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*A plea for action today, tomorrow, this week
from the International Committee of Conscience
of the Fellowship of Reconciliation.*

There are upward of 200,000 political prisoners in the prisons, jails, and interrogation (torture) centers of South Vietnam. They include Communists and non-Communists and anti-Communists; people who approve the military struggle of the National Liberation Front (Vietcong) and people who have adhered rigorously to nonviolent means of resisting the war and the government of President Nguyen Van Thieu, peasants and intellectuals, Buddhist monks and nuns, lawyers, students, labor leaders. At least half of them have never been formally charged, much less tried and convicted. They have one thing in common: opposition to the war and to the repressive Thieu government.

Thousands more have been arrested in the past few weeks. Since word of an imminent settlement of the war, Thieu has been arresting thousands more, trying to make a clean sweep of the ablest leaders of the non-Communist nationalists who are South Vietnam's best hope for a democratic future.

Are they being "liquidated"? Disquieting reports have begun to come in that Thieu's statement that "we must eliminate unreliable elements" is being implemented through the wholesale murder of the leadership elements among these prisoners. The reports have not been confirmed; the trouble with a police state like South Vietnam is that by the time the rumors can be confirmed, the victims are dead. The evidence is sufficiently convincing, however, that the highly responsible Amnesty International has sounded an alarm, calling on all four parties to adopt a protocol protecting the prisoners.

It is obvious that these actions reflect President Thieu's determination to retain his power, and to do so by simply eliminating the ablest leaders of his opposition, regardless of whether they are "Communists" or not. WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE, HORRIFYINGLY, THAT THE "BLOOD BATH" OF WHICH PRESIDENT NIXON HAS SPOKEN SO OFTEN SEEMS LIKELY TO BE THE WORK OF HIS ALLY, PRESIDENT THIEU, WITH AMERICAN ACQUIESCENCE AND SUPPORT!

The Thieu government has complete control of the prison system/and police. American advisors and officers reportedly no longer are associated with this aspect of Saigon's regime, and so cannot directly control or moderate this program. (Though there is little reason to suppose that they would anyway; many of the prisoners were captured by the infamous American-directed Operation Phoenix.)

The end-the-war agreement announced by Hanoi and confirmed by Henry Kissinger provided for the release of (military) prisoners of war of both sides, but left the fate of these civilians prisoners to subsequent negotiations between the NLF/PRG and Saigon. This provides no safeguard for the prisoners whatever.

WE MUST TRY TO RAISE A THUNDEROUS VOICE OF PROTEST FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD, DIRECTED TO ALL FOUR PARTIES BUT ESPECIALLY TO SAIGON AND WASHINGTON, TO TRY TO PREVENT THIS AMERICAN-BOUGHT, SAIGON-MADE BLOODBATH. (SEE OVER)

WHAT MUST BE DONE

There is neither time nor money to mount a large, centrally organized campaign. If anything is to be done, it must be by concerned men and women all over the world, acting with passion and imagination. Protests must pour into the White House in Washington, Independence Palace in Saigon, the offices of the North Vietnamese and Provisional Revolutionary Government delegations in Paris. Here are some things to do!

In the United States

Your Senators and Congressmen are probably at home now. Wait on them; press them to send their own strong protests to President Nixon, Secretary of State William B. Rogers, and to President Thieu.

Bring the situation to the attention of churches, labor unions, community groups, newspaper editors and columnists, radio and television commentators.

Mount vigils and other actions in every creative way that occurs to you. Maximum publicity may be the only hope these prisoners have.

Make sure that your own messages go, again and again, insisting that this dreadful war must not end in a new wave of horror. Send to Nyack for supplies of this leaflet (\$5 per 100) or, better, reproduce it yourself for wide distribution.

In Other Countries

It is quite likely that pressure from other countries will be more effective even than that from inside the United States, especially from America's "friends" in Western Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, the Philippines, India and so on.

Recruit the active support of members of your parliament in letters and telegrams to Presidents Nixon and Thieu especially.

Encourage individuals and other groups to take whatever actions are appropriate in your own country to make a massive publicity and mail campaign of this.

Today, tomorrow, summon your FOR or ICCV or other peace group, or recruit a group of friends, and get to work. There literally is not an hour to lose.

And an important note: This is not a campaign that can be directed or heavily serviced from headquarters; it must be done by people in the field, though we will help if we can. BUT PLEASE LET US KNOW WHAT YOU ARE DOING, AND WITH WHAT RESULTS, SO WE CAN COORDINATE PRESS RELEASES AND OTHER INFORMATION EFFORTS.

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