

VIETNAM BROADSHEET

SPRING 1979

an alternative to the lies and distortions of the media

ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Excerpts from the speech of Ambassador Ha Van Lau at the United Nations, November, 1978.

When one speaks of human rights, above all it is the right of mankind to live in peace and security — in independence and freedom. Essential to human rights is the right of everyone to have work and to live in comfort and dignity, and the right of nations to live in peace and security in a world freed from the danger of war and nuclear attack.

It is well-known that the American war machine in former South Vietnam had at its disposal an army of more than one million men and a police force of 150,000. Before the liberation of Southern Vietnam, some people in the West were predicting that a "bloodbath" would follow the taking of power by the Communists. But contrary to these predictions, almost all these soldiers and the functionaries of the former Saigon regime were immediately integrated into the national community with the same rights and duties as all other Vietnamese citizens.

The fate of the thousands of those who had held military or political power, who had given orders to bomb villages, burn down hamlets, massacre the people, torture political prisoners was to be held in custody while the policy of re-education was pursued. At present only a very small number of these are still detained.

The Boat People

Since the liberation in Southern Vietnam in 1975, some thousands have taken to boats to leave the country. Most of them had become accustomed to the easy life made possible by the flow of dollars and goods from America. Now that things have changed, now that everyone must live by his own labour, in the very difficult post-war conditions they cannot adapt themselves to the new life and are leaving the country in the hope of finding an easier life elsewhere.

Vietnam prides itself on having built a society where the people have faith in the fundamental human rights, in the dignity and work of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women.

In Vietnam, a backward agricultural country, ravaged by 30 years of war followed by adverse climate conditions, the people are struggling, as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights "to promote social progress and a better standard of life".

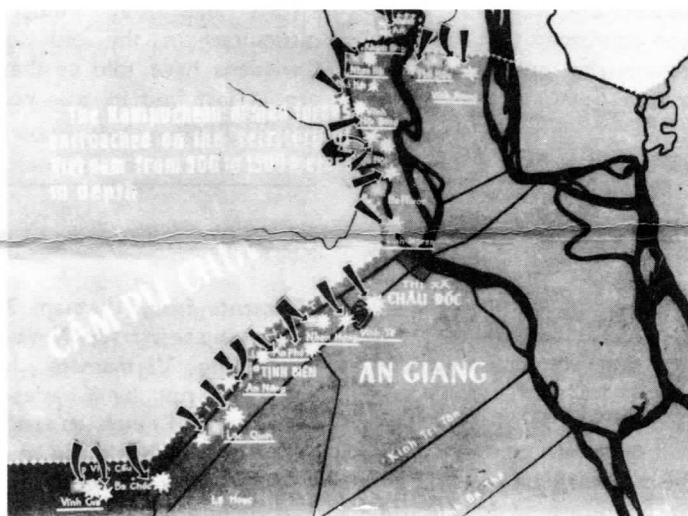
BRITISH GOVERNMENT DOUBLE STANDARDS FOR UGANDA AND KAMPUCHEA

Within hours of the formation of the new government in Uganda, after the overthrow of the murderous regime of Amin, the British Government sent a formal message of recognition. The move secured universal support. No one disputed the right of Tanzania to assist the anti-Amin forces after its territory had been invaded. Nor was the right of the Ugandan people to overthrow an intolerable tyranny disputed.

The parallel with the situation in Kampuchea (Cambodia) is complete. Why then is a double standard applied?

the regime — murdering many of those who had taken part in liberating the country, banning freedom of religion, organising forced collective marriages, destroying pagodas and temples of Buddhism, destroying Islam, closing schools and universities. It continued:

"They abolished all urban life and forced millions of people in cities and towns to leave their homes for the countryside where many have died a slow death. They have herded our compatriots into disguised concentration camps, robbed them of all means of production, overworked them, forcing them into destitution and slavery. The regime is neo-slavery and has nothing to do with socialism.



The Kampuchean armed forces encroached on the territory of Vietnam from 500 to 1,500 metres in depth.

