

In addition, Than Vu has been a strong link between the project and the mental health center.

In summary the Vietnamese Reeducation Camp Detainees Project has been successful in meeting the project goals. Staff believe that this special group of refugees have made excellent progress in becoming adjusted to their new country. Perhaps the most important accomplishment of the project has been to provide a meeting place and time for group members to get together to share their struggles, to have a good time and to be able to relax and speak Vietnamese.



HỘI GIA-ĐÌNH TÙ NHÂN CHÍNH-TRỊ VIỆT-NAM

FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 5435, ARLINGTON, VA. 22205-0635

Telephone: (703) 560-0058 * Fax: (703) 204-0394

August 21, 1992

Hội Đồng Quản Trị
Board of Directors

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TRẦN KIM DUNG

Ms. Ann Morgan
RP/TR-SA1
Bureau for Refugee Programs
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Ms. Morgan:

We are writing to you on behalf of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association. It has just been brought to our attention that the Department of State will institute a training program for the Vietnamese political prisoners, especially for only the "free cases" (involving those political prisoners who do not have families and/or relatives in the United States), and send them to the Philippines for an approximate 3 month training period.

We have thoroughly enjoyed a very close working relationship with the Bureau for Refugee Programs and the Department of State. We have appreciated the support and encouragement received from the Department of State in their understanding of our long separation from our loved ones.

It is our hope that the new training program will be successful and truly assist the political prisoners as they begin the new transition towards freedom and experience an opportunity to rebuild a new life in a free land.

However, on behalf of the Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association's membership in the United States, Vietnam and around the world, we would like to request a meeting with you to discuss the issues and logistics of this program as well as to convey to you the concerns and desires expressed by the political prisoners who will be involved.

We would prefer to have a meeting after September 3, 1992; preferably on a Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon, if possible.

Ms. Ann Morgan
RP/TR-SA1
Bureau for Refugee Programs
Department of State
Page Two
August 21, 1992

Members of our delegation who have been identified to attend the meeting include:

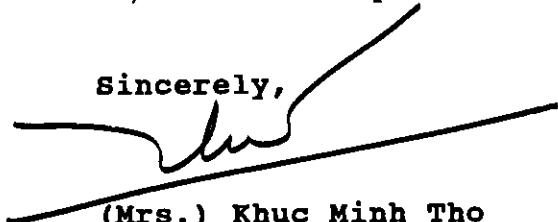
Dr. Le Xuan Khoa
President of IRAC

Ms. Trinh Ngoc Dung
Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho
Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners
Association

We would appreciate your consideration and response to this request as soon as possible.

Should you have any questions and/or concerns please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Khuc Minh Tho', written over a horizontal line.

(Mrs.) Khuc Minh Tho
President

AGENDA

We have been ~~informed by the State Department~~ that political prisoners and their families classified as Free Cases (i.e. with no relatives or sponsors in the U.S.) will be sent for a three month English training in Bataan, Philippines.

We would appreciate getting some clarification and confirmation of the following issues:

- 1) Definition of a free case: Would a former political prisoner (FPP) who is sponsored by a friend and has a signed agreement of support still be classified as a free case?
- 2) Processing procedures: What are the steps involved in Vietnam and in the U.S. to process free cases? How long are the procedures expected to last?
- 3) Medical examination: Would a FPP be allowed to leave Vietnam without delay after being successfully interviewed and once medical clearance is completed? In case a FPP needs further medical treatment, would he be allowed to leave Vietnam to seek treatment in the U.S.?
- 4) English training: Is it mainly a language instruction or does it also include skills training? Is the program sufficiently intensive and of appropriate length to provide the FPP the necessary conditions to find a job once in the U.S.? Are diplomas granted in the Philippines recognized in the U.S.? Would it not be more efficient to conduct this training in the U.S. rather than in the Philippines as supported by surveys done by the State Department (see attached documents)
- 5) Treatment of recently released FPPs: Does the rule of mandatory three month English training apply to the 145 FPPs released between 9/91 and 5/92 (one has since passed away after release from re-education camp)? Since many of them may have serious health problems due to their extensive imprisonment, further delay of their resettlement in the U.S. could have grave consequences for some, including death.
- 6) Treatment of FPPs coming from other countries: Could you tell us whether the treatment of FPPs from other countries follow the same procedures as what we have discussed earlier?

PROPOSAL

The issues raised above highlight a number of important concerns. Together with the evidence obtained through of surveys conducted by the Center for Applied Statistics (under the sponsorship of the State Department) which indicate an unanimous preference among recently arrived FPPs for direct settlement in the U.S., we would like to make the following recommendation:

linguistics

"Allow all FPPs to leave Vietnam immediately after their medical check up and have their skills and language training done in the U.S. rather than in the Philippines".

