hard to fulfill. The government raises one reason after another to delay issuing the church-building permit. Also, it allows no priest to come to perform Mass. Where is the sign that religious life is normal and prosperous?

6. The church wishes so much to work on education, health care, information, social services . . . but when will the church receive permission to re-open its schools, clinics, orphanages, houses for the handicapped and cultural centers that have been confiscated by the government under forced delivery?

Does the church have any paper or printing house of its own to dispatch its teachings? To have them, the prerequisite that must be met is "to stand firm on the socialist principles" or, at least, not to criticize the regime and the government. The right to free thinking, the right to freedom of expressing the faith, the freedom to teach the Good News and the Truth, the freedom to select schools and academic subjects for children . . . when will they be normal?

7. In Hue, because the late archbishop Phillips Nguyen Kim Dien fought so determinedly, the government failed in its attempt to establish the Unified Patriotic Catholics Committee. Now the government is inviting a number of priests and seminarians to participate in the People's Council, which is a governmental power organization. The hidden purpose is to use a number of priests, seminarians, and parishioners to propagandize socialism, to support the regime.

* Following are several general sketches about the Vietnamese Catholic Church and some personal prayers:

8. I don't dare to name any bishop or priest "government-owned," for I think that they may be

trying hard, even in tears, to find a way for the church to be developed and to act. But what they are collecting upfront will not be enough to compensate for the great losses that will leave stigmas for a long time in history, that will distort the image of a church valiantly building the Kingdom of Heaven, freely speaking the voice of conscience, dauntlessly criticizing all injustices and mistakes from whatever direction, and will replace it by an image of a feeble church, kowtowing MORE AND MORE EVERY DAY, running after some fleeting conveniences upfront, knowing only of "collaboration" but not of "resistance" (formula "collaborator en resistant" of Pope John Paul II), disappointing the great majority of God's people and many people of good will who used to admire the Vietnamese catholic church. Are they not trying to twist their tongues saying the words like "enthusiastic," "cheerful," "wise," "admiring" . . . just to gain special privileges and benefits?

9. I have been accused of not paying attention to works on education, health care, social services, and of always making noises on freedom of religion. One thing easy to understand is that only with freedom of religion the church can stop evil things, better the society, and contribute many Christians who actively and ambitiously serve the world in many fields. Freedom of conscience and freedom of religion are the bases on which one may obtain and guaranty other freedoms. I would like to live peacefully to serve everyone, but at the foremost, because of the passion for the Lord and the love for mankind, I have to struggle for true freedom of religion, to keep on requesting persistently until the Vietnam has a religious life as NORMAL as that in many other countries in the world, where the citizens never raise their voice to request freedom of religion and the government never keeps on repeating the refrain: "The government guaranties freedom of religion" or "The [government's] religious policy is always consistent." One only has to read the petitions by the Vietnamese Bishops Conference to Vietnam prime minister, dated October 18, 1992 and October 26, 1993, to see that the Vietnamese church lacks so many basic rights, but it knows only of writing petitions and waiting and waiting.

Comparing articles 18 and 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of October 12, 1948, of the United Nations (of which Vietnam has been a member since 1977), the Declaration of Freedom of Religion of December 7, 1995 and the Declaration of Christian Education of October 28, 1965, of Vaticano II Conference (see attached documents), let's ask what basic rights the Vietnamese catholic

church has?

10. It is possible that some people will criticize that when other priests are content to work, some even seem to be satisfied with everything, it seems I am the only one who keeps on requesting freedom of religion (since 1975, I have been arrested and jailed twice for requesting freedom of religion and am still in detention). Of course, there are many people who, by many means, are struggling as much as or more than I. But it is possible that there are some wise people who want to stay safe to continue services; if every priest is in jail, who will take care of services?

I hope that the true Christians and all the people of good will agree with my above ten-point declaration. I also affirm that, with me there have been, there are and there will be, many generations of Christians who want to share the grace of the history call of Moses, Jeremiah, Ezekiel . . . three thousand years ago: "Let my people go, so that they may hold a festival to me in the desert," Exodus 5:1, "You must . . . say whatever I command you. Don't be afraid. . ." Jeremiah 1:7, Ezekiel 2:6.

Although undeserving, I commit myself to follow the example of the Vietnamese Martyr Saints, seminarian John Marcel Nguyen Tan Van who died for the faith on October 7, 1959 in camp Yen Binh 2, near Ha Noi, the Church and the silent Council of Bishops of China and, in the most recent time, the late bishop Phillips Nguyen Kim Dien, who was under misery for the faith and died for the faith on June 8, 1988 in Saigon. However, whoever intentionally harms me will blatantly violate article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.

Please pray for me every day so that I have enough strength to accomplish the task the Lord has given me that I cannot delegate to anyone else. "The Lord has shown me a place to stand, I have no right to flee." Letter to sir Diognelos, [?].

I place this declaration under the protection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mother La Vang, Great Saint Joseph, the Vietnamese Martyr Saints, and the international human rights organizations.

Please help me to distribute [this declaration] widely so that my country will soon have true freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. With sincere thanks, I remain.

Hue Communal House,

The Day of the Vietnamese Martyr Saints
November 24, 1994

A little priest in Hue

Tasteo Nguyen Van Ly

17 Phan Dinh Phung
Hue, Vietnam

* * * *

IV. Analysis of Do Muoi's Speech by Father Chan Tin

In the aftermath of the lifting of the US trade embargo, the transformation of Vietnam's economy into the free market economy modeled after capitalist countries, plus the "peaceful evolution" happening within and outside Vietnam, Mr. Do Muoi has called on party members: "First and foremost we must stand firm on the class ideologies and the class struggle."