The truth about the criminal regime of Pol Pot was known to the world. It negated every principle of socialism and it denied every democratic right. Western governments must also have been aware that a liberation movement, organised by leaders who had fought against the French colonialists and the US invaders had been operating since Pol Pot and his group seized power.

The movement gathered strength and on territory already liberated it founded on December 2nd, 1978, the National United Front for the Salvation of Kampuchea. The declaration issued on that occasion was available to the world, but ignored by our media.

This declaration, addressed not only to citizens at home, but also those forced into exile (another parallel with Uganda) called for a general uprising to "overthrow the Pol Pot Government".

The declaration listed the crimes of

The Front referred to the border war launched by the Pol Pot forces against Vietnam and said this attack was designed to serve the strategic ambitions of the Chinese authorities.

Again the evidence was available to prove the claim. *Agence France Press* reported from Bangkok at the beginning of 1978 that during the past three years, China had armed many Kampuchean divisions and sent thousands of military advisers to the country. It was when the Pol Pot troops were occupied attacking Vietnam that the Front launched the revolution. The liberation forces were welcomed everywhere and 80% of the Pol Pot forces deserted to the Liberation Front. The Front was therefore able to take the capital, Phnom Penh, without meeting resistance. Attempts at organised resistance in one or two areas have now been crushed".

RELIGION

There is no "state religion" in Vietnam similar to the Church of England here. The majority of Vietnamese religious believers are Buddhists; Roman Catholics predominate amongst the Christians. All beliefs are permitted and clergy and adherents are not subject to persecution. Whilst enjoying full liberty to practise their religion, they do of course have to respect the law and share the same responsibilities and duties of all other citizens. Dignitaries of both Christian and Buddhist faith travel freely abroad to participate in assemblies, for instance in the recent election of the Pope.

Archbishop Hannan, a member of the recent US Mission to Vietnam to study relief needs, reported on crowded congregations for mass in Saigon Cathedral, which continues for about eight hours, starting early in the morning until about 10 o'clock, and again in the evening. Missions, hospitals, orphanages established by Buddhists and Catholics have been incorporated into the national framework under the appropriate Ministry. Archbishops Hannan confirmed that the nuns and other workers who ran these institutions are able to continue their work there.

Most believers, Christian and Buddhist alike, have completely accepted the new socialist regime, in fact they voted for it in their millions. Indeed, Sister Françoise Vandermeersh (Editor of the French Review *Echanges*), writing in Vietnam Courier on the Vietnamese Catholic Church, states that she discovered in Vietnam "a radiant Church, simple and poor, which shares the life of the people with this one thought: to be evidence of Jesus Christ". Sister Françoise also quotes a young vicar on returning to Vietnam after years of theological studies in West Germany:

"I came back to Saigon just before Liberation. What a Change! In the West individualism reigns; one dies without one's neighbour noticing it. The new regime brings a new outlook; it says to us:

'Each lives for the others'.
God is present in this revolution. He works actively in people's hearts'."

However, in some cases a cloak of religion has been used to organise sabotage and disruption of the reconstruction process. As early as February 1976, after the unmasking of armed conspiracy in Vinh Son Church, the Archbishop of Saigon stated that "the Catholic Church could not sponsor, encourage or condone any organisation that opposes South Vietnam's government in the name of religion. The Church cannot accept the illegal activities of the Vinh Son Church. Some people still believe they are serving the Church through such activities when in fact they are acting against its interests and policy".

Some Buddhist clergy have attempted sabotage. A number were brought to trial late in 1978. They admitted their guilt and expressed repentance. Two received no sentence; others were given short suspended sentences. Buddhist Superior Thich Tri Thu thanked the government for its lenient treatment of these monks who had misused religion to oppose the revolutionary administration. He appealed to the Buddhist clergy and laity to co-operate with the government in national defence and construction. Buddhist nun, Man Da La, representative of the Vietnamese Buddhist Association in France, then visiting Vietnam, said that the verdicts were "a valuable sermon for those Buddhists who still have some doubt about the destiny of the country after liberation".