This option provides FPPs the benefit of obtaining the necessary language and skills training without the cost of having to make two adjustments (once upon arrival in the Philippines and later at the time of permanent settlement in the U.S.). It also avoids the negative impact on the health status of those FPPs who need immediate medical care in the U.S.



HOI GIA-DINH TU-NHAN CHINH-TRI VIETNAM
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P.O. BOX 5435, Arlington, VA 22205-0635
Tel: (703) 560-0058 - FAX: (703) 204-0394

FAX COVER SHEET

DATE: August 24, 1992

TO : Bill Fleming
Thomas Raezer

FAX #: 202-663-1061

FROM: Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association

NO. OF PAGES include cover sheet: 06

SUBJECT:

"For your information"

Tho

For Bill Fleming: *P.B.* . Gửi anh Bill xem bài báo của
tờ báo Văn nghệ Tiền Phong về các
trại ở Philippines -



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August 21, 1992

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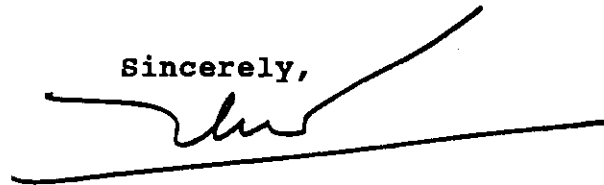
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Sincerely,

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(Mrs.) Khuc Minh Tho
President



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FAX COVER SHEET

DATE: August 24, 1992

TO : Thomas Raezer
Bill Fleming

FAX #: 202-663-1061

FROM: Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association

NO. OF PAGES include cover sheet: 3

SUBJECT:

"For your information"

Please give me a call. Thanks.

Tho (703)358-5154

Ms. Ann Morgan
RP/TR-SA1
Bureau for Refugee Programs
Department of State
Page Two
August 21, 1992

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FILE	FILE TYPE	OPTION	TEL NO.	PAGE	RESULT
036	TRANSMISSION		92026631061	05	E-1)

ERRORS

- 1) HANG UP OR LINE FAIL
- 2) BUSY
- 3) NO ANSWER
- 4) NO FACSIMILE CONNECTION



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FAX COVER SHEET

DATE: September 15, 1992

TO : - Ann Morgan
 - Bill Fleming
 - Tom Raezer

FAX #: 202-663-1061

FROM: Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association

NO. OF PAGES include cover sheet: 07

SUBJECT: Draft minutes of our meeting on September 15, 1992

Dear Ann:

Before I send the minutes out, please check for any inaccuracies and correct them.

Thank you very much.

Tho (703) 358-5154

TO : ANN MORGAN

DOS, CAL, IRAC, FVPPA's Meeting. September 15, 1992

Minutes.

FVPPA presented a two-and-a half pages of concerns gathered from its members, community based organizations, service providers and leaders in the community regarding DOS plans to send the detainees to Bataan, Philippines.

Ann Morgan: FPPs previously had been exempted from pre-arrival training because the center was fully occupied by the Amerasians. But now, the number of Amerasians has gone down, and there is room for FPPs. Furthermore, based on the two surveys done by the Center for Applied Linguistics, Bureau for Refugee Programs understands more about FPPs, also based on letters BRP received asking why not offer this training to FPP. There were always different points of view. Some said "yes", it is better for them to go there, while, others said "no" they should go directly to the US. That is also the reason why BRP talked to FPPs, MAAs and others to see how they feel about it. Based on based on CAL's two surveys, Ambassador Lyman decided to do a pilot program, for a selected group, with a limited number -- free cases -- only. Then BRP will do a vigorous assessment. It may be continue or drop the program by this time of next year. It is only a pilot program.

In answering questions raised by FVPPA and IRAC that when this program will start, BRP said probably in January or March, 1993. It is now pending an OK from the Philippines. The decision has been made for the "Best Interest of the FPPs".

FVPPA asked how does BRP separate free cases from family reunification cases, and how "free cases" are defined? For example, those who have friends, or whom camarade in arms sponsor, are they considered free case or family reunifications?

BRP: They will be given a choice at the interview whether they want to join friends or families; otherwise, they can be free cases if they did not join any of the relatives or friends here. After the interview and medical check-up, those who do not want to join friends, relatives, can go directly to Bataan, instead of waiting in Viet Nam for their document to go to Bangkok to get assurances. Normally, it will take 2-3 months. They can go to the Philippines to study and the assurance process will be done while they are there, so they will not lose any time. "This is the only difference".

