

March 4, 1991

VIETNAM : REPRESSION OF DISSENT

Summary

Since the reunification of North and South Vietnam in 1975, the Communist Party of Vietnam has brooked no public dissent from its rule or policies. The Party has systematically stigmatized and punished those citizens whom it perceives as disloyal, usually under the guise of "reeducation," the most flagrant example being the long-term incarceration at the end of the war of tens, and perhaps hundreds of thousands of members of the former South Vietnamese military and civil service, along with journalists, clergy, intellectuals and political activists. The stigma persisted for many after their release from labor camps, through denial of basic rights of citizenship to them and their families.

Despite pervasive government repression, or possibly in response to it, advocacy of basic human freedoms has grown in Vietnam, which acceded to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Social and Economic Rights in 1982. This report focuses on personal accounts of dissent and repression among human rights activists, writers and artists. In October 1990 an Asia Watch team conducted 24 confidential interviews of Vietnamese in refugee camps and detention centers in Hong Kong. The cases reported draw on these interviews and reports of further recent detentions.¹

These accounts point to the continued exposure of government critics to arrest without charge and detention without trial in so-called "reeducation" camps, where inmates perform hard labor under conditions of malnutrition, abuse and lack of medical care. Other methods of punishment and control of dissidents include institutionalized discrimination through denial of basic documents that enable citizens to live, work and travel freely, and to enjoy basic public services such as education and medical care. The systematic repression of persons for non-violent expression of views should be taken into consideration by foreign governments in assessing the claims of Vietnamese seeking asylum.

¹ The cases presented are those that are particularly recent or those that so far have received little public attention. Asia Watch recognizes that many other instances of repression of dissent exist. For further information see *News From Asia Watch* "Trial of Writers, Postal Worker in Vietnam," June 16, 1989; *News from Asia Watch* "Vietnam: Update on Prisoner Cases," August 18, 1989; Amnesty International, "Vietnam: 'Renovation' (Doi Moi), the Law and Human Rights in the 1980's," February 1990, Amnesty International, "Viet Nam: Arrest and Detention of Real and Suspected Government Critics," July 1990 (ASA 41/11/90).

Background

In December 1986, the Sixth Party Congress adopted the policy of "renovation" (*doi moi*), which came to designate a broad slate of economic, legal and social reforms. Under this rubric, the Party endorsed gradual reform of the economy towards greater market orientation, amnesties for thousands of political detainees held in "reeducation" camps since 1976, promulgation of a criminal procedure code and cautious encouragement of restrained social criticism by intellectuals, artists and journalists. Still beyond the limits of acceptable criticism, however, was advocacy of a multi-party system.

Increasingly unnerved by events in Eastern Europe and the criticism even this mild loosening produced, the Party began tightening controls on expression in 1989. Party Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh, who in 1987 had urged writers and artists to expose social ills, began urging newspaper editors to tone down criticism of the party and government. In December 1989, Council of Ministers Decision 135 was widely publicized. This decision, later promulgated by the National Assembly, provided for strong repression of crime, corruption, and "those who seek to undermine political security" including "those who instigate and rally forces to oppose the lines and policies of our party and state".²

Decision 135 precipitated a series of major anti-crime campaigns continuing through 1990.³ The official press reported thousands of arrests, "surrenders" and seizures of contraband literature and tapes.⁴ Asia Watch believes that many of those arrested were targeted for their political beliefs, their associations, or non-violent expression of their views.

Modes of Repression

The repression of dissent is enforced by a variety of overtly punitive measures. These range from short term detention and release under condition of police surveillance and restricted movement to indefinite incarceration without trial in so-called "reeducation" camps. The legal basis for "reeducation through labor" was established by the Democratic Republic of Vietnam in 1961, which allowed for three year terms of detention without trial, indefinitely renewable.⁵ These rules were amended in 1976 to mandate trial or release of prisoners after three

² Editorial, *Nhan Dan* April 16, 1990 (FBIS-EAS 90-073, April 16, 1990).

³ See Alan Dawson, "Just Who's in Charge in Vietnam?" *Bangkok Post*, June 30, 1990 p. 6 (in FBIS-EAS June 6, 1990).

⁴ See, e.g. Hanoi Domestic Service, Oct. 7, 1990 in FBIS-EAS Oct. 10, 1990 (One month crime suppression drive in Ho Chi Minh City results in arrests of 55 fugitives and 229 escapees from "reeducation" centers, 443 surrenders of "suspects," some of whom help public security forces track down "accomplices," and confiscation of 120 video cassette recorders and tapes); Hanoi Domestic Service, Sept. 12, 1990 in FBIS-EAS Sept. 19, 1990 (Hanoi one month anti-crime drive to implement Decision 135 nets the "surrender" of 11 criminals "involved in reactionary organizations"; 100 others summoned for warnings); Hanoi Domestic Service Oct. 21, 1990 in FBIS-EAS Oct. 29, 1990 (Ha Bac Province Decision 135 crime sweep produces 1337 arrests and confiscation of "a huge quantity of reactionary, decadent cultural products.")

⁵ State Committee, National Assembly Resolution No. 49 NQ/TVQH June 21, 1961.

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years;⁶ however the thousands of persons held in "reeducation camps since 1975 who were released in 1987 and 1988 are evidence these rules were ignored. Further regulations in 1987 on "reeducation" and forced labor still permit administrative bodies to detain persons for six months to two years without trial, including "past or present counterrevolutionary elements who, charged with many crimes, are still stubborn and refuse to be reeducated despite the lenient policy and repeated reeducation efforts by the government."⁷

Court-imposed conviction and sentence appears to be a rarity among political detainees. Virtually every informant expressed the opinion that trials are only held where the evidence against the accused is overwhelming; otherwise public trial would serve no didactic purpose and might even embarrass the government. Informants who had been held in "reeducation" camps for political reasons were unaware of the length of their "sentence" until the day of their release. One former inmate's release papers were a form which provided different places to note time served, depending on whether the detention had been judicially or administratively ordered.