For religious people, the liberation of Vietnam has created conditions for a truly Christian life by cleansing a society corrupted by United States money, and stifled by police terror. Nuns who have devoted their lives to taking care of the sick, curing drug addicts, and reforming young offenders, have realised that their efforts had met almost insuperable difficulties in the old society. Many Christians have told us that the Church can at last find its true vocation in the new Vietnam.

ON DEMOCRACY

(Excerpts from Vietnam 78, a booklet containing answers by Ngyuen Khac Vien, a leading Vietnamese Journalist, to questions put by Charles Fourniau, a well-known French expert on Vietnam, giving a very frank and realistic account of present day Vietnam).

Parliamentary democracy with many parties is not the only model of democracy. It has grown out of certain historical conditions in capitalist society with its class antagonisms based on private ownership of the means of production.

We view the question from an entirely different angle. Private property is no longer the basis of our society. We have not been through centuries of capitalist development, and the bourgeoisie is almost non-existent. We have created a society on the basis of a national consensus organising for cooperation not opposition. Opposition in itself is not a sign either of democracy or of political maturity, for it all depends what you are opposed to.

An opposition party in present day Vietnam could only be formed by supporters of the old regime, and the emergence of such a party would not mean more democracy but rather a setback for democracy.

The present Vietnamese system works thus: the organs of State power, the National Assembly, the central government and the local administrations are all

elected either in national or local elections (province, commune or municipality).

At job level the system is that the management of an enterprise is appointed jointly by the State, the party organisation, the trade union, and the youth organisation.

The Management, the Trade Union, and the party organisation form a kind of triumvirate which meets regularly to discuss production guide-lines, planning, work-norms, salaries and promotions. The management has to consult the trade union about all important decisions, and had to justify all decisions before the general assembly of the enterprise. Where there is disagreement on decision the management has the final word.

There are also commissions for supervision and inspection in all enterprises, and administrative organs, to whom every citizen can take grievances.

In a country like ours, which is just starting modernisation, passing from being a colony to independence, from war to peace, many people at different levels often do not know how to make decisions, and need training and education. There is a real danger of bureaucratism when someone gets into a position of power and isolates himself from the public interest, but nothing is gained by firing people and fuming at bureaucrats. Our laws and institutions must ensure that the people take part in decision-making and in supervising the use of power.

WAR CRIMINALS IN VIETNAM

"If we executed them, their children would never forget. We have to give leniency in return for crimes, so that the crimes will be completely done away with. Otherwise there will be feuds and retribution for generations.

"We want to be remembered as the government that brought about reconciliation, not the one that carried out Nuremberg trials to pass death sentences. We want to be remembered as the government which rebuilt Vietnam from the rubble of war. It takes love and compassion to rebuild, not anger and hate".

Luu Van Te,
Chairman of the Provincial People's
Committee of Long An Province.

VOICE OF VIETNAM (Hanoi Radio)

can be heard in Britain everyday in English
at 18 & 20.30 hours GMT
in 19 & 31 metre bands
on 15.012 & 10.040 K/c

(News, Commentaries, country and people)

VIETNAM AND CHINA

The Chinese invasion of Vietnam in February was no bolt from the blue. Ever since Vietnam's reunification the Chinese government had been openly hostile to Vietnam. It supported Kampuchea's attempt to seize Vietnamese territory along the border areas while accusing Vietnam of responsibility for this border war.

In May, 1978 China cancelled its aid projects and recalled technicians and workers who had been engaged on them. It started a campaign to incite people of Chinese extraction living in Vietnam (known as the Hoa people) to abandon their homes and work, to emigrate to China.

Its agents provoked panic amongst them, prophesying war between Vietnam and China when the Hoa people would be in danger of their lives. When, from May onwards, some thousands of panic-stricken people began arriving at the frontier, disorders broke out as the Chinese refused to agree on a procedure to deal with the situation. After some were allowed into China, the