FVPPA and IRAC: What percentage of free cases are there among the FPPs caseload? BRP: based on statistics, it is about 25%, or from 400 to 500 of the 2,000 per month.

FVPPA: How long is the training and what is in it? BRP FPPs will study 6 to 8 hours a day for 12 weeks - ELS and Cultural Orientation, taught by qualified teachers. A program like this will be four or five times expensive if it is conducted in the US.

FVPPA: They should be treated the same. They should not be singled out as free cases since they have the same needs, and they have been handicapped by having no ties in the US. They face all kinds of problem before they get through with the interview in Viet Nam. Now they have another hurdle. They want to get on with their new lives; they have no time to adjust to the Philippines, and readjust when they come here. We have every type of training in the US.

BRP: No, we have heard that the waiting list for ESL is months. The decision is made! Are you willing to be an advisor to the curriculum development committee. Maybe you can help build a suitable curriculum for the FPPS.

There are five staff from the Bataan who will be here visiting five sites, to meet with detainees and states and service providers to find out about FPPs needs.

FVPPA: We will have to consult with our people and get back to you at a later date.

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AGENDA

FOR MEETING WITH

**ANN MORGAN, DIRECTOR
TRAINING OFFICE**

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

September 15, 1992

We come today to convey grave concerns from our former political prisoners, their families, relatives, friends, and particularly our Vietnamese community and the service provider agencies. Our concern centers around the training in the Philippines for the Vietnamese political prisoners (free cases). Basically, what we are asking is that:

"We want our former political prisoners and their families to come directly to the United States. We feel that economically it would be more cost effective to have them route directly to the United States, in addition to the following reasons listed below.

The reasons are as follows:

1. Former prisoners experience all kinds of trouble and have many disadvantages from the time they get out of re-education to the time they arrive at their local areas, receive their exit visa, interview, receive their medical check-up and get on the manifest. There are entirely too many hurdles along the way for these people who have spent at least 3-5 years waiting for their departure. The camp is in the Philippines; and the Philippines is not the United States, thus the camp is not a free land in the true meaning of the word. The camp causes bitter and unpleasant memories as they reflect on the time spent in reeducation. Most of these remembrances are very painful and would rather be forgotten as quickly as possible. We are interested in expediting their freedom and provide them with practical experiences. We are available to take them shopping and guide them through the banking process; they should not have to spend months in the Philippines to learn the United States system. In addition, it is our understanding that they have access to Agency Resettlement once they arrive.

They want to get to the free country as quickly as possible to rebuild their lives and get on with a normal life. They have been waiting for their freedom for 17 years and "a day free is worth more than a thousand days in camp."

The free case people certainly feel badly when they have to go through camp while their friends, who have families, can go directly; they view it as being treated differently...as if they are further being punished for not having any U.S. ties. They feel as though they have no voice or anyone to speak for them.

2. If the Department of State plans to send them to Bataan, what will be the schedule and the curriculum? Please define who are considered "free cases"? How many among the 2,000 leaving per month will be free cases?

Can they fly to the Philippines as soon as their interviews and medical clearance are completed? Regardless of the numbers - 50, 100, 200...do they have to wait to make up a full load?

3. Definition of a free case: Would a former political prisoner, who is sponsored by a friend, and has a signed agreement of support, still be classified as a free case? (See attached documents).

4. Processing procedures: What are the steps involved in Vietnam and in the United States to process free cases? How long are the procedures expected to last?

5. Medical examination: Would a former political prisoner be allowed to leave Vietnam, without delay, after being successfully interviewed and received medical clearance?

6. English training: Is this mainly language instruction or does it also include skills training? Is the program sufficiently intensive and of appropriate length to provide the former political prisoner the necessary conditions to secure a job once in the United States? Would it not be more efficient to conduct this training in the United States, rather than in the Philippines, as supported by surveys done by the State Department?

7. Treatment of recently released former political prisoners: Does the rule of mandatory three-months of English training apply to the former political prisoners released between 9/91 and 5/92 (one has since passed away after release from re-education camp)?

8. Treatment of former political prisoners coming from other countries: Could you tell us whether the treatment of former political prisoners from other countries follow the same procedures as what we have discussed earlier?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The issues presented highlight a number of important concerns. Together with the evidence obtained through surveys conducted by the Center for Applied Linguistics (under the auspices of the State Department) which indicate a unanimous preference among recently arrived former political prisoners for direct settlement in the United States, we would like to make the following recommendation:

"Allow all former political prisoners to leave Vietnam immediately after their medical check-up and have their skills and language training done in the United States rather than in the Philippines."

This option provides former political prisoners the benefit of obtaining the necessary language skills and training without the cost of having to make two adjustments (once upon arrival in the Philippines and later at the time of permanent settlement in the United States). It also is the most cost effective method and it avoids the negative impact on the health and mental health of those former political prisoners.

CONCLUSION

As always, we wish to express our gratitude and appreciation for the opportunity you have afforded us to present our issues and concerns regarding this matter. We are hopeful that all due consideration will be given to the suggestions made and that the ultimate decisions will be for the good of the former political prisoners in their quest for freedom.

Những Tệ Trạng Bên Trong
CÁC TRẠI TỶ NẠN Ở PHILIPPINES

● TIÊN TRỌNG DẠ VŨ

A Survey of the Pre-Arrival Training Needs of Former Political Prisoners from Vietnam

Project Description

During the next several years, up to 100,000 former political prisoners (FPPs) and their family members are expected to enter the U.S. In the past, FPPs and their families have entered the U.S. directly from Vietnam without attending the Department of State-funded pre-arrival language and cultural orientation program in the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC). The FPP population was exempted from this training due to a lack of space and funds to expand the facility. Anticipating that space will become available soon, the Department of State has asked the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL) to undertake a survey to assess the desirability of offering pre-arrival training specifically designed for FPPs and their family members.

An earlier study conducted by CAL looked at FPPs' backgrounds in Vietnam, their expectations about life in the U.S., and their initial resettlement experiences. The study, completed in early FY 1992, showed that FPPs are being resettled at a time when social services for refugees are at an all time low, and that FPPs and their family members, while not a population in crisis, have resettlement needs that are not being met. Findings suggested that at least some of the FPPs' needs — in particular, their need upon arrival for better information about resettlement and their wives' and children's need for English — could be addressed in a pre-arrival training program.

The upcoming survey, which will take place from January to June, 1992, will collect data from resettled FPPs and from service providers at the local, state, and national levels. Data will be gathered regarding: 1) attitudes of concerned parties regarding pre-arrival training for FPPs and their family members and 2) pre-arrival training needs of FPPs and their family members. In addition, information will be gathered concerning the prospective components of such a program.

Data will be gathered through telephone interviews from the following sources:

- Directors (or designates) of national voluntary agencies involved in FPP resettlement;
- Directors (or designates) of national governmental and non-governmental agencies that play a role in FPP resettlement;
- State refugee coordinators in states with high concentrations of FPPs;
- Local service providers involved in FPP resettlement in sites with high concentrations of FPPs.
- FPPs resettled in sites with high concentrations of FPPs between January 1990 and January 1992.

For further information, contact the Refugee Service Center, Center for Applied Linguistics, at (202) 429-9292.

CENTER FOR ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS, INC.

210 Mt. Avenue, Manila, Philippines
Tel. 50-09-13

Manila, September 16, 1992

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho
President
Families of Vietnamese
Political Prisoners Association
VA 22205, USA

Dear Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho:

Sister Pascale has asked me to provide you with some information regarding the use of Bataan camp for the HO Program prior to their resettlement in the States.

Living and working side by side with the refugees since 1989 I do not consider refugee camp a healthy environment for any one. In refugee camp the refugees are being subjected to rules and regulations which are more strict than those in a normal society. Family crisis is the most common problem seen in the camp due to lack of basic needs such as privacy, food, water, medicines

What do refugees usually gain in the refugee camp? If not dependency, fear, apprehensions, humiliation ... And what do they lose? If not their dignity, self esteem, self reliance, self confidence, and human rights ... You may say that these expolitical prisoners are not "refugees" therefore they should be treated differently I wish this is the case

There are indeed countless problems that may happen during their stay in the Philippines. These may delay their departure. None of them wants to be in the camp a day unless they have to. Our expolitical prisoners are suffocated from freedom in many reeducation camps. Why are they in their agonies?

I hope this letter answers your quest providing the best assistance that has been forgotten by most

Sincerely yours,

Margarita Tran
Sr. Margarita Tran B1
CADP, Inc.
FAX # (00632) 50-0

*2 vò chuy
k dia nhó tui
ngay 7 may 1992
281/4913 le van sy
P. 11. Q-T. Buis
10 AM.*

CENTER FOR ASSISTANCE TO DISPLACED PERSONS, INC.

210 ~~St~~ Avenue, Manila, Philippines
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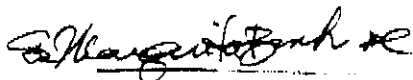
Living and working side by side with the refugees since 1989 I do not consider refugee camp a healthy environment for any one. In refugee camp the refugees are being subjected to rules and regulations which are more strict than those in a normal society. Family crisis is the most common problem seen in the camp due to lack of basic needs such as privacy, food, water, medicines

What do refugees usually gain in the refugee camp? If not dependency, fear, apprehensions, humiliation ... And what do they lose? If not their dignity, self esteem, self reliance, self confidence, and human rights ... You may say that these expolitical prisoners are not "refugees" therefore they should be treated differently. I wish this is the case.

There are indeed countless problems that may happen during their stay in the Philippines. These may delay their departure. None of them wants to stay one ~~mo~~ day in the camp unless they have to. Our expolitical prisoners have been suffocated from freedom in many reeducation camps. Why do we want to prolong their agonies?

I hope this letter answers your question. Thank you for your tireless effort in providing the best assistance to our expolitical prisoners who in many ways have been forgotten by most of us.

Sincerely yours,



Sr. Margarita Tran Binh, DC
CADP, Inc.
FAX # (00632) 50-09-13

CORRUPT PRACTICES IN THE REFUGEE CAMPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

There are two refugee camps in the Philippines, one on the Bataan peninsula, called the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC) and the other on the island of Palawan.

BATAAN

The Bataan facility is a temporary shelter for persons approved for resettlement in foreign countries. At Bataan, they are supposed to be receiving language training and orientation in preparation for their new lives. Some residents have legally emigrated from their homeland, but unfortunately, many obtained emigration/immigration status by fraud and misrepresentation. The camp population is of different ages, and from different walks of life.

These people presently live in tension, worries, fright and disorder. They crowd in 12 areas, living in those barracks-style housing in which 10 or 12 families share a common housing bloc. Daily activities are a medium for conflicts. Because people have been in camps so long and now again confined in small spaces, just an uncivil word can blow up into a fight and sometimes end in death.

AMERASIANS

A number of the camp residents are Amerasians, who left Viet Nam with inferiority complexes. They often have low self-esteem, lack formal education, and come from a poor family background. It is very hard to find a good image among these. At Bataan, 2/3 of the population are Amerasians. At one time, they were invaluable assets in Viet Nam, because merely having a relationship to an Amerasian was a person's ticket to emigrate to the United States. Selling and buying "relationships" to these people is a prosperous "industry".

Upon arriving at Bataan, their "Golden Dream" is shattered and turned into a nightmare. As a result they join their friends in gangs, act out, and abuse their parents. Worst of all are young girls, between 18-20; they have put up a lot of money to marry Amerasian boys. Suddenly, they have found that they lost everything. The boys whom they married have formally declared that they were not actually married; then the boys take off, leaving the girls behind, pending repatriation. Some have been there since 1989.

EXTORTION AND ROBBERY

One can say that extortion and robbery are the most common and familiar crimes in Bataan.

There is a lady whose name is Mui, who was robbed of all of her jewelry in front of everybody's eyes, and right at her living

quarter. When she fought back, they (5 Philipinos) shot at her legs several times. After taking all her money and jewelry, they leisurely walked away as though nothing happened. Nobody said anything. In another case, Ms. Thai Bich Ha and her brother Loc, were robbed in front of the UNHCR office. When they screamed and fought back, the robbers fired two shots at her back and one at her brother's arm. At Bataan, this seems to be normal. Nobody takes this as a criminal act.

Many robbery and rape incidents happen on less densed populated roads in this camp. The criminals are Philipinos. Philipino police in Bataan are notorious for their bribery. Any crime committed there can be bought off by dollars.

In sum, Bataan is a temporary, but unsafe place. Security and order is just a joke.

PALAWAN

There are approximately 3,000 boat people living in Palawan. Most of these people came after the cut-off date - March 1989, and are considered legal invaders. They have to be screened to determine whether they are political or economic refugees.

The screening method done by CID Philippines is very strict, unfair, unjust and corrupt. Practically speaking, for a boat person to be screened in as a political refugee, he/she must meet two criteria: (1) money, (2) sex.

When one is called upon to appear at the interview desk, one often sees a CID personnel and a translator. This translator often is half and half - not real Vietnamese native speaker, nor real Vietnamese. Therefore, even if one meets the criterion, he/she still can be out if he/she does not make the "judges" happy. The following two Vietnamese female cases are typical:

Ms. Ho Thi Th's father was tortured to death in re-education camp, and their family's property was confiscated by the Vietnamese communists. Ms. Nguyen Thi T.N.'s father was in re-education for over 4 years, and her husband escaped by boat and has been missing since 1978; her son is in the U.S. These two women were screened out because they refused to go to bed with their Philipino interviewers. The two women went to the UNHCR office and banged their heads against the column to take their lives. Fortunately, some one saw and held them back. Mrs. Leonardo C. Aguilar comforted them by saying that "Had you two got a few thousand dollars, this would not have happened".

These situation continue, but nobody seems to care; worse still, people are in the stage of "refugee fatigue". We, the people, can we just overlook it?

An excerpt from Tien Phong magazine
Volume 400: 16-30 September 1992

VẤN ĐỀ: "CÓ NÊN CHUYỂN ANH EM CỨ TỬ NHÂN CHÍNH TRỊ H.O. CỦA BATAAN TRƯỚC KHI QUA MỸ?"

(Hôm 12 tháng 9, 1992, bà Khúc Minh Thở, chủ tịch Cứu Tử Nhân Chính Trị Việt Nam viết thư hỏi ý kiến cơ quan tu thiện Công Giáo CADP chuyên giúp người tỵ nạn ở Phi Luật Tân về vấn đề: có nên đưa anh em H.O. qua Bataan trước học hết văn hóa để tránh khủng hoảng trước khi đến Mỹ. Thấy mặt CADP, Sr. Margarita Trần Bình D.C. - đã và đang làm việc tại Bataan từ 1989 đến nay - đã phúc đáp thư với bà Khúc Minh Thở. Dưới đây là ý kiến và giải thích thêm của Sr. Margarita Trần Bình về vấn đề này.)

Tại sao lại đặt vấn đề chuyển Cứu Tử Nhân Chính Trị VNCH qua trại Bataan vào lúc này mà không áp dụng ngay từ 2 năm trước.

Bạn có thể cho rằng tôi làm căng, lồi thối, phát ngôn bừa bãi, không thông hiểu thời cuộc, nên có thói đồ "dưa cọt mà nghe". Cứu Tử Nhân Chính Trị đi Mỹ gần hết rồi còn đâu nữa mà gởi qua trại Bataan. Nếu đây là sự thật thì tôi ~~đã~~ đã không mất thời giờ ngồi năn óc viết bài này làm gì.

Theo tôi được biết thì ngay từ tháng Sáu đã có ruck rích những đề nghị cho di tản H.O. qua trại Bataan. Thưa, quý vị đồng hương, khi nghe tin này, tôi rụng rời tay chân và cảm thấy choáng váng mắt mày. Tôi muốn bay qua Mỹ để gặp ông hay bà nào...cả chưa đã cho ý kiến này để trình bày với họ.

Nhưng lúc đó chưa có gì là chắc chắn cả. Rồi trước ngày tôi rời trại Bataan đi Mỹ tham dự hội nghị về vấn đề còn lại được thông báo sẽ có tin tức về H.O. vào cuối tháng 7. Rất mừng, đến cuối tháng 8, khi trở lại đất Phi, vào trại cũng thấy có diện H.O. nào ghé...thăm.

Thế rồi hôm 12 tháng 9, 1992 vừa qua, Soeur Pascale Lê Thị Triệu, Giám Đốc cơ quan CADP, nhận được điện thư của bà Khúc Minh Thở, Chủ tịch hội "Cứu Tử Nhân Chính Trị VNCH" hỏi ý kiến về việc H.O. có nên ghé qua trại Bataan để "học và nghỉ ngơi, lấy sức...và chuẩn bị tinh thần" trước khi định cả ở Mỹ.

Vì tôi làm việc ở trại Bataan từ năm 1989 nên Soeur Giám Đốc ủy nhiệm tôi việc trả lời thư và cho ý kiến. Tôi xin nhà báo cho đăng nguyên văn bức thư tiếng Anh kèm theo đây tôi đã gởi đến bà Khúc Minh Thở nhé. Vì nếu dịch, e cơ hồ hớ và khi thông dịch lời văn và ý sẽ lệch lạc...lời thối lắm...

TẠI SAO "CÓ VẤN ĐỀ" NÀY?

Một số đồng bào, đồng hương của tôi ở Mỹ cho rằng: nếu anh em H.O. được qua Bataan thì sẽ bị "shock", tránh cảnh "ngờ ngàng" khi định cư ở Mỹ sau này. Hơn nữa, có người nghĩ, chương trình học và các sinh hoạt ở trại "sẽ giúp những H.O. nhìn thấy cuộc sống ở Mỹ một cách thiết thực hơn"?

Anh em H.O. bị "shock", thậm chí có người tự tử vì thất vọng đến Mỹ trắng tay vẫn hoàn trắng, vì chuyển đở vợ gia đình - làm sao tránh được chuyện này? Tại đây chân ở Bataan có giúp được gì không?

CÓ BỐT BỊ "SHOCK" KHÔNG? CÓ LỖI GÌ KHÔNG?

Theo tôi thì KHÔNG. VÀ LỖI KHU ÍT MÀ BẤT LỖI THÌ NHIỀU, ĐÔI KHI CÒN CÓ THỂ TÀI HẠI ĐẾN TÌNH THÂN VÀ ĐÌNH TRẠ ĐẾN VIỆC TÁI ĐỊNH CỬ. Dưới đây tôi sẽ khai triển thêm những điểm trong lá thư đã gửi đến bà Khúc Minh Thở:

1. Hoàn cảnh quốc gia Phi chưa chắc đã làm cho H.O. bị "shock" vì Phi tuy nổi tiếng Anh nhưng chắc chắn không phải là Mỹ. Lý do là Phi thuộc "thế giới thứ 3" chậm tiến trong khi đó Mỹ là một "siêu cường", từ mức sống cho đến văn hóa hoàn toàn trái ngược nhau. Người Phi trong những giá trị gia đình lập thể, trong khi người Mỹ tôn sùng chủ nghĩa cá nhân...vv...

2. Hoàn cảnh trại Bataan chỉ làm anh em H.O. lo nghĩ thêm về tương lai. Ở Buluan, họ sẽ chỉ kéo dài 1 cuộc sống như khi ở Việt Nam, có một số "tự do" nhưng vẫn phải gập hạn trong khuôn khổ kỷ luật trại.

Vả lại, trong 6 tháng này sao một người có thể dể tâm trí, học tiếng Anh khi môi trường hỗn độn của trại chắc chắn sẽ chỉ phơi họ về mọi mặt, nhất là vấn đề sinh sống trong tương lai; hơn nữa họ sẽ luôn luôn băn khoăn lúc khi nào sẽ được lui định cư ở Mỹ.

Trong thời gian 6 tháng này, họ còn có thể đau lòng khám phá ra những "trường hợp" bị kẹt ở trại từ năm nay qua năm kia vì bệnh tật, phạm tội, kiện tụng, hoặc vì xúc phạm đến nhân viên điều hành trại...vv...biết nhiều song ~~nhưng~~ chỉ làm mất tinh thần thêm.

3. Chuyên thực phẩm: đồng ý là không ai phải dể mở phổi dể buồn tăn, bán tác dể có gạo trắng với cá rau dể sinh sống mỗi ngày. Tuy vậy thực phẩm không đầy đủ cho lắm, nhất là cho những gia đình đông thành niên và các em thiếu niên đang tuổi. Sống nhờ thực phẩm trại cấp thì thiếu thốn, nên phải "buồn bán" trao đổi, mà "buồn bán" có thể gây ra đủ chuyện. Gia đình thiếu thốn, chật vật có thể xảy ra cảnh "cơm không lành, canh không ngọt" - đã có người người lủ 2-3 tháng vì tội danh vớ, vì xúc phạm đến chức quyền trong ban điều hành trại. Chắc chắn "Rau Tôm Nấu Với Ruột Bâu/Chồng Chan Vớ Húp Gạt Vầu Khon Ngon" không còn thực tế trong gia đình Việt Nam của chúng ta nữa.

4. Khi phải làm việc với các chức quyền, anh em có thể cảm thấy phải bị "thanh lọc" một lần nữa. Nói dầy mọi thủ tục giấy tờ, sức khỏe đều phải bị xem xét lại. Trại tự nạn lại được tổ chức với những luật lệ riêng, những luật này nhiều khi bất công lắm lắm, người có thẩm quyền có khi giả dể, giả cam, giả đủ thủ và lệ phải nhiều khi thua cuộc. Người có quyền nhiều khi chính là người tự nạn như mình chứ không phải người bán xử dầy nhe.

Ví dụ chuyện hai ông trưởng và phó vùng: anh em đều là người Việt thể mà nhân tâm chơi trò "XIA" với nhau, tổ cáo lẫn nhau đến nhân viên ban điều hành trại người bán xử. Trước là để lấy điểm cá nhân, sau nữa là hại nhục dầy nhau ra khỏi vị trí, rồi tham quyền cố vị, nhìn bộ người trên để thủ lợi cho mình và gia đình. Hình như dân mình có đầu óc vọng ngoại, không tin nhau, luôn cúi và thối phân trần nhờ người ngoại quốc xử.

Tôi cũng muốn nói đến thái độ và cư xử khúm núm, sợ sệt, lo âu của một số vị khi phải gặp người ngoại quốc. Những chuyện này đã không, đang, xảy ra ở trại tỵ nạn sao? Tại sao chúng ta lại nên "tái di cư" cảnh đau lòng này tại đất Phi?