The persistent practice of detaining persons without formal charge or trial stands in contradiction to the provisions of Vietnam's codified criminal law. The Criminal Code, ratified by the National Assembly on June 27, 1985, provides that "criminal liability must be borne only by someone who has committed a crime stipulated in the Code of Criminal Law" and that "the penalty for a crime must be determined by a court."⁸ Similarly, the Criminal Procedure Code of 1989 provides that "no one may be considered guilty or forced to undergo punishment without a court judgment that has taken legal effect."⁹

Despite the apparent inconsistency, there are signs that the system of administrative detention is intended to coexist with the criminal law. Vietnam's Minister of Justice, in urging the adoption of the Criminal Code, noted that "violations of the law that do not require investigation of criminal culpability must be promptly dealt with by state agencies and social organs through disciplinary action by the mass organizations, administrative disciplinary action, civilian disciplinary action or other appropriate measures."¹⁰

Another form repression takes is denial of civil rights and entitlements. In Vietnam, inscription on a household registry document (*ho khaib*) is essential not only to legally reside in one's home, but to legally hold a job, collect grain rations, attend public school, receive public health care (which includes all forms of hospitalization), travel, vote, or formally challenge administrative abuses. In theory, persons released from "reeducation" camps, usually after a probationary term of police supervision, are reinscribed in the household registry and readmitted to the full rights of citizens.¹¹ In practice, this restoration may never be granted, or the

⁶ See Amnesty International, "Vietnam: 'Renovation' (Doi Moi), the Law and Human Rights in the 1980's" February 1990 (ASA 41/10/90).

⁷ *Saigon Giai Phong*, July 4, 1987 in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, July 25, 1987, FD/8629/B/4 to FE/8629/B/5.

⁸ Code of Criminal Law, Article 2, published in *Nhan Dan*, July 12, 15, 16, 17, 1985; translated in JPRS-SEA 85-135, Sept. 3, 1985, pp. 1-92.

⁹ The Criminal Procedure Code, published in *Nhan Dan* July 13, 14, 15, 1988, translated in JPRS-SEA 89-019.

¹⁰ Phan Hien "Implementing the Code of Criminal Law Well, Thus Helping to Strengthen the Socialist System of Law," *Hanoi Tap Chi Cong San*, no. 7, July 1985 pp. 26-32 in JPRS-SEA 85-148, Sept. 27, 1985.

¹¹ The Criminal Code provides as supplementary penalties to imprisonment the denial of residence, probation and the denial of rights of citizenship for limited periods of time. See Arts. 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 100.

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former prisoner may be granted residence rights only in an area remote from his spouse and children. In some cases, such as that of the artist Nguyen Quang Phuc, the authorities may withdraw household registry as a punitive measure in itself.

Finally, the stigma of "reactionary" can be inherited by the individual's children. If both parents are not issued or inscribed in a household registry, children will not be either, which prohibits their attending public school. Unregistered parents must consequently tutor their children privately, or rely only on supplementary evening literacy programs run by the state.

Even should a child be fortunate enough to have one or more registered parents, a "reactionary" ancestor may doom the child's advancement to university, professional school or government employment. All persons are required to submit to the authorities detailed histories of their relatives reaching back three generations.¹² These family histories (*ly lich ba do*) are kept on permanent file, available for use for a variety of coercive purposes, such as investigating detainees or assessing taxes and bond subscriptions for bourgeois families. For these reasons, parents who have suffered government suspicion or arrest may feel they have compromised their children's future, and determine that the children's best interests lie in sending them out of the country.

This sort of politically-motivated discrimination often drives families to a marginal existence outside the officially sanctioned economy. The decision to escape may come not only from present privation, but from a conviction that the government will never restore the individual's civil status, nor that of his or her descendants. Governments receiving Vietnamese must recognize that such persecution, pervasive though it may be, pushes the asylum-seeker across the line between "economic migrant" and "refugee."

Reduction in the numbers of refugees abroad is the task of Vietnam's government, in eradicating the human rights abuses that precipitate flight. The persistence of illegal detention and discrimination contravenes not only Vietnam's international obligations under the Covenants and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but also its own domestic law.

Human Rights Activists

Human rights advocacy in Vietnam takes place against a background of extreme repression. The ten year incarceration of Tran Danh San for reading a declaration of human rights in a public square, or the recent arrest of Dr. Nguyen Dan Que for signing an open demand for political reform illustrate the risks of open advocacy. For this reason, most human rights activists confine their activities to private advocacy and education.

1. The Human Rights League of Vietnam

On February 15, 1990 a boat carrying 15 members of the Human Rights League of Vietnam departed Danang for Hong Kong. Hong Kong immigration authorities have denied refugee status to half of them, who are appealing

¹² See Stephen Denney, "Human Rights and Daily Life in Vietnam" (March 25, 1990, unpublished paper) and Anne Wagley Gow, "The Black-Listing of Families in Vietnam" *Indochina Journal* Vol. IV, No. 2 (1990) p. 5.

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this determination. The founder of the movement, Vietnamese attorney **Tran Danh San**, arrived in the United States on May 29, 1990, after ten years of detention for publicly reading a declaration of human rights on the steps of the Saigon Cathedral. Their story reveals both the extent of the government's efforts to crush human rights advocacy, and the persistence of such advocates in their claims. The shortcomings of the screening process in Hong Kong are illustrated by the fact that half the members were granted refugee status and half were denied it.

1.1 The Declaration of Human Rights by the Destitute People of Viet Nam

In late October 1976, Tran Danh San and some colleagues began meeting regularly on the pretext of discussing the potential for private law practice in the new Socialist Republic of Vietnam. Their discussions, however, turned to the new regime's restriction of basic freedoms and the best way to draw international attention to repression in Vietnam. In searching for a precedent for human rights advocacy in a "proletarian dictatorship" they drew on the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and Czechoslovakia's Charter 77. Thus was born the Human Rights League of Vietnam.

The group drew prominent intellectuals, many of whom had been both veteran activists and former government officials. Tran Danh San, an attorney in private practice, had served as general counsel to the Port Authority of Danang; he earlier had been a special assistant to Nguyen Cao Ky and led the "Progressive Youth Forces" in 1965, for which he was jailed three years. Other members and sympathizers included **Trlou Ba Thlop**, also a lawyer and former president of the Committee of Students for Struggle against the Dictatorship of Ngo Dinh Diem; **Nguyen Huu Giao**, a lawyer and former student leader at Hue University, **Pham Blou Tam**, vice-president of the Association of Patriotic Intellectuals; **Huynh Thanh VI**, president of the Vietnamese Press Association, and **Nguyen Quy Anh**, the former Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany.

The League early committed itself to the principle of non-violent advocacy, given the tremendous loss of life Vietnam had suffered over the decades of war. Its first platform called for Vietnam to recognize workers' right to strike, freedom from forced labor, the right of tillers to their land, the right of intellectuals to express their views and work without compulsion to support Party propaganda, and the right of religious believers to not merely hold but to freely exercise their beliefs. The League's strategy was to press for those basic human freedoms Vietnam had agreed to uphold in its international legal commitments and its own constitution.