Which class? That is the pivotal issue: is it the class of the hungry proletariat who are being exploited today in this country; or is it the class of the "workers" who have no possession worthy of its class name; or is it the class of the "revolutionary mandarins" who exploit the workers to the bare bone.

The class struggling class so that the present ruling class can perpetually dictate and hold a monopoly of power over the economy, politics, society, education, medical, etc.

To guarantee the monopoly rule of the "new class", the people must be enslaved. Human beings and their most basic rights must be trampled upon by reasoning that "each nation has its distinctive traits, its traditions, and its own law."

Those traditions or unjust laws used to oppress human beings are traditions and laws that must be terminated. The more civilized humanity becomes, the more revolutions must be waged to destroy those traditions, those laws, those injustices. Mr. Do Muoi cited those dictatorial traditions and unconstitutional laws to contend against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was a signatory along with other civilized nations.

Mr. Do Muoi spoke about the Vietnamese Communist Party's legacy which includes "liberating the worker class and the proletariat, eradicating oppression, exploitation, repression, injustice, and bringing happiness to everyone." Is it true? Real workers are still poor, hungry, exploited, and are being oppressed even more severely compared to the colonial era. Only a minority, granting itself the "worker class" status, is able to enjoy wealth, status, and power to live on top of the laboring men, women, and workers with starving salary. This minority has abolished colonialism to install an even more severe and oppressive servitude.

The history of 73 years of communist ruling in

Soviet Union, 45 years in Eastern Europe, and the present state of rule in China, North Korea, Cuba, and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam proves that communist rule is oppressive, autocratic, dictatorial, and monopolistic. Today exploitation, oppression, and injustices are greater than all colonial and feudal powers in history.

Our feudal era was an era of self-developed feudalism. It was unorganized and not uniform; slaves were not left starving nor sick; and slaves were not required to praise the rulers. Today communism is an organized feudalism. Void of liberty and happiness, the people must say that they have freedom, that they have happiness, and that they live in a society a million time more democratic than capitalism.

Regarding ideologies struggle, I think party members such as Ha Si Phu, Phan Dinh Dieu, Bui Tin, Lu Phuong have spoken up too much already about the obsolescence, rudimentariness, and demise of Marxism-Leninism.

Mr. Do Muoi praised Marxism-Leninism by repeating old lessons: Marx, Engels, and Lenin had profoundly analyzed the characteristics of capitalism and imperialism and pointed out the striving manner in which "to liberate the worker class and the proletariat, to eradicate oppression, exploitation, repression, injustice, and to bring happiness to everyone." Mr. Do Muoi had recited materials which are brainwashing lessons to everyone who joins the communist party.

Ideology is one thing; reality is the opposite as everyone has already seen today, including the scientists and intellectuals in the Party. Standing in front of intellectuals and scientists who have severely criticized socialism and the socialist models applied in the Soviet Union and Vietnam, Mr. Do Muoi angrily pounded the table and said: "cadres in natural science and social science institutes, politicians, and cultural cadres show your attitude and speak up. Why have we been in a submissive position in the past few years? Soon we will be submissive even more ..." Mr. Do Muoi cried out: "We cannot let them rob, murder, and cry wolf at the same time." Who is crying wolf here? Stripping the people of all their human and civil rights, then saying that "our government is a million time more democratic." That point alone is enough for us to know who cries wolf.

Mr. Do Muoi said: "A number of bad elements have said that the 20th century is the century in which communists have committed the most murders in history, and therefore communism must be buried." Communism has lasted only 70 years in the Soviet

Union, 45 years in Eastern Europe, 40 years in Vietnam, and yet Stalin has committed many massacres, killing millions of people because those innocent victims had different opinions. Right here in Vietnam, how many died and lost their land in the Land Reform campaign; campaigns to purge novelists and intellectuals in the Nhan Van Giai Pham period; how many were jailed and executed for speaking against the Party. Since the day of democracy in Russia, people have exposed the terrors of communism in Soviet Union. Thousands of Polish officers were massacred at the Katyn forest; communists earlier blamed German troops for the massacre, but today there is proof that the Soviet Union killed the Polish officers one year before the Germans arrived.

Mr. Do Muoi asked: "Who caused World War I and World War II for the loss of millions of lives?" Mr. Do Muoi has forgotten that Germany started that war with the alliance of Soviet Union in the early stage of WW II. Millions died because of the bombs and destruction of war, different than willful massacres of millions of innocent victims without weapons whose crime was to disagree with the communist party.

Mr. Do Muoi charged: "Enemy forces accuse our party members of being dictatorial and anti-democratic." Are people wrong in saying so? Or do we have to call dictatorship democracy, and democracy dictatorship? Other regimes have restrictions in a few areas, and democracy in many areas. In Vietnam, there is dictatorship in all areas: no freedom of ideology; no freedom of press; no freedom of speech; no freedom of religion so that Churches can have jurisdiction over their internal organizations, can appoint clergy, can publish religious materials; no freedom of movement; no freedom of dwelling. The "People's food ration" document, ho khai nhan dan, is considered a house imprisonment paper. People must get permission to move to a new place, permission which is usually denied by "revolutionary mandarins."

In order to have a free election, candidates must be allowed to run for office freely. In Vietnam individuals are not allowed to run for office. Even if there are such candidates, they exist solely for obligatory purpose, and/or the candidates will be disqualified before election. They are being used as precursors for revolutionary mandarins who are selected by the Party through an organization called the Fatherland Front. These are the facts and we are still considered as democratic, non-dictatorial, and a million time more democratic? There are people

who can say these things without feeling shameful. This authority also considers the people as children or slaves who must obey all orders from the Party. When the Party insists black is white, everyone must concur that it is white. This is such a misery and shameful for a people who have 4,000 years of civilization.

