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Additional local chapters are in the process of being formed.
We will notify Volag of any further established affiliates.

COORDINATING COMMITTEE FOR THE RECEPTION OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS

UỶ-BAN PHỐI HỢP TIẾP ĐÓN TÙ-NHÂN CHÍNH-TRỊ VIỆT-NAM

MEMORANDUM

TO : Member Organizations, Coordinating Committee
Local Political Prisoners Reception Committees
Vietnamese American MAAs
Vietnamese-language media and press

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Information and
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Dao Van Binh

FROM : Nguyen Ngoc Bich, Planning Subcommittee

SUBJECT : ROLE OF LOCAL RECEPTION COMMITTEES

DATE : January 10, 1990

We have received several requests for clarification of the role of the local political prisoners reception committees. The present memo is to address this question.

When the Coordinating Committee was formed in April 1989 it was determined that there would be two levels of coordination: one at the national level, and that is the function of the Coordinating Committee; and one at the local level, because resettlement is essentially a local function, and that is the function of the local reception committees.

The National Coordinating Committee

The national Coordinating Committee is in charge of gathering information on who is coming and where the person(s) is/are going to be resettled. This information would then be communicated to the various local reception committees.

Functions of the Local Reception Committee

With the information it receives the local Reception Committee would get in touch with the families and/or Volags which would be responsible for the initial resettlement of the political prisoner(s) in question and their families (if any). This is to offer:

- 1/ The Vietnamese community's solidarity with the newcomer(s) and their families in view of their long suffering after the end of the Vietnam War in 1975.
- 2/ Volunteer help for the many little things that the newcomer families might need, for instance, transportation assistance, apartment hunting, clothing and household utensils, registration for English classes, job hunting, etc. (In other words, the local Reception Committee can serve many of the functions that would normally devolve on a regular sponsor or sponsoring group.)
- 3/ Long-range companionship and counseling (if called for), an essen-

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tial component in view of the many years of isolation and prison camp condition undergone by the political prisoners. This help is crucial also in view of the long years of separation of the prisoners from their families. All of this is made worse by the necessity of adapting to a second culture and language.

In concrete terms the above offer boils down to:

- Number (1) means that the Local Reception Committee is willing to organize a small party consisting of community leaders and other interested community persons to go to the airport and greet the newcomer(s) and their families, to make them feel that they have not been forgotten, to express our solidarity with them. Additionally, the Committee may organize a more formal reception, for instance, a dinner or reception with many people invited. The Committee could also organize social visits to make the newcomer(s) and their families feel "at home."
- Number (2) is self-explanatory. This kind of volunteer help could last several months.
- Number (3) is expected to last beyond the initial resettlement period of a few months to a year.

In all of the above there may be money involved but it is expected that the local Reception Committees raise that money on their own so as not to burden anyone else and that the help will be forthcoming at no cost to the newcomer(s) and their families.

The whole reception effort is a volunteer effort by the Vietnamese community offered by earlier refugees and immigrants from Vietnam to their former colleagues and comrades-in-arms, whose distinction is to have suffered more than us in the wake of the communist takeover of South Vietnam. As it is an offer the families of the newcomer(s) are totally free to accept it or reject it. The Local Reception Committees will not impose their will on anyone or contradict the wishes of the families involved.

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We hope that the above clarifies the position of the Coordinating Committee for the Reception of Vietnamese Political Prisoners as well as the articulation of the respective role of the national Coordinating Committee as distinct from the local Reception Committees.