On April 18, 1977, the League chose to make its demands public, in the hope of bringing them to the attention of the remaining foreigners in Ho Chi Minh City. Standing in front of the Saigon Cathedral, Tran Danh San began reading an eloquent plea for international attention to the state of human rights in Vietnam (see Appendix I). Though he and seven other signatories to the declaration were apprehended before he completed the text, the League had placed a tape recorder at the opposite end of the public square, which managed to repeat the entire declaration twice before it was shut off. Tran Danh San was to spend ten years in "reeducation" camps for this act.

This event was reported by the French, but did not receive wide public attention until 1978, when **Doan Van Toai**, a former cell mate of Tran Danh San who committed the declaration to memory, escaped to France. Doan Van Toai wrote of San, "This remarkable personality transforms

the mood in his cell. Cultivated, articulate and witty, he creates around him a climate of enthusiastic rebelliousness that infects everyone in the vicinity."¹³

¹³ Doan Van Toai, *The Vietnamese Gulag*, p. 301 (Simon & Schuster, 1986). Tran Danh San also reportedly quipped "if only we had obtained Mrs. Ngo Ba Thanh's signature, she would be with us now and we'd be a lot less bored." At that time, Ngo Ba Thanh was a lawyer renowned for her acerbic criticism of South Vietnam's President Thieu. She now heads the legislative drafting committee for

1.2 Prison Camp Activism

Tran Danh San remained in prisons and "reeducation" camps until October 13, 1987. During that time, he continued his advocacy for the Human Rights League and won many new members. He also kept accounts of political prisoners, both those whose only activities were non-violent expression of their views and those who had resorted to armed resistance.

In 1986, while interned in Xuan Loc Camp, also known as Z30A, Tran Danh San published a journal called *Hop Doan* or "Joint Group." He wrote it by hand on discarded cement bags made of multiple layers that could be pulled apart to form pages; the journal was circulated hand-to-hand among sympathetic prisoners. *Hop Doan* called for Vietnam to honor its constitution and international law commitments by respecting human rights, including the rights of prisoners to receive letters, medicine and medical treatment. Tran Danh San still bears the scars of untreated fester sores on his legs.

The most pressing issue for prisoners, however, was slow starvation. According to Tran Danh San, in "reeducation" camps for ordinary criminals, rations were two spoonfuls of rice and water daily. After 1982 privation deepened, and cassava replaced rice half the time. In camps for "persistent" offenders, where political offenders were incarcerated along with common criminals, rations consisted of only cassava, with rice served only on lunar new year. He said to Asia Watch, "You have seen nothing until you have watched a former Minister of Education, a former Minister of Justice, and a dozen Chinese billionaires, all with their eyes riveted on the distribution of slices of rotten cassava."

To sustain life, all prisoners depended on regular supplies from their families. The families, in turn, had to make enormous sacrifices to purchase extra food and transport it often thousands of miles to the camp where their relatives were imprisoned. The prison authorities, according to the ex-inmates carefully exploited the tremendous psychological pressure on prisoners to receive the food and make their families' sacrifice worthwhile. Before claiming the food brought by relatives, prisoners would have to make self-criticism, acknowledging their own (imaginary) crimes, and denounce others, in what was called an "assimilation test." In the camps for "persistent" offenders, prison guards were usually prisoners themselves, often former servants of the present regime whose own rehabilitation depended on the "proper" treatment of political offenders. As a result, abuse was normal, with guards siphoning off or denying prisoners the food brought for them. In the end, a political prisoner might receive only ten percent of what his family had brought.

In the face of such physical and psychological manipulation, acts of resistance such as Tran Danh San's prison journal and advocacy took on powerful meaning. Prisoners also resorted to less risky methods of maintaining self-respect, such as not wearing hats so as not to have to doff them to prison guards.

1.3 Activism in the Central Provinces

During his initial imprisonment in Xuan Loc in 1978 and 1979, Tran Danh San met **Nguyen Dinh Hoe, whom he had known from his days as a lawyer in Danang. Hoe, born in 1945, had completed three years of law studies at Saigon University, and had served as a youth leader for the Vietnam Kuomintang Party. An officer in the ARVN since**

the National People's Assembly and presented Vietnam's report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in July 1990.

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1966, Hoe served as a Danang City Councilman from 1974 to 1975. He had been recruited to the Human Rights League before his incarceration by the lawyer Huu Giao, and upon his release from Xuan Loc in 1983, again became active in the cause. In 1984 he was once more detained and placed in the An Diem "reeducation" camp. Upon his release in 1987 he again continued to coordinate activities of the League in central Vietnam.

Under Nguyen Dinh Hoe's direction, the Human Rights League had divisions in all six provinces of central Vietnam, namely Nha Trang, Thua Thien, Quang Nam-Danang, Binh Dinh, Quang Ngai and Quang Tri. Hoe estimated membership to be in the thousands, but any estimate is speculative given that the League did not keep membership records. In these areas the members organized in a cell structure, with most members knowing the identities of only three to five others, to protect the organization should members be arrested for their activities. Tasks were often divided among members who didn't know each other. For example, the person who solicited donations to the group would never be the one to collect it; likewise, the person who carried leaflets to a demonstration would not know who printed them. One unfortunate consequence of this policy was that many of the League members who escaped in February 1990 did not know one another, hence Hong Kong Immigration authorities doubted their story.

Given the dangers of open advocacy, the League depended heavily on person-to-person recruiting and fund raising. Men would organize among former colleagues from the South Vietnamese military, former political opposition parties (such as Vietnam's Kuomintang Party) or current acquaintances at work, school or coffee shops. Women organized cells among other women, who would normally meet each other at the marketplace. The League also made efforts to represent students as well as ethnic Chinese, a wealthy minority who since 1975 were the objects of special persecution in its membership. Local groups might emphasize various local social problems, such as unfair taxation or corrupt officials, but common to all was a commitment to nonviolence, and an insistence on basic rights for all citizens.

On Christmas Day 1985 the League distributed leaflets within the Hoi An Cathedral without detection. The leaflets called for all religions to unite in calling for freedom of religion and equal treatment for believers, and opposed the forced purchase of government bonds.

Another important issue was election rigging. Truong Vinh Lo, one of the League members rejected as a refugee in Hong Kong, described how he was jailed for four days for failing to vote, a crime the authorities described as "sabotaging the election." When he protested that he wasn't qualified to vote because the authorities had denied him a household registry card, he was told it was his duty to ask the police for special permission to vote each election. From that time on he did, and permission was always granted.