With respect to human rights, Mr. Do Muoi said: "The first article of the United Nations Covenant on Human Rights is the respect for the rights of independence, sovereignty, and self-determination of other nations." But the rights of independence, sovereignty, and self-determination are used for what purpose but to bring liberty and happiness to everybody? If independence implies isolating the country with a repressive regime, free from any outside intervention to protect humanity, then what good does that sort of independence bring to the people? If the right of self-determination is created by a political party which imposes a structure of governing that violates the basic rights of humanity, then that kind of self-determination is not for the people. The Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) always recites that the people have chosen socialism. Which people? A minority imposed socialism, and then claimed it was chosen by the people. The VCP should conduct a free poll to see how many people endorse socialism and the present socialist model in the country. For sure the VCP would not dare.

Concerning the economy, Mr. Do Muoi said: "we have entered the market." Which market? A free market with abiding rules, disciplines, and regulations, or a "chaotic market" without clear regulations, with smuggling (everyone smuggles, every house smuggles, every government office smuggles, including the People's Committees and Party branches such as the case of Binh Hoa district), and a state of spreading corruption. According to Mr. Do Muoi, an economy needs guidance and intervention from the State and the Party. That kind of economy only benefits for people in power and in high positions, people who safely stay under safeguarding umbrellas. A type of Mafia has cropped up throughout the country, throughout all provinces and cities, to benefit themselves and the foreign countries by utilizing corruption to close deals selling away lands, houses, and enterprises at low prices. These people have abandoned failing state subsidies to chase chaotically after the free-market.

Mr. Do Muoi spoke of four dangers, one objective and three subjective, to communism in Vietnam:

The objective danger is that different enemy forces want to overthrow the regime. "They fight us, we

light them back" [says Do Muoi]. That is an illusion. This is the era the Party describes as the "peaceful evolution" era. The present Communist party is very afraid of peaceful evolution. The party has much experience fighting with guns. The VCP is not afraid of war, but of peace: peaceful evolution.

Whoever brings good deeds, liberty, happiness to the people will be followed by the people. If the communist party can bring liberty and happiness to the people better anyone else, then what is there for the party to fear in "peaceful evolution?"

About the other three objective dangers, Mr. Do Muoi first mentioned the danger of "disorientation." Disoriented from what path? The path of the people, or the path of the party? The path of the people is the path to freedom, democracy, respect for individual integrity, respect for civil and human rights. The path of the party is the path of dictatorship, of trampling upon all civil and human rights. The party is "disoriented" from the people's path and yet Mr. Do Muoi called the people's path "disoriented." Perhaps we need to orient more toward the party's dictatorship path. This indeed is an existing disorientation danger that the party has not changed in order to orient itself with the people.

Nguyen Trai, a famous scholar-warrior, has said: "the boat is rowed by the people, and gets capsized also by the people." Do not fear that the enemies will capsize the boat. Mr. Do Muoi should re-orient himself to head in the same direction with the people.

With respect to corruption, Mr. Do Muoi bemoaned that corruption exists in all eras, all countries. Corruption in democratic countries is limited, exposed, and brought to trial; prime ministers and presidents are not excluded. In this country, corruption spreads everywhere, in every field, and at every rank. Convicted corrupted officials only hold a certain rank, whereas "revolutionary mandarins" and high ranking officials who protect their smuggling, corrupted subordinates, stay at the same post or even get promoted.

The last danger is the lack of fighting mentality, and weakened party subordinates. A Chinese proverb says: "Commanders without principles, subordinates without orderliness." If higher commands wage wrongful authority and wrongful deed, then subordinates will wage wrongful authority and deed. Investigations at government enterprises will show that party members are the figures who wage wrongful authority and wrongful deed, yet these figures get elected to the anti-corruption committee! With that, how can corruption be battled in the way Mr. Do

Muoi's has appealed exhaustively? According to a recent party newspaper, the Party battles corruption, corruption spreads with more sophistication.

In general, Mr. Do Muoi's speech has no valid point. Reform, yet with old dogmas. Reality is not being observed; Marx-Engels doctrines are still cited as if in the past. Collapsing communist countries have really opened party members' eyes, so we can reform according to the people's orientation. In the future, if communist parties in Russia and Eastern Europe hold influence over its people, it is because those parties have reformed, have asked for democracy, pluralism, liberty, and human rights just like other parties.

If it wants to survive, the Vietnamese Communist Party needs to orient itself to the people's wishes, to accept democracy, to respect individual integrity, to respect civil and human rights, and to accept pluralism.

- Fr. Chan Tin

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Profile of Cardinal Paul Pham Dinh Tung Archbishop of Ha Noi, Viet Nam

The following description of Cardinal Paul Pham Dinh Tung, Archbishop of Hanoi, Vietnam, is from the official Vatican newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Nov. 2, 1994.

Cardinal Paul Joseph Pham Dinh Tung, Archbishop of Ha Noi, Viet Nam, was born on 15 June 1919 in Binh-Hoa, in the Diocese of Phat Diem. Ordained to the priesthood on 6 June 1949, he was named Bishop of Bac Ninh on 5 April 1963. He was asked to serve as Apostolic Administrator of Ha Noi on 18 June 1990. On 24 April 1994 he was appointed Archbishop of that city.

