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SUBJECT: SOUTH VIETNAMESE APPEAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AID 1114175

1. THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AFTERNOON DAILY AFTONBLADET REPORTED JAN. 11 THAT SOME 250,000 LEAFLETS HAVE BEEN DISTRIBUTED IN STOCKHOLM AND FOUR OTHER SWEDISH CITIES IN RECENT WEEKS APPEALING FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO SOUTH VIETNAM SUFFERING CHILDREN. THE APPEAL, WHICH CONTAINED A FORM FOR SUBMITTING CONTRIBUTIONS, WAS ISSUED BY THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE INFORMATION OFFICE IN STOCKHOLM (THE VIETNAM COUNCIL OF FOREIGN RELATIONS). IT CONTAINED THE NAMES OF 68 PROMINENT SWEDES WHO SUPPORTED THE APPEAL, INCLUDING 11 PROFESSORS, 32 PHYSICIANS, AND ONE APPELLATE COURT JUDGE. THE REMAINING SUPPORTERS WERE CLERGYMEN, INCLUDING A MODERATE PARTY M.P., MARTEN WERNER. UNDER THE TITLE "HELP SOUTH VIETNAM'S CHILDREN", THE APPEAL ASKED: "WHY HAS SWEDEN ONLY WANTED TO AID THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP IN NORTH VIETNAM WHICH IS FIGHTING A WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST THE COUNTRY AND PEOPLE OF SOUTH VIETNAM?"

2. ALTHOUGH THE AFTONBLADET ARTICLE DID NOT EXPLICITLY CRITICIZE THE APPEAL, IT DESCRIBED THE VIETNAM COUNCIL OF FOREIGN RELATIONS AS "A THINLY DISGUISED PROPAGANDA JAW FOR THE SAIGON REGIME IN SWEDEN". AND THE INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED BY THE NEWSPAPER'S CORRESPONDENTS WITH SEVERAL OF THE SIGNERS, ASKING THEM TO JUSTIFY THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE APPEAL, HAD A PERCEPTIBLY HOSTILE TONE.

3. EMBASSY OFFICER DISCUSSED THE APPEAL WITH TRK NHA, HEAD OF THE GVN INFORMATION OFFICE, WHO CONFIRMED THAT THE AFTONBLADET STORY WAS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT. TRAN NHA SAID AN EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE TO KEEP APPEAL AS HUMANITARIAN AND NON-POLITICAL AS POSSIBLE, AND THAT EMPHASIS HAD BEEN ON SUFFERINGS OF VIETNAMESE CHILDREN IN SOUTH RATHER THAN CONDEMNATION OF NORTH. HE ADDED THAT IN EFFORT TO RETAIN NON-POLITICAL CHARACTER OF APPEAL, HE HAD NOT ASKED ANY SWEDISH POLITICIANS TO SIGN, NOTING THAT M.P. WERNER HAD BEEN INCLUDED IN HIS ROLE AS A CLERGYMAN.

4. COMMENT: APPEAL FOR AID TO SUFFERING SOUTH VIETNAMESE CHILDREN SEEMS COMMENDABLE INITIATIVE BY LOCAL GVN OFFICE. TIMING OF APPEAL WOULD APPEAR TO BE PARTICULARLY PROPITIOUS, IN VIEW OF CURRENT NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFENSIVE, INCLUDING SEIZURE OF PROVINCIAL CAPITAL PHUOC-BINH. LOCAL MEDIA, REFLECTING GOS' TRADITIONAL HOSTILITY TO SAIGON GOVERNMENT, HAS BEEN HARD PRESSED IN RECENT WEEKS TO PROTRAY GVN AS AGGRESSOR AND VIOLATOR OF PARIS AGREEMENTS IN LIGHT OF PATENTLY AGGRESSIVE NORTH VIETNAMESE ACTIONS. AS ONE OF SIGNERS POINTED OUT TO AFTONBLADET CORRESPONDENT: "I HAVE FELT THAT OUR NEWSPAPERS DON'T TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM. NO ONE TALKS ABOUT THE TERROR AND SUFFERING IN SOUTH VIETNAM."

EMBASSY BELIEVES SUCH INITIATIVES ON PART OF SOUTH VIETNAMESE THEMSELVES, BASED ON BROAD APPEALS TO SENSE OF JUSTICE AND HUMANITARIANISM OF SWEDISH PEOPLE RATHER THAN ON EVILS OF NORTH VIETNAMESE, CONSTITUTE MOST EFFECTIVE APPROACH THAT CAN BE WKEN IN LIGHT OF ATTITUDES PREVAILING HERE. GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA REMAIN STRONGLY BIASED IN FAVOR OF HANOI, BUT SUCH EFFORTS MAY RAISE QUESTIONS IN MINDS OF SOME THOUGHTFUL SWEDES ABOUT JUSTNESS OF GOVERNMENT LINE ON VIETNAM.