The authorities' curious insistence that Truong Van Le exercise his franchise, while denying him all other civil rights highlights an important political fact. The least unpredictable aspect to elections was the casting of ballots, because they were so carefully rigged. Typically the Party would slate nine candidates for eight positions, and the police would carefully instruct all voters which one candidate's name to strike off their ballot. In one instance, League members recalled the loser of an election nonetheless becoming deputy ward chairman because he was a former Viet Minh colonel.

In Hoe's words, "since liberation, there have been many elections but not much choice." To protest the lack of electoral choice, League members encouraged persons who were able to vote to cast blank ballots as a protest. Some League members also destroyed ballot boxes in Quang Tin to protest the elections in November 1989.

The League provided important support to student demonstrations throughout 1989. Encouraging students to include human rights demands along with their local grievances, the League would supply banners and print leaflets with their basic human rights demands. These included that the government recognize all citizen's

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rights to freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, the right to travel and reside where they wished, and the right to choose government representatives.

In June 1989 students at Hoa Khanh University in Danang protested their inadequate food allowance (student malnutrition was a serious problem). To these grievances, League members added demands for freedom of press, religion, prison reform, public trials for all those held for political reasons, and "a more open sphere of political activity" -- a demand intended to suggest further democratic reform without actually insisting on a multi-party system. Three students were arrested as a result of this protest.

On August 28, 1989, the League also supported Quang Ngai University student protesters. The incident that provoked the protest involved sexual harassment of female students by the local police. Male students went to the police to remonstrate, and were badly beaten, with one killed. At this point the League and the students organized a public demonstration to demand an investigation of the police and press human rights demands.

The League had picked September 15, 1989 as the day it would publicly announce its human rights demands in its own name. Demonstrations were planned in all six provinces, banners painted and leaflets printed on a makeshift press one member constructed from stolen machine parts. However, in the days immediately preceding the planned demonstrations, the police arrested key League members in Danang, Quang Ngai and Nha Trang. Hoe and others learned the police had their names as well. The demonstrations were abruptly canceled, and the banners and leaflets buried.

After this crackdown, Hoe and other League leaders decided it would be too dangerous to remain in Vietnam and attempt further activities. Over the next six months they identified those League members they felt were in greatest danger of arrest or discovery, and organized their escape, using several dozen other "paying" passengers to subsidize the voyage.

On February 15, 1990 they set out from the Danang vicinity on a large fishing boat, and arrived in Hong Kong in early March. On the way they lost **Nguyen Thi, a veteran League member who served as pilot. The Macau police forced the Vietnamese, over Nguyen Dinh Hoe's objections, to leave their boat and board a rickety wooden craft. Intending to tow the boat to Hong Kong, the Macao authorities had tied it too closely to their own, and the two vessels collided, throwing Nguyen Thi overboard in heavy seas. After this accident, they turned back for Macao. The Vietnamese were finally permitted to reboard their own boat, which the Macao police successfully towed to Hong Kong.**

1.4 League Members Rejected as Refugees in Hong Kong

The following persons are members of the Human Rights League of Vietnam who have been rejected as refugees in Hong Kong. All have appealed their rejection, and in an unusual procedure have been reinterviewed by Hong Kong authorities. They are still awaiting decision.

Among this group are young people who joined the League close to the time of the escape. Although not all were deeply involved in League activities, as a result of the escape and their confinement at Nei Kwu Chau detention center, all have become familiar with the League's membership and activities, and would be at significant risk if forced to return to Vietnam.

■ **Nguyen Quang Trai, 52, was leader of the League in Hoi An, a city about 30 kilometers south of Danang. A sergeant in the Combat Engineers before 1975, he joined resistance groups after the communist victory and was arrested and sent without trial to reeducation camp in 1978.**

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Upon his release in 1981, he decided to join the League and try to work for change in Vietnam through non-violent means. His job was to recruit members and organize them into cells, and to distribute leaflets sent to him by the League leadership. He was leafletting for human rights as early as 1982 and organized the 1985 leaflet campaign in the Hoi An Cathedral.

Trai's daughter applied to university and passed the entrance examination but was rejected. Trai demanded an explanation for her rejection, writing first to the school authorities and later to a newspaper. He received this startlingly frank admission of discrimination in a letter from a communist party secretary:

(Trai's daughter was rejected) because her father was in reeducation, was a counterrevolutionary, and was sentenced for three years for the crime of counterrevolution combined with the crime of leaving the country illegally. From 1985 to the present he has returned to his home, but he still does not accept the policies of the government and he has been absent from his house many times. Her mother is a trader, and is not a good follower of government policies. The student herself is not a member of the Ho Chi Minh Youth League.

Trai explained with a small laugh that she was never allowed to join the Ho Chi Minh Youth League because of her bad family background.

Nguyen Quang Trai said that the League interpreted Decision 135 as a signal that all members would be subject to arrest, whether they engaged in advocacy or not. On the same night that Decision 135 was posted, the police came to his house to find him; fortunately he was away. He spent the next three months on the run until he escaped.

▪ Truong Vinh Le, 42, was a private in the Republic of Vietnam's Marines before 1975, and had lost a leg in the war. Though he only spent 15 days in "reeducation," he was denied a household registry card. When he asked why, the authorities told him it was because his father, a village chief, had carried arms against the people and thus owed them a "blood debt," and also because the Marine unit he served in had been particularly effective against the communists.

As a result of having no household registry, his children likewise were unregistered and were never allowed to attend public school. Instead they went to evening literacy classes. They were not allowed to travel, to leave their house at night, or obtain public health care, including hospital care. These restrictions are enforced by neighborhood security people who may be responsible for reporting on 50 families; in turn, about five such neighborhood security people report to the local policeman, who in turn reports to higher levels.

Truong Vinh Le worked as a courier for the League, transporting leaflets from city to city in his hollow artificial leg (he abruptly detached it during the interview to demonstrate how capacious it was). He did not know who printed the leaflets, although one of the printers was on the escape boat. After League members who knew him were arrested following a leafletting incident in 1990, Le was told to keep a low profile. He pretended to be a beggar until he received word to join the boat on February 15.

▪ Nguyen Thi Thao, a 36-year-old mother of two, organized women's cells of the League throughout Quang Nam - Danang province. Recruits to the League were often wives of soldiers of the Republic of Vietnam, or businesswomen whose goods had been confiscated by the communist government. They shared the same human rights concerns as male members, but were particularly concerned with the poor quality of education and state indoctrination of students. She also served as a finance officer for the League.