Hầu hết những người trong trại ai cũng lo âu sợ không được đi đúng như ý muốn; kể cả những ông trưởng trại INC (Interneighborhood Council Chairman), hay trưởng phố vùng (Neighborhood leader hay là Assistant). Ông nào cũng muốn yên thân để khỏi bị dính "list" rồi trại càng sớm càng tốt. Có ông đã nói với tôi rằng: "Họ bầu chúng tôi lên làm bình phong thời soeur ơi, quyền hành chúng tôi đâu có."

Nhìn lại nhiệm kỳ 4 tháng của mỗi nhóm đại diện trong trại những năm qua, tôi chưa thấy ai dám đứng ra bênh vực quyền lợi cho dân, ví dụ như khi bị bắt bỏ oan ức, thậm chí bị cắt rốn. Mỗi lần đi họp tôi biết có nhiều tệ đoan xã hội, những người lạm quyền đồng hương, phật giáo chịu năm này qua năm khác mà không ai dám đứng ra tố cáo; vì tố cáo chúng ai bênh vực ủng hộ cả. Tố cáo không bằng chứng hay nhân chứng thì cũng như không. Những tệ đoan này người bán xử không thể, đồn phường làm được - một bàn tay không thể tạo nên vạn tiếng vô tay. Hơn nữa ngôn ngữ bất đồng, tìm thông dịch viên rất khó: gia như có người muốn giúp đỡ mình, họ cũng phải chờ đợi với anh em xử bàn giấy này đến bàn giấy khác, như ở Việt Nam hiện nay. Cảm giác đang bị "thanh lọc" chắc chắn là không tránh khỏi.

5. Còn nếu quốc H.O. nhìn nước Mỹ qua lời nói của những Việt kiều "áo gấm về làng" thì đâu có người nào nói nước Mỹ khô, khô khan, xù xụ. Và lại làm sao họ nên tin lời những Việt kiều này khi chính bản thân H.O. chưa nhìn qua cuộc sống ở Mỹ. Tôi thiết nghĩ biết có tháng 4 năm 75 đã nói rõ cho anh em biết về bản chất của người Mỹ, đừng nghĩ rằng vì đã là quân nhân chiến đấu với họ, khi qua Mỹ sẽ được hậu đãi - quốc hội Mỹ tại chính còn không đủ lo cho dân Mỹ thì làm sao đỡ đỡ - la vào Sataan cho anh em H.O.? Và cũng không hiểu nổi làm sao một số H.O. ngày thứ tin rằng khi qua Mỹ họ sẽ được trả tiền "Rappel". Nói không đâu xa, tiền chi phí điểu hành trại đã ít, khi đến tay đồng bào còn không được bao nhiêu, huống chi là tiền "Rappel" gì đó - nếu có. Vô phúc cho anh em nào quá tin vào tin đồn.

Nếu thật sự anh em H.O. chưa được chuẩn bị đủ, tôi tin chắc đó là lỗi của chúng ta: không dám nói rõ sự thật và không biết hay không muốn. Riêng tôi phải nói những gì tôi biết là sự thật.

Tôi vẫn thường nhắc nhở mình thông cảm và chia sẻ nỗi đau với tất cả anh em đồng hương lạc vào hoàn cảnh bất hạnh. Tôi tha thiết van xin đến qui nhà báo Nhân Quyền, quý vị nào có địa vị nếu còn thuong xót quan tâm đến những anh em đồng hương này - xin lên tiếng, can thiệp, bồi tiền, gửi thư cho các Trưởng/Hạ nghị sĩ Mỹ, yêu cầu họ bãi bỏ việc chuyển anh em H.O. qua Sataan.

Năm tháng dài tù tội trong trại tù cộng sản - đoạn trường đã đủ - xin dừng hành tội anh em qua một thủ "trại" nào nữa, nhất là trại tỵ nạn.



HOI GIA-DINH TU-NHAN CHINH-TRI VIETNAM
FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 5435, Arlington, VA 22205-0635
Tel: (703) 560-0058 - FAX: (703) 204-0394

FAX COVER SHEET

DATE: September 16, 1992

TO : Ngoc Dung Trinh

FAX #: ⁴⁰¹⁻⁴⁶⁸³
~~202-252-4683~~

FROM: Families of Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association

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FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION

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SUBJECT: Thờ của Philippines

Goi tôi khi được Fax này.

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Joi Kurdi ka

Job Training Partner
Act.
(ITPA)

Ann Morgan
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Fenwick

358 5723

Meeting Sept. 15, 92

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Room # 1229

Room

1229

GEIBEL

- Tom
Prill

Ann
Lanswick

thank you letter
Honorable Antonio Carpio

Mr. Bryan Dalton ①


Mr. Charles Neary ②

Mr. Gary Wakalino ③

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