

January 13, 1997

Board Meeting and Elections

The meeting for the election of the Board of Directors and the Executive Board was held at the office of the Families of the Vietnamese Political Prisoners Association (FVPPA) on the above date. The following members were present:

Khuc Minh Tho  
Nguyen Xuan Lan  
Trinh Ngoc Dung  
Tran Kim Dung  
Truong Thi Lang Anh  
Nguyen Thi Khen  
Nguyen Van Gioi

Nguyen Quynh Giao was out of the country on travel and unable to attend the meeting, however, she gave her consent to the meeting decisions in advance.

In opening the meeting, Khuc Minh Tho, the President, reported on the activities which the Association undertook in 1995. These included:

- o consolidated the departure program for the former political prisoners
- o simplified and expedited departure procedures for the former political prisoners
- o continued our active intervention with the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Congress on behalf of the former political prisoners, refugees and their families who escaped by boat and remain in camps in the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and Hong Kong in our ongoing effort to ensure that these refugees are resettled in free countries and not forcibly repatriated to Vietnam.

o intervened with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the State Department and the Orderly Departure Program (ODP) regarding simplifying the resettlement process for the former prisoners and their families:

- a) lost documents
- b) eligibility of the unmarried over-21 sons and daughters of the former prisoners
- c) refugee eligibility and consideration for the special forces commandos who operated behind enemy lines in North Vietnam and Laos during the 60's and particularly the 1971 Lam Son 719 operation and captured as POW's but do not qualify for the HO subprogram of ODP.

o requested Congress and the State Department to approve the resettlement of family members of former political prisoners who died in camps, including widows or the children whose mothers passed away or simply disappeared

o requested Congress and the State Department to increase the budget and admission numbers dedicated to the resettlement of the former political prisoners

o requested Congress and the State Department to intervene with Vietnam to release all political prisoners to observe international standards of human rights regarding prisoners of conscience

o requested that the U.S. Government extend the deadline to accommodate the processing and admissions of the remaining caseload of all former political prisoners and their family members.

o requested that the criterion of three years of detention in prison camps be reduced to two years

o visited resettled prisoners and their families in Arizona and California during Thanksgiving and the Vietnamese New Year. Some families in these states were experiencing hardships due to the lack of employment opportunities. The purpose of these periodic visits by the Association is to inform the Vietnamese communities, former political prisoners, and our association members, about the status of current resettlement programs, policies and procedures and to

procedures to gather feedback from them about the results of resettlement efforts.

Khuc Minh Tho reported all the details of the situation in all the Asian camps in Southeast Asia. She presented detailed information regarding the physical, mental and emotional conditions of the political prisoners and the effects of the repatriation program on all refugees in the camps.

Khuc Minh Tho reported that the INS and ODP had denied many applications for admission despite these cases having fulfilled all the admissions requirements. Reasons for denials included:

- o eligibility exclusion by ODP of unmarried sons and daughters over the age of 21
- o lack of original release certificate from the camps
- o eligibility exclusion of children and widows of former political prisoners who died in camp or died after release due to the harsh conditions of the camps

Truong Thi Lang Anh, Treasurer, reported on the financial status of the Association for 1995. The report indicated that the Association has a balance of \$135.00. According to the Treasurer, the Association needs financial assistance for its ongoing business expenses, such as postage, supplies, printing, utilities and telephone/fax services.

After the President, Treasurer and the Advisor completed their reports, the Board of Directors and the Executive Board members all resigned their offices.

Khuc Minh Tho opened the meeting for discussion and election of new officers. In light of the continuing programs and negotiations concerning issues related to the former political prisoners, it was agreed by unanimous consent that the Board of Directors and Executive Board members be reappointed for another term.

Four current volunteers of the Association, Ms. Trinh Ngoc-Dung, Mrs. Thanh Hai Reyes, Mr. Pham Thanh Long, and Colonel William F. Paris III (Ref.) agreed to continue their services as volunteers. Colonel Paris will volunteer as Employment Coordinator and will help former prisoners and family members in their job search by contacting companies and employment offices.

The Association welcomed two new volunteers. The first is Mr. Sedgwick Tourison, a former U.S. Embassy employee in Vietnam

during the war era and author of the recent book "Secret War, Secret Army." Mr. Tourison is collecting all the documentation for the lost commandos both in Vietnam and the United States and coordinating with our Association in helping the lost commandos and their widows still behind in Vietnam. The second is Mr. Robert Zimmerman, a Vietnam veteran, who will help handicapped and disabled former prisoners, as he has done with Mr. Phuoc Ngoc Ho, who needs full nursing home care at the Leewood Nursing Home in Annandale, Virginia.

Mr. Thai Quy Toan, Esq., worked as a volunteer for the Association during 1995 and volunteered to continue any practicable services he can perform for the Association, particularly in his capacity as a lawyer, for the prisoners from his new residency in California.

The volunteers will assist the President of the Association in providing and disseminating information on issues and concerns to Association members, former political prisoners and the community at large. This will include attending meeting and/or making presentations at the request of the President.

After these discussions, those present voted on the new Board of Directors and members of the Executive Board. Those persons reelected and their positions are as follows:

Khuc Minh Tho	President
Nguyen Quynh Giao	Vice-President
Nguyen Van Gioi	Secretary-General
Truong Thi Lang Anh	Treasurer
Nguyen Thi Khen	Deputy Treasurer
Hiep Lowman	Advisory Committee
Nguyen Xuan Lan	Advisory Committee
Tran Kim Dung	Advisory Committee

This meeting was adjourned at 4:10 P.M. on January 13, 1996. A list of the Board of Directors and of the Executive Board is attached.

Respectfully Submitted

Mrs. Khuc Minh Tho  
President