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▪ **Le Minh** was also a recruiter and finance officer of the League, responsible for soliciting donations that would be used for operating expenses such as paint and cloth for banners. The League had an internal investigatory team that ensured funds collected were properly accounted for, a difficult task in an organization that for safety could not give receipts or keep books. When Le Minh's activities on behalf of the League were discovered by the police in October 1989, he left Danang for Ho Chi Minh City, and his wife went to live with friends in Danang. They later contacted him to join the escape party. Le Minh is one of the few League members who escaped with his spouse and all his children.

▪ **Nguyen Van Dong** was a former NCO in the Republic of Vietnam's navy. He joined the League on October 15, 1987, and helped to solicit donations from Chinese businessmen in Ho Chi Minh City. Like Le Minh and Nguyen Thi Thao, he would not actually collect the donations he solicited; another League officer would collect and hold the money, distributing it to officers for specific projects as it was needed.

▪ **Truong Chi Hao** is an ethnic Chinese whose father was a Taiwan national and member of the Kuomintang Party. He was active in supporting the student demonstrations in Quang Nai and Danang in the summer of 1989.

▪ **Dang Thanh Choi** was invited to join the League in December 1989 by his cousin, Nguyen Thi, a longtime League member. Choi was a fisherman and helped procure the boat that Thi eventually piloted for the escaping Human Rights League members.

▪ **Nguyen Xuan Truc**, a mechanic and friend of Dang Than Choi, also joined the League in December 1989. He took charge of ensuring the police did not discover the place of escape, and kept the boat's engine in running order.

▪ **Nguyen Thuy Dien Chau** is a 16-year-old girl from a Catholic family in Danang. Her uncle is a priest who was arrested in 1984 and incarcerated four years in a labor camp for 'anti-government activities'. Her father is a crippled veteran of the ARVN; her mother is under arrest. Chau and her family were not permitted to attend church or go to school after her uncle's arrest in 1984. Her family felt it was in her best interest to escape Vietnam so that she would be able to resume her education and practice her religion.

▪ **Huynh Nguyen Ngoc Huy** is a 16-year-old boy. When his father was arrested in October 1989, he was expelled from school. Huy on many occasions acted as a messenger between League officers during the period when the League was most active in supporting public demonstrations. League members believed Huy was under surveillance, and his mother was fearful he would be arrested.

2. Dr. Nguyen Dan Que and The High Tide Humanist Movement

On May 11, 1990, **Dr. Nguyen Dan Que**, as representative of a political reform association known as the High Tide Humanist Movement, signed a public appeal for political reform and recognition of human rights in Vietnam (see Appendix II). Dr. Que released the appeal to various international news agencies and friends in Canada and France, with the expectation he would be arrested. The appeal called for the Communist Party to "respect the human, civil and property rights of the people" and to "adopt a pluralistic political system" and called for international support "in our moderate and non-violent struggle".

On June 14, 1990, seven or eight police from the public security bureau of Ho Chi Minh City came to take him into custody. Dr. Nguyen Dan Que refused to go as the police lacked a court order authorizing his arrest. The police left, but returned that afternoon with the order, and took him with them. Over a dozen others were arrested in

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conjunction with his detention; their names and whereabouts are not known.

Born in 1942 in Hanoi, Dr. Nguyen Dan Que graduated Saigon University Medical School, and pursued research in Belgium, France and England. He returned to Vietnam in 1974 to teach endocrinology at the Saigon University Medical School in 1974 and practice at Cho Ray Hospital in Saigon.

Dr. Nguyen Dan Que was jailed without charge or trial from 1978 to 1988 for publicly demanding Vietnam's government respect human rights. During this time he was adopted as a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International.

The Humanist Movement is an underground association dedicated to nonviolent advocacy¹⁴ of basic human rights and political and economic reforms, including free elections in Vietnam. The movement claims members throughout Vietnam, although Dr. Nguyen Dan Que is the only one who has consented to make his identity public. Since Dr. Nguyen Dan Que's arrest, the movement estimates as many as a thousand of its supporters have been detained in the "anti-crime" campaigns precipitated throughout the country by Decision 135.

Dr. Nguyen Dan Que is believed to be held in the vicinity of Ho Chi Minh City. He suffers from bleeding ulcers, and his family is deeply anxious about his safety and health. Despite numerous appeals to the authorities, no family member has been permitted to visit Dr. Que or know his whereabouts.

3. Prisoner Rights Activist Nguyen Manh Hung

Nguyen Manh Hung's career as a prisoner rights activist began with his first incarceration in "reeducation" camp. A 37-year-old from Haiphong, Hung was caught trying to escape North Vietnam in 1973, and was sentenced to eight years of imprisonment for "going over to the enemy side." By feigning insanity he succeeded in having his term reduced to seven years.

In 1975 he joined with other prisoners, including the dissident poet **Nguyen Chi Thien**,¹⁵ into a prisoner-support group, whose name he declined to divulge to protect its members. The group organized secret study sessions in the camps, among both political prisoners and common criminals, and tried to win over prison guards in order to ameliorate the oppressive conditions of imprisonment. Unlike the Human Rights League, this informal organization operated only north of the 17th parallel.¹⁶

Hung's group taught forbidden subjects such as English, read poetry, discussed international and

¹⁴ Dr. Nguyen Dan Que has called for civil disobedience and non-cooperation with government policies. There is no evidence, however, that Dr. Nguyen Dan Que was arrested for actions other than the expression of his views.

¹⁵ Nguyen Chi Thien, born in 1933 in Hanoi, has been a prisoner of conscience for over half his life. His current detention without charge or trial dates from 1979, when he was arrested after leaving a collection of his poetry he had composed in prison at the British Embassy in Hanoi. Two volumes of his poetry have been published in the West, *Prison Songs* and *Flowers from Hell*. He is reported to be in ill health.

¹⁶ The Geneva Conference of 1954 partitioned Vietnam at the 17th parallel pending a political settlement that was to be achieved through later nationwide elections, which South Vietnam's Ngo Dinh Diem rejected the next year.

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domestic policy, and criticized the government's failure to obey both international norms and its own regulations on prison administration. Hung admitted that the group would resort to force against prisoners who informed on them, but only because these activities, when discovered, could result in shackling and torture.