For virtually all the 30 years of his episcopal ministry in the Diocese of Bac Ninh he was forced to stay at home without ever being able to make pastoral visits to the more than 100 parishes in his jurisdiction. With only three priests, restricted in his movements and lacking any means of communication during his years of "house arrest", the Bishop wrote the life of Jesus and elements of Christian doctrine in the "luc bat" poetic form. The cadence of these compositions helps people learn them quickly.

There are 30 priests in his Archdiocese, many of whom are over 60. His main pastoral concern is thus the formation of priests.

Hmong Christians Targeted for Persecution

Editor's note: The following is an excerpt (pp. 56-58) from the report of the Puebla Institute, Vietnam: Free Market Captive Conscience: A Puebla Institute Report on Religious Repression. Written by Jean-Louis Robadey, Jeffrey Micklos and Anne Himmeljarb; edited by Nina Shea (Puebla Inst. Pres.). The full report (113 pages, published in 1994) is available for \$10 from: Puebla Institute, 1319 18th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Telephone: (202) 296-8050.

Another tribal group is also the special target of anti-religious government policies. In Vietnam's remote northwestern provinces of Lai Chau, Ha Tuyen and Son Lau, a large number of Hmong tribesmen have reportedly become Christians. This movement began in 1989, and it is now estimated that Hmong believers number more than 50,000 in a population of approximately a half-million. Many have converted in response to native-language gospel programs of the Far East Broadcasting Co, an American-based radio network with offices in Hong Kong. That this raised some concern among Vietnamese authorities was manifested in an April 1991 article published in the *Nhan Dan* (People's Daily), which describes the conversion of increasing numbers of Hmong as a "widespread movement causing a lot of serious damage against the security of the country."

The government, while acknowledging the size and depth of the movement, systematically tried to discredit newly converted Hmong believers, emphasizing for instance their "low cultural standards" and "herd spirit". The new Hmong converts are accused by the government of supporting a scheme to overthrow the Communists in seeking to link up with a religious movement that has Hmong followers in the South.

The persecuted Hmong Christians have been reaching out for help. Copies of letters, documents and tapes of Hmong Christians recount beatings, fines, forced labor, interference with farming and harvesting, imprisonment, death threats, forced emigrations and property confiscations. The abuses, recounted by various sources, seem to have begun in 1991, to have continued and amplified in 1992, and reached a peak in the summer of 1993. A December 1993 report documents severe cases of physical abuse against arrested Hmong people. Authorities reportedly "play games with them," forcing them to kneel and worship government

officials and their wives. Bibles and radios are regularly confiscated. Hmong women and children have also reportedly been abused. These incidents caused some believers to flee to surrounding jungles to hold Bible studies and prayer meetings without constantly fearing police persecution.

Hmong documents indicate repeated appeals to local and provincial officials. After unsuccessful requests for redress at the local level, in February 1993, a Hmong delegation of eleven men, guided by Vietnamese Christian leaders in Hanoi, went to the Ministry of Interior to report in detail about beatings, jailing, fines and other mistreatment they suffered due to their new religion. An officer of the Ministry of Interior acknowledged receipt of their complaint by issuing a record of evidence, but the persecution did not diminish, despite attempts by the Hmong to clarify their position with the authorities and to deny political aspirations.

On January 10, 1994, Thao A. Tong, an influential Hmong leader in Hong Thu village, was seized by police while preaching. He was charged with "taking advantage of religion to break laws and distract people from the productive work of the country." Arrested with Tong was layperson Giang A. Di. There has been no news of a trial and Hmong Christians fear these leaders are joining a growing list of others arrested over the past five years, and held indefinitely, without trial.

Aside from some highly-publicized prison releases, Puebla found evidence that far from being eliminated, repression against the Protestants is still very much in place, having taken more sophisticated and hidden forms. Despite recent progress, older churchmen who spent the years since 1975 in and out of the Vietnamese prison system warn that the conviction of party cadres that churches encourage dissidence and foment insurrection is deeply entrenched. Believers are not entitled to religious activity without the government's consent and control. Places of worship remain confiscated. High fines are being imposed on those who dare to freely express their beliefs. Last but not least, the worst brutality against Evangelical Christians has been removed from urban areas, but is more widespread than ever in more remote regions, hurting those people who have little recourse to international attention and support.

* * * *

NEWS: Reports and Comments

(Note: the following are some developments related to human rights during January and February 1995. In future issues we hope it might be possible to provide more comprehensive coverage)

Free Doan Viet Hoat

Release Doan Viet Hoat, urged his wife in a speech to some 300 Vietnamese in southern California. "I will always stand by my husband through all his hardships," said Tran Thi Thuc, a former professor of English at Saigon University.

Prof. Hoat, former vice rector of Van Hanh Buddhist University is serving a 15-year prison sentence for advocating political democracy in Vietnam. He suffers from kidney stones and a recent hunger strike. He was moved to the more isolated Thanh Cam prison of northern Vietnam because of repeated pro-democracy statements he has issued which have been smuggled out and disseminated abroad.

"The burden makes me want to fall down and cry," Thuc said. "But the support from everyone keeps me strong. We must keep believing." Thuc was allowed last year to emigrate to the U.S. under the family reunification (ODP) program. She began this year a worldwide speaking tour on behalf of her husband and other imprisoned dissidents in Vietnam. (source: Associated Press Jan. 9).

U.S. & Vietnam Exchange Diplomatic Offices

The U.S. and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam agreed to exchange diplomatic liaison offices in a low key 10-minute ceremony held in Hanoi Jan. 28, with offices opened at the beginning of February. The agreement does not technically constitute opening of diplomatic relations, which the Clinton administration says it is continuing to withhold in order to pressure Hanoi on the MIA/POW issue. It does constitute diplomatic relations in the de facto sense, however. The Vietnam office opened at a temporary location in Washington, D.C., is expected to move within a few months to the former embassy of the Republic of Vietnam, which will no doubt offend the many Vietnamese living in the U.S. (let us hope this does not happen on April 30th!). James Hall now heads the U.S. office, while Le Van Bang heads the Vietnam office.

The addresses of the two offices:

Ambassador Le Van Bang, 1233 20th St. N.W., Suite 501; Washington, D.C. 20036. Tel: (202) 861-

0737; fax: (202) 861-0917.

Ambassador James Hall, U.S. Liaison Office, Hanoi. PSC 46, Box 400; SPO AP 9652-002. Note: this is the mailing address only for those who live in the U.S.; others write to: U.S. Liaison Office, 7 Lang Ha Street, Hanoi; Telephone number 944-4-350-445.

(Sources: see *New York Times* Feb. 12; *Far Eastern Economic Review* Feb. 9; *Christian Science Monitor* Feb. 3; *Washington Post* Jan. 28; *Indochina Digest* Feb. 3,10; and Foreign Broadcast Information Service [FBIS] *East Asia Report*, Jan. 30, Feb. 1).

Philippines Offers Vatican-Vietnam Mediation

The Philippines can mediate between the Vatican and Vietnam, said Philippines Foreign Minister Roberto Romulo on the eve of the Pope's Manila arrival in January. "We would be more than happy to convey the message to China and Vietnam to liberalize their policies when it comes to religious restrictions, to help enhance and further ties with the Vatican," he told reporters. (Reuters Jan. 9).

Tour Guide Banned

The highly esteemed publisher of travel guides, Fielding Worldwide Inc., was informed Jan. 10 that copies of "Fielding's Vietnam" by Wink Dulles were confiscated in Vietnam. Dulles, age 36, had spent a year in Vietnam touring much of the country by motorcycle. He is the cousin of former CIA Chief Allen Dulles and Sec. of State John Foster Dulles. "Our book has evidently been confiscated due to our candor regarding travel in Vietnam," said Fielding's publisher Robert Young Pelton. "The door to Vietnam has been opened, but not wide enough." Fielding's, which also organizes tours to Vietnam, advises caution when carrying or displaying the tour guide in Vietnam. (Source: Fieldings PR newswire, Jan. 10.)

Party Retains Media Grip

SRV Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet said his government has no plans to release its control over the press or make it more commercial. "There is no privately owned press," he said to reporters in Ho Chi Minh City. The government has enacted a new decree regulating advertising in the Vietnamese media. (Reuters Jan. 9).

Two newspapers were temporarily shut down in January: Nguoi Hanoi (The Hanoian) was closed Jan.

18 after it published an article reporting citizens' criticism of a government ban on firecrackers during Tet celebrations. Nguoi Hanoi is a newspaper of the Hanoi Association of Literature and Arts, with a circulation of a few thousand. The Ministry of Information and culture has urged local authorities to punish the editor and the journalists involved in publishing this article. (source: Reuters Jan. 21).

The other newspaper shut down was a metallurgical journal which was accused of publishing sensationalist tabloid style articles completely unrelated to its field.

(Editor's comment: The ban itself probably saved lives--71 people were killed in 1993 Tet celebrations--but the offending article reported complaints of the ban being harmful to fireworks producers and traders. The temporary closure of these two newspapers is not so significant as the more draconian forms of punishment meted out to dissidents in southern Vietnam.)

Hanoi Leaders Reject U.S. Criticism

The SRV rejected U.S. criticism of its human rights violations and told Washington to mind its own business Feb. 4.

"We think that no state has the right to judge and impose its own opinion on the human rights situation in other countries," said a Foreign Ministry spokesperson in a one-sentence response to the annual U.S. State Dept. report on worldwide human rights. (Dissidents in Vietnam might respond that the Vietnam government has no right to impose its opinion on them.)

The report noted permissible debate in Vietnam was increasing "within narrow boundaries" but also cited continued government repression of dissent, the inability of citizens to change their government and credible reports of inhumane treatment in prisons. (Source: Reuters Feb. 4. The full text of the State Department report can be accessed on Internet via the Library of Congress government gopher).

Repression "Negative Factor" in Canadian Relations

"The human rights situation in Vietnam remains a concern to the Canadian government and a negative factor in an otherwise improving bilateral relationship," said the Canadian government during the 51st session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva Jan. 17-18. It noted the 1992 SRV constitution guarantees respect for human rights, but also says various freedoms can be exercised only "in accordance with the law." This permits harsh prison sentences for political dissidents, exacerbated by the

lack of an independent judiciary. It noted with particular concern the case of Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, presently serving a 20 prison sentence for advocating political democracy in Vietnam.

"The communist party is firmly committed to one-party rule and any questioning of its leading role is dealt with harshly. An extensive and pervasive security apparatus remains in place. Free and democratic elections have not yet been held in Vietnam," said the report. (source: posted on Seasia-L in Internet Feb. 27 by Cao Tran, who received it from David Kilgour, Dep. Speaker of the Canadian Parliament.)

Vietnam keeps third place as rice exporter

Vietnam shipped 2.2 million tons of rice in 1994, according to the official Vietnam News Agency, ranking it behind Thailand and the U.S. as the third largest rice exporter in the world. Rice exports in 1993 amounted to 1.8 million tons. Total rice production in 1994 was 23.5 million tons, despite serious floods and typhoons that destroyed more than one million tons. (Reuters Jan. 11).

New Construction threaten's Hanoi's Heritage

Artists and writers urged Hanoi's mayor in January not to allow the city's building boom to destroy architectural heritage. The National Union of Literature and Arts Association said the cultural heritage of Hanoi is threatened by construction of hotels and office blocks. It is especially concerned about the West Lake area, where developers are building several hotels and a sports club, the central landmark Lake of the Restored Sword area and the old French Quarter. (source: Reuters, *Vietnam Investment Review* Jan. 8).

New Civil Code

The National Assembly draft of the new civil code, the first for Communist Vietnam since the 1945 revolution, was published on Feb. 11-12. The code contains 32 chapters and 701 articles dealing with property rights, land use, inheritance, etc. It is expected to be formally ratified in July. (*Indochina Digest* Feb. 17; VNA Feb. 12, FBIS-EAS 95-29).

AIDS Epidemic Threatens Vietnam's Future

HIV infections surged in Ho Chi Minh City and in Kontum province of central Vietnam in 1994 -- 89 HIV positive cases were diagnosed during the last week of December. The National Aids Committee

reports 2,177 citizens have been infected with HIV, and 48 have died of AIDS. The World Health Organization says there could be 400,000 HIV positive cases in Vietnam by the year 2000. (source: Vietnam News Jan. 4).

UNICEF Rep. Calls for End to Child Prostitution

UNICEF country representative Stephen Woodhouse called for an end to child prostitution at a youth conference co-sponsored by UNICEF and the HCM City Communist Youth Union. The proportion of prostitutes under 18 in Vietnam has risen from 1.2% of the total in 1992 to 11% in 1994 and 20% to 35% of all urban prostitutes. He called for tougher legislation, border controls, community surveillance and special education programs to combat the problem. (source: *Indochina Digest* Feb. 8).

More Boat People Return, EU Program Ends

Talks were held between Vietnam and Hong Kong in early January to discuss repatriation of asylum seekers in Hong Kong. Some 42,000 have returned from Hong Kong to Vietnam since the repatriation program began in 1988.

About 24,000 Vietnamese remain in Hong Kong (from a high of 60,000 in 1991), refusing to return. Local people in Hong Kong are angry at their continued presence; but human rights activists say many genuine political refugees who were unfairly screened out are among them and that living conditions for the asylum seekers remain abysmal. Hong Kong and China demand that all boat people leave by 1996.

The European Union's (EU) program to aid returnees ended on Nov. 30, 1994. The EU made about 48,000 loans and became the biggest source of capital for small and medium sized businesses in Vietnam. It also aided in job training and infrastructure development for the areas in which the Vietnamese returned. All returnees received a \$240 repatriation allowance. Overall the program cost about \$50 million.

The UNHCR claims most of the returnees are doing at least as well as when they left and that there have been no reprisals. Some have started businesses with their grants and loans. One-third of the returnees come from Haiphong. (Sources: Associated Press, Jan. 21; Reuters Jan. 5).

* * * *

(News reports continued on page 7.)

**Prisoner Pham Van Thanh Exposes
Re-education Camp Conditions**

Editor's note: The following was received from Penelope Faulkner of the Vietnam Committee on Human Rights (address below). We also received from Ms. Faulkner a French translation (by Fr. Jean Mais) of the white paper referred to below.

Vietnam Committee on Human Rights
25 rue Jaffieux
92230 Gennevilliers
France

27 September 1994

For Immediate Release:

DETAINEE DENOUNCES TORTURE, ILL-TREATMENT OF 1,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS IN REEDUCATION CAMPS

Pham Van Thanh sends White Paper from Camp A20, Phu Yen to the Communist authorities in Vietnam

The Vietnam Committee on Human Rights has just received a WHITE PAPER sent clandestinely by PHAM VAN THANH, political prisoner in A20 Reeducation Camp, Phu Yen Province, with the request that it be forwarded to the leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party (VCP) in Hanoi. Dated July 25, 1994, the White Paper denounces the "inhuman living conditions" in Camp A20, better known as "the Valley of Death", a reeducation camp approximately 600 kms North of Saigon reserved for political, religious and other "difficult" prisoners.

34-year-old Pham Van Thanh and Pham Anh Dung, both French residents, were arrested on March 5, 1993 during a visit to Vietnam along with 12 others, some of them overseas Vietnamese from Canada and the U.S. On Aug. 28, 1993, the group (including Tran Tu, Nguyen Van Muon, Do Huon, Pham Anh Dung, Nguyen Ngoc Dang, Pham Doc Hau, Do Hong Van, Le Hoang Son, Pham Van Thanh, Luc Sy Hanh, Van Dinh Nhat, Tran Thi Nhan, Nguyen Duy Cuong and Nguyen Phu) was condemned by the Ho Chi Minh City People's Tribunal to penalties ranging from three years to life imprisonment. Pham Van Thanh received 12 years and Pham Anh Dung 20 years imprisonment on charges of "activities aimed at overthrowing the

people's Government."

In the White Paper, Pham Van Thanh denies these charges, stating that he returned to Vietnam "in order to take part in a non-violent demonstration (...). My only intent was to 'fight' you through legitimate, political means, by way of the free vote and the open ballot..."

The VCP's spokesperson, Mrs. Ho The Lan and other Foreign Ministry officials have repeatedly announced that there are "no political prisoners in Vietnam." How, then do you classify people like us? What about Ho Ngoc Tuan, who is serving 12 years in prison simply for sending abroad short stories he wrote about social realities today? Or the Buddhist monks Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu, condemned to 20 years for their writings on society, a study group called 'the Freedom Forum'; or Dr. Nguyen Dan Que, who faces 20 years in jail simply for expressing non-violent, humanist views? These people, like myself and thousands of others, were tortured and harassed by Security Police, prosecuted on fictitious charges of possessing explosives, seeking to disturb public security.. then condemned as common criminals in trials where the State-appointed 'defence' lawyers piled up even heavier accusations against them!!"

Deploing the "lack of independence of the Vietnamese judiciary", Pham Van Thanh states that in Vietnam "everything is under the control of the Security Police. It is the Security Police who pass judgement by way of the Courts, the Security Police who imprison, and the Security Police who are in charge of the prisons and reeducation camps."

On conditions in prisons and reeducation camps, he reports: "Security Police beat up political prisoners with unbelievable violence. Almost all the political prisoners detained here [in A20 Camp] over the past 19 years have been beaten like animals. I saw a whole group of Security guards surrounding a prisoner at the Camp entrance, beating him repeatedly over the head with their rifle-butts (...). In 1986-87, Catholic priests Nguyen Luan, Nguyen Minh and Nguyen Van Vang died in A20 Camp from beatings like this..."

"The Party obliges detainees to fulfill excessive hard-labor norms, without ever allowing them any medical treatment to heal their ills. Food rations are minimal (we eat nothing but rice mixed with salt water -- fish or meat only appear in official reports, never in our stomachs!), and the prisoners have to pay for medical treatment. Recently, Hoang Dinh My, a veteran political prisoner who has spent 28 years in detention, lost his eye in a work accident.

We had to pool our own food rations to pay the Camp to give him hospital treatment.. they even made us pay the Security Police who took him [to the hospital]. Another political prisoner, Tran Cong, died of an illness two weeks ago because he could not afford to pay for medicine.."

"I know of over 1,000 political prisoners who are currently detained under identically inhuman conditions in A20 Camp (Phu Yen Province), K3 Camp (Xuan Loc), Z30D Camp (Ham Tan), B34 Camp (Saigon), and in the prisons of Chi Hoa and Vung Tau alone."

In a report annexed to the White Paper, political prisoner Dao Van Quan qualifies the deliberate deprivation of medicine and food as the regime's "subtle strategem to suppress political prisoners." He quotes the examples of Pham Van Dang, a prisoner with high blood pressure who died working in the "Brick brigade" because the prison authorities ignored the Camp doctor's plea to exempt him from heavy labor, and that of Tran Huu Cong, who was left to agonize for three months without any medical treatment before he finally died in A20 Camp.

Pham Van Thanh's White Paper is divided into four chapters: 1) The people's right to self-determination; 2) the problem of unity; 3) for a sustainable people-based development; 4) Human rights. The above extracts are from the chapter on human rights.

He concludes the White Paper with a four-point proposal to Communist authorities:

"1) All monks, priests and nuns in prison or under house arrest should be released; the bodies of detainees who died in prison should be returned to the next-of-kin, who should be allowed to give them a decent funeral and burial according to their choice;

"2) All political prisoners should be released. Special priority should be given to the elderly and weak, and to detainees who have served over 15 years in prison;

"3) The people's right to self-determination should be restored. General elections should be held under the supervision of the United Nations;

"4) The Vietnamese Communist Party should participate on an equal footing with other political parties in the collective task of building a free, happy and prosperous Vietnam."

* * * *

Book Review: Learning True Love by Sister Chan Khong.

(Reviewed by Virginia Baron, Fellowship magazine)

Editor's Note: We are reprinting the following review from the Nov./Dec. 1994 issue of Fellowship, the magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. The book, along with another book of Parallax Press, Love in Action by Thich Nhat Hanh, provides some good historical background on the Buddhist struggle for a more just and humane society during the years of the Vietnam War and in subsequent years.

Reviews:

Learning True Love: How I Learned and Practiced Social Change in Vietnam, by Chan Khong (Cao Ngoc Phuong), Forewords by Thich Nhat Hanh and Maxine Hong Kingston.

Parallax Press, P.O. Box 7355, Berkeley, CA 94707. 1993, 258 pages (paper) \$16.00.

Learning True Love is the life story of a Buddhist nun much loved and revered by those who have been in the peace movement long enough to remember the Vietnam War. Sister True Emptiness, Chan Khong, Cao Ngoc Phuong -- these are the names by which she is known. Sister Phuong (as we knew her before she took the decisive step of shaving her head and putting on the humble brown robe of a nun) had long distinguished herself as a leader in the Buddhist movement for religious rights, for freedom, and for peace, before she believed herself worthy of formal ordination in 1988.

The eighth of nine children, Phuong was born in a village on the Mekong Delta in 1938 to a family of landowners and village leaders. Even in childhood, she tells us, she struggled against authority, taking stands against the traditional patterns into which every Vietnamese female child was born. Growing up in the chaos created by the power struggle between French military occupiers and the communist Viet Minh People's Army, Phuong witnessed at an early age the consequences for civilians of being caught in a war between ideologies. As a teenager, she started work to alleviate suffering in the slums of Saigon. Ever since those days of distributing food, aiding the sick, and teaching children and adults, she has committed herself to a Buddhist practice of social change.

In 1959, perhaps the most significant step of her never dull and often turbulent life took place when

she signed up for a course given by a young Zen monk, Thich Nhat Hanh. This meeting marked the beginning of what was to become a powerful partnership, one that can be credited with affecting positively the destinies of many, especially the Vietnamese and Americans, over the course of the last three and a half decades.

In 1968, while experiencing war firsthand, seeing those close to her fall victim to its violence, Phuong made the difficult decision to leave for the West, where she believed she could be more effective in obtaining relief supplies for local Buddhist rescue committees. Her acceptance of Thich Nhat Hanh's invitation to become his assistant in Paris, where he was representing the Unified Buddhist Church and informing people about the real situation in Vietnam, plunged her into a very different life -- of conferences, speaking, organizing, fundraising -- all for the benefit of those she left behind in Vietnam.

She never abandoned these causes, even long after war's end. In the last several years, she has joined Thay Nhat Hanh (Thay is Vietnamese for "Teacher") in the nurture and development of young Buddhists in this country and abroad. She has taken part in and led countless retreats at Plum Village, the community she and Thich Nhat Hanh founded in France, as well as in many countries in Europe, Asia, and North America. Sister Chan Khong has tirelessly cultivated committees worldwide to support severely malnourished children, refugees, flood and typhoon victims, and those who suffer from human rights violations.

Longtime FOR members will find a number of friends on these pages -- Al Hassler, Laura Hassler, Jim Forest, A.J. Muste, the Berrigans, Joan Baez, Daniel Ellsberg. Memories of the war years, painful and spirited, will be jogged by many of the events described. And for those who have not had the privilege, please meet a treasured jewel:

"Who is Chan Khong, Sister True Emptiness? Who is Cao Ngoc Phuong? She is made of her ancestors, the land called Vietnam, the air, the suffering, the friendship, the teachings, the cruel ignorance of the war makers, and the love and understanding of several previous teachers and friends during her first thirty years in that spot of the world, and then another twenty years among many bodhisattvas in the West. The experiences in this book are the collective experiences of all those who have shared my life with me."

Sister Chan Khong presents her story simply -- the record of a troubled time, but also one of courage and determination that would be rare in any age.

Virginia Baron

Editorial: Human Rights in Vietnam Today (continued from page 2)

Some examples of non-violent dissidents, advocates of democracy in Vietnam:

- Dr. Nguyen Dan Que. A 52-year-old endocrinologist and the only member of Amnesty International in Vietnam. He was sentenced to 20 years in prison in Nov. 1991 for leading a non-violent pro-democracy movement.

- Prof. Doan Viet Hoat. Former rector of the Buddhist Van Hanh University in Saigon. He was sentenced last year to 15 years imprisonment for editing four issues of a newsletter, Freedom Forum, and leading a group of pro-democracy intellectuals. He was recently moved to a camp in the north after a number of statements of his were smuggled out of prison and circulated abroad.

- Thich Tue Sy and Thich Tri Sieu. These two prominent Buddhist monks were sentenced in 1988 to 20 years in prison for their opposition to the government. They are among Vietnam's most prominent Buddhist scholars.

- Doan Thanh Liem. Liem is a lawyer and a lay Catholic who worked with Saigon orphans during the war. He was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment in 1992 for "anti-socialist propaganda". An open letter urging his release, signed by 125 former anti-war activists (including Tom Hayden) was published in the New York Times, July 10, 1992.

- Ly Truong Tran. A 70-year-old former "third force" dissident leader in South Vietnam's senate. He has been imprisoned since 1987 for belonging to a human rights organization.

All of the above prisoners are reported to be in poor health as a result of their incarceration. There are many other political prisoners in Vietnam, although no one seems to know how many. The smuggled-out "White Paper" of Pham Van Thanh (discussed in this issue) indicates there are at least 1,000.

The second concern we raise here concerns the government's policy toward religion, most particularly its treatment of clergy. This policy varies:

1. The Hoa Hao Buddhist Church, representing about 1 million followers in the Mekong Delta Region, was abolished by the government in June 1975. Most leaders of the other major indigenous religion of Vietnam, the Cao Dai, have also been arrested.

2. The Unified Buddhist Church, the major Buddhist organization in South Vietnam during the war, was dissolved by the government in Nov. 1981 and forcibly incorporated into a government-sponsored

Buddhist organization, the Vietnam Buddhist Church, which is now the only officially recognized Buddhist organization in the country. Several Buddhist monks have been placed under house arrest or in prison for protesting this policy, including the two most prominent monks in Vietnam, Thich Huyen Quang and Thich Quang Do, both of whom were nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978 by Mairead Corrigan and Betty Williams. Several monks have been imprisoned over the last two years for their support of these monks and for the right of the Unified Buddhist Church to exist. The latest news is that Venerable Thich Quang Do will be brought to trial, apparently for his public dissent from the government's violation of human rights; and that Venerable Thich Huyen Quang has been moved to a ruined temple in a remote mountainous region of Quang Ngai Province in Central Vietnam.

3. The Protestant Church in Vietnam has suffered severe restrictions, particularly among ethnic minority believers in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, where most churches have been closed. Several laypeople and clergy have been arrested for trying to organize house church meetings.

4. The Catholic Church, representing about 10% of Vietnam's population, has suffered the most severe restrictions in trying to gain government approval for the appointment of priests and bishops in the country. Thus, some dioceses have remained vacant of a bishop for several years and have suffered a severe shortage of priests, especially in the North. The 1993 U.S. State Department report says, for example, that in Haiphong province, there are only 15 priests to serve 150,000 Catholics.

It should be also noted that the shortage of clergy and of schools to train clergy is a problem for other religions as well. The government Resolution 69 requires prior government approval for virtually all forms of religious activities in Vietnam, and most property of religious institutions remain under government control, including churches, seminaries, libraries and orphanages.

Now that the U.S. and Vietnam have established diplomatic relations and are moving toward other issues, such as Most Favored Nation Status, it is time to consider applying more pressure on the Vietnamese government leaders to end human rights abuses, as reflected in the legal system, the punishment of dissidents and continued restrictions on religions. If we wait too long we might find we have no more leverage to affect positive change in Vietnam.

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