According to Hung, after 1975 the authorities segregated prisoners into three different categories in North Vietnam. Common criminals were assigned even identification numbers, political prisoners odd identification numbers, and prisoners from South Vietnam numbers beginning with the letter "Z". Within the camps these groups were often segregated further according to type. For example, in 1987 a "reeducation" camp in Thanh Cam, Thanh Hoa province, there were 32 or 33 Catholic priests. The priests from the South were kept near but separate from southern ex-military officers, and those from the North kept confined among northern political prisoners.

From 1979 to 1980, reported Hung, violence by the authorities against political prisoners was especially severe. Although Hung reported that political prisoners are not publicly executed, he reported cases of life-threatening beatings for attempted escape. After 1980 food rations were sharply reduced, so that prisoners would have to depend on family visits for adequate nutrition. Food rations were reduced further in the late 80's, making family support essential for survival.

Hung was only two weeks out of "reeducation" camp when he and his friends in Hanoi decided that dramatic action was needed to bring the abuses and deaths in Vietnam's prisons to international attention. He wished to relate "hundreds" of cases in which prisoners had died from beatings, lack of medical treatment and inadequate nutrition.

Although prisoners at the time of their release are usually required to sign a promise not to reveal anything about the conditions in which they were held, Hung did not sign such a promise, again feigning insanity. On May 4, 1980, he walked into the Indonesian Embassy in Hanoi to relate his personal experience of prison conditions in Vietnam, and to ask the embassy's assistance in raising his report to the United Nations.

The embassy official agreed to take him to the United Nations representative in Hanoi. However, public security officers seized Hung as soon as he stepped out of the embassy door. He was sent back to "reeducation" camp in Thanh Cam, Thanh Hoa province for an indefinite term, without trial.

According to many Asia Watch informants, summary administrative proceedings that commit political detainees to "reeducation" camps without trial are the norm, particularly where the absence of convincing proof against the defendant would render a public conviction suspicious. When Hung's interrogators demanded that he confess his crime, his only response was "walking into the Indonesian Embassy." His prison papers, however, listed the charge against him as "counterrevolution."

Back in "reeducation," Hung continued his human rights advocacy. He eventually won the sympathy of a prison guard, who helped him escape.

On June 12, 1988, Hung arrived in Hong Kong. Immigration authorities denied him refugee status after his initial screening interview. He refused the right to appeal and joined a lawsuit as one of ten plaintiffs challenging screening procedures as unfair. Nevertheless, the Refugee Status Review Board, which hears all appeals from Vietnamese denied refugee status, reviewed his case *sua sponte* and granted him refugee status. Hung remains an activist on behalf of imprisoned Vietnamese, supporting protest activities against forcible repatriation.

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Writers

■ **Le Van Tien**, also known by the pen name **Nhu Phong**, was reportedly rearrested in December 1990, paradoxically around the same time he received word from the Interior Ministry to collect a visa to leave for the United States. A week before his arrest, the authorities held him for three days and questioned him about his contacts overseas.

It is believed he was arrested in connection with the arrest a short time earlier of **Doan Viet Hoat**. **Doan Viet Hoat** was a US-educated professor of English literature who prior to 1975 was Vice-President of **Van Hanh University** in Saigon. Incarcerated in "reeducation" for over ten years, **Doan Van Hoat** after his release in 1988 had corresponded with Vietnamese publications abroad.

The charge against **Le Van Tien**, which has not been made public, is reported to be "having relations with overseas Vietnamese for the purpose of espionage on behalf of the United States." The sole basis for this accusation appears to be an innocuous account **Le Van Tien** wrote on current events in Vietnam.

Born in Hanoi, **Le Van Tien** grew up in a literary environment, raised by an elder sister who had married a founding member of the "Tu Luc Van Doan" literary group. He became a writer, journalist and publisher and emigrated to the South in 1954. From 1965 to 1966 he served as an advisor to South Vietnam's Prime Minister **Phan Huy Quat**. He also worked as an editor for the Saigon newspaper, *Tu Do* ("Freedom"), broadcast reports on the BBC, and published articles in *The China Quarterly* and other journals on international affairs. He is known as an expert on the political history of the Vietnam Communist Party.

After 1975 **Le Van Tien** joined a resistance movement and was captured by communist forces. Although reports of his death circulated, he in fact was confined in prisons and "reeducation" camps, from which he emerged very ill in 1989. He had been living in Ho Chi Minh City at the time of his most recent arrest.

A number of other associates of **Le Van Tien** were also arrested, say Asia Watch sources. These include:

- **Pham Thai Thuy**, a poet, journalist and newsroom director for National Radio before 1975, and
- **To Thuy Yen**, a satirical poet who had worked as a journalist with several newspapers before 1975. The whereabouts of these persons is not known.

Artists

Artists in Vietnam must belong to professional associations or work groups in order to receive commissions. As there is no private market for painting or sculpture, and private exhibitions are a rarity, to work as an artist entails submitting to government control. The case of **Nguyen Quang Phuc**, detained for the "crime" of accepting a commission from the Catholic Church, illustrates the hazards involved in pursuing an independent career. Although artists who publicly exhibit critical works may be punished, even those who keep their paintings in their own homes may run afoul of the authorities.

A significant number of Vietnamese graphic artists are currently detained in closed centers in Hong Kong. Asia Watch interviewed three in October 1990. Though each began his career in Vietnam with varying degrees of

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official acceptance, the authorities ended the careers of each one as he expressed views contrary to Party dogma. Nguyen Quang Phuc, although from a "bad" family, worked and attended art school until his artistic iconoclasm and work for the Catholic church provoked the authorities to revoke his permission to live and work in Hanoi. A second artist who wishes to remain anonymous, in contrast, managed a successful career as an arts school graduate and government painter until he took Secretary General Nguyen Van Linh's call to expose corruption and social evils too literally. The third artist was never allowed to attend a government arts school or officially work as a painter; nevertheless, he incurred police harassment by merely painting what he wished in the privacy of his home.

■ **Nguyen Quang Phuc**, a 44 year old painter, is currently held in Whitehead Detention Centre in Hong Kong with his wife and two children. He left Vietnam on August 21, 1988, and has been interned in Hong Kong camps since September 9, 1988.

Phuc was born to an intellectual family in Hanoi. His father, a doctor who combined western medical practice with classical Sino-Vietnamese treatments, was also a member of the Vietnam Kuomintang party. His mother assisted his father in his medical practice.

After the communists assumed control of the North in 1954, they confiscated most of the family's property, including their Buddhist sanctuary and their medical tools. The communists targeted his father for harsh persecution because of his political affiliation, and in 1956 this drove him to commit suicide.

Phuc was able to attend school but was denied admission to university or other institutes of higher education. In order to improve his political background, he volunteered for the Army in 1966, despite the ongoing war against the French, but found he still encountered discrimination.

After his military service, he joined a Hanoi art company as a painter in 1973, where he worked for six years. Because his personal style conflicted with the style dictated by the communist party, he was never accorded the status of a government employee with the attendant benefits.

In 1979, with the help of well-known painters he had befriended, he managed to gain entrance to a university art program in Hanoi. He became a vocal critic of the militarization of the school and the officially sanctioned artistic styles promoted by the school's administration. He was censured and threatened with dismissal.

During the school holidays in June and July 1982, Phuc and a friend accepted a commission from the Catholic Archbishop of Hanoi to produce a large number of statues of the Madonna and Jesus for distribution to churches throughout Vietnam. They had completed 360 statues when they were discovered by the public security forces and jailed.

Phuc argued with his interrogators he had done nothing wrong. When they accused him of working for a reactionary organization, he demanded to know what law said the Catholic church was a reactionary organization and prohibited people from working for it. The police, aware of his family background, accused him of having "inherited reactionary tendencies" from his father.

Phuc's characteristic intransigence may have been a factor in the police releasing him a week later. However, he was dismissed from his university, and placed under police surveillance. The authorities revoked his residence permit, and assigned him to forced labor for a period of time. He was subsequently unable to work as an artist, and struggled to support his family by working as a casual laborer for private businesses and making sweets.

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During this time he continued painting at his in-laws, where he and his family stayed after the authorities prohibited them from living in their own house. In 1986, the police searched the house, confiscating his art materials and paintings. Phuc was again jailed for his "degenerate" and "reactionary" paintings, this time for two days. The paintings in question were nude studies, strictly prohibited by the regime.

In 1988 an explosion went off in front of the family's home, harming a member of the British Embassy who was a friend of his wife's youngest sister. The police never revealed who was responsible for the explosion, but they detained his family briefly, accused them of having "illegal relations with foreigners." Those family members who held government jobs, including Phuc's wife, were fired. Finally, the entire family was ordered deported from Hanoi to a remote "new economic zone" for resettlement. At this point, Phuc and his family made the decision to flee.

Notwithstanding the stark prison conditions of the Whitehead Detention Centre, Phuc has been able to resume painting. His work has been shown in several exhibitions in Hong Kong and has reached Paris and San Francisco. The revival of his artistic life has been his "greatest happiness" he writes, but the prospect of forcible return to Vietnam remains his "greatest fear."

That fear, unfortunately, is a very real one. The Hong Kong authorities have rejected Nguyen Quang Phuc's application for refugee status and his appeal. Asia Watch urges the UNHCR to recognize he has been persecuted for his political and artistic expression and because his family has been characterized as "reactionary" for their political views and associations with foreigners. The continuous persecution he and his family have endured at the hands of the communist authorities for the last 37 years provides a solid foundation for his fear of return.

■ X, in his 30's, is a fine arts graduate and worked for a provincial literary and artistic affairs bureau in Vietnam.

One signal of the political liberalization that initially accompanied renovation was Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh's widely publicized speech in October 1987, exhorting artists to "speak directly and speak the truth" about Vietnamese society, "even if it hurts." Many writers, musicians and artists responded to this call; some were punished for their candor.

Inspired by this apparent change in policy, X and other artists in his province organized an art exhibit scheduled to run ten days from December 22, 1987. The authorities closed the exhibit after one day, arresting three artists and severely criticizing X and five others. The latter six lost their membership in the Cultural and Artistic League, which prevented them from working as artists.

The offending paintings were nudes and depictions of the terrible conditions of peasant life. "According to party policy," said X, "it is forbidden to depict peasants as unhappy or overburdened." X complained to the authorities that he was merely trying to respond to Nguyen Van Linh's call, but they told him that the policy of artistic freedom of expression was meant to apply only in big cities like Hanoi, and not in the province.

Following this episode, X organized other artists to write a letter criticizing the provincial party secretary's treatment of artists. This letter, which went to central authorities already investigating charges of corruption against the official, demanded an accounting for the artists who had been arrested but never publicly charged.

X, who had lost his job in April 1988, was arrested for this letter and charged with having an "anti-government attitude" and "failing to control his fellow artists." In August, just as his case was ready for trial, the Party decided it needed his help in painting some banners for National Day on September 2. He was temporarily

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released from jail to get his paint and brushes from home, and he took the opportunity to flee.

X has been held in detention centers in Hong Kong since 1988. Initially rejected as a refugee, he awaits the outcome of his appeal.

■ Y, a 30 year old painter from Hai Phong, studied art in private schools because his family background prevented his admission to a public school. Three members of his family had moved to the South after 1954. Although he was never allowed to exhibit his work, he showed his paintings to friends at his home. Unfortunately, their contents became known to the police, including that of a picture showing a party cadre in an unflattering light. As a consequence, he was interrogated by the police several times and not allowed to paint for a living.

This asylum-seeker arrived two months after Hong Kong ended its policy of considering all boat people refugees. His claim to be a refugee was rejected by the Hong Kong authorities.

Conclusion

These cases illustrate both the growth of dissent and human rights advocacy in Vietnam and the means used by the government to repress it. Asia Watch calls on the government of Vietnam to:

- Cease punishing peaceful critics through detention without trial and denial of their basic civil rights;
- Recognize and protect the right of its citizens to peacefully express their views.

Oppressive conditions in Vietnam, whether caused by central government policy or local administrative abuse, should be recognized by all countries enforcing the protections of international refugee law. Most countries must recognize and credit asylum-seeker's claims of persecution through:

- Denial of household registry documents and denial of any of the rights of citizenship because of a person's political or religious beliefs or associations;
- Official acts of persecution based on an individual's family background or past political affiliation;
- Forced removal to New Economic Zones;
- Detention without charge or trial;
- Detention for peaceful expression of views or peaceful association with others.

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APPENDIX I

[The following was read at the Cathedral of Saigon on April 32, 1977 by Tran Danh San, Esq., Chairman of the Viet Nam Human Rights League.]

DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS BY THE DESTITUTE PEOPLE OF VIETNAM

We the destitute people of Viet Nam, using what strength we still have, with the spirit of the disabled, are determined to struggle using non-violent means to call on the conscience of humankind and the forces of the civilized world to hearken to these most pitiful pleas from those who can suffer no more.

-- We have lost our strength because we are starving and shall die of starvation;

-- We are disabled because we are not allowed to live or think as human beings; we are forced to bow our heads, bend our backs and wish eternal life to an ideology which is obsolete and anti-humanist;

Nevertheless, we still continue to use human language to rouse the blind and wicked. For only by taking the road of nonviolence can we avoid the butchery of a fratricidal war and the sullyng of the impoverished Vietnamese people's purity of soul.

Peasants and farmers of the world, look at Vietnam -- a place where farmers must labor all day on an empty stomach. Their harvest is taken from them in the name of the laws of historical materialism. Their buffalo may rest after the plowing is done, but Vietnamese farmers do not have this right, for in their leisure time, Vietnamese farmers are obliged to attend interminable indoctrination sessions. Workers of the world, do you understand the lot of Vietnamese workers? They must work nights as well as days, and especially hard on their day off: on days off they must work twice as hard to present the Party and our leadership blood, sweat and tears. The ultimate weapon of workers is the right to strike; this right has been taken away. Any thought, any activity that diverges from the Party's rigid guidelines is deemed to be wrecking and espionage.

Religious leaders, scientists, philosophers, artists and intellectuals! Those who say prayers must cease doing so; those whose love is solitary research in the ivory tower, open up your doors; those who create with pen and ink, break your pen and throw the ink away. All of you, look towards Vietnam, where pagodas and churches have been turned into political indoctrination centers, where the laws of science have been distorted to satisfy the official ideology, where the sole purpose of the artist is to praise the country as instructed by the Party. You, and you above all others, have given up your whole lives in the service of honesty, truth, justice, peace and progress -- can you ignore and turn your backs on the Vietnamese tragedy, while the desperate Vietnamese people are being physically abused and mentally oppressed?

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This pitiful state of affairs is the work of a small minority -- the party cadres and their puppets -- who are oppressing this desperate nation with the most frenzied and cunning illusions that the world has ever known.

This abomination is a stain on human history; this abomination is a disgrace to the conscience of humankind; this abomination is a slap in the face of the civilized world; and above all, the abomination is a clear violation of the International Declaration of Human Rights.

O human conscience, awake!

O civilized forces of the world, arise!

We cannot wait any longer. The United Nations must intervene, must intervene urgently, to apply thoroughly the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the impoverished people of Vietnam, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Charter.

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APPENDIX II

[The following is a statement signed by Dr. Nguyen Dan Que on May 11, 1990 on behalf of the Humanist High Tide Movement. Dr. Que was arrested thirty four days later for publishing this statement. His whereabouts remain unknown.]

APPEAL OF THE HUMANIST HIGH TIDE¹⁷ MOVEMENT TO FORCES STRUGGLING FOR FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY AND PLURALISM

The world has changed enormously, the confrontational East and West are being transformed into a North-South cooperative arrangement. The war era has ended, to be replaced by an era of peace and development.

Everywhere the trend of the times is a demand for respect of human rights, for freedom and democracy, and for a pluralistic political system.

All the nations of Southeast Asia and of the Pacific Region wish to see this area of the world move into an era of peace, stability, non-alignment and regional cooperation so as to develop their economies and culture, through such instruments as ASEAN, the Association for Southeast Asian Nations.

The Vietnam War was in actuality an expression of contradictory strategic interests between the United States and China, that was implemented by two proxies--the leadership in Saigon and Hanoi. When there was no longer confrontation between the two blocs--the communist bloc and the capitalist bloc--when the relationship between the United States and China became one of cooperation (as of the Shanghai Joint Declaration of 1972), the conditions were present for solving the Vietnam War on the basis of withdrawal of alien elements (i.e. the two war machines and the two leaderships in Saigon and Hanoi) to let the Vietnamese people determine their own political future.

In Indochina the essential mistake of the Political Bureau of the Vietnamese Communist Party was to try to englobe militarily the three nations of Indochina under one political power, whereas the whole world demands that the three nations of Indochina be kept as three separate political powers before they could join ASEAN.

The Vietnamese people must rapidly integrate into the international community and actively find solutions to fulfill its aspirations and protect its interests. In this regard the Humanist High Tide Movement advocates:

1) To disband the war machine of Hanoi, for which China and the Soviet Union are responsible since they had a hand in setting it up. This instrument of violence is being used by the Hanoi leadership to repress the voice of the

¹⁷ "High Tide" is a Vietnamese expression meant to convey a surge of popular support, much like the English expression "groundswell."

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Vietnamese people.

2) The Political Bureau of the Vietnamese Communist Party must respect the human, civil and property rights of the people. It must also accept a pluralistic political system. The Vietnamese people have the right, through truly free elections, to determine a new system of government which would be in tune with the present infrastructure of Vietnamese society.

3) To turn over to society the entire economic and cultural structures of the country. To restore to every single citizen his or her economic and cultural rights so as to bring about a new set of humanist relations of production, in which the forces of production--and not a socialist state or the capitalists for that matter--are in direct control of the relations of production.

We urgently appeal to all individuals and all groups inside Vietnam as well as in the world--organizations in Europe and America as well as Vietnamese movements in Europe and America--to all those in love of freedom, democracy and pluralism to support us in our moderate and non-violent struggle meant to establish a social-humanist and progressive regime, a new governmental system that would belong to the whole people and not to any one class, a state whose role would not be to disrupt the national community--that it should truly serve instead--one whose role will no longer be to supervise but to coordinate the activities of all areas in society.

The above is a necessary trend of modern Vietnamese history, it will allow for the solution of current socio-economic difficulties and will project Vietnam on a strong path of development in the present-day world.

Vietnam, May 11, 1990

[Signed]

**Dr. Nguyen-Chau Nguyen Dan Que
Representing the Humanist High Tide Movement.**

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**For Further Information:
Dinah PoKempner (212) 972-8400
Mike Jendrzyczyk (202) 371-6592**

News From Asia Watch is a publication of Asia Watch, an independent organization created in 1985 to monitor and promote internationally recognized human rights in Asia. The Chairman is Jack Greenberg, the Vice Chairs are Nadine Strossen and Orville Schell, and the Executive Director is Sidney Jones.

Asia Watch is a component of Human Rights Watch, which includes Africa Watch, Americas Watch, Helsinki Watch and Middle East Watch. The Chairman of Human Rights Watch is Robert L. Bernstein and the Vice Chair is Adrian

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DeWind. Aryeh Neier is Executive Director; Kenneth Roth, Deputy Director; Holly Burkhalter, Washington Director; Susan Osnos, Press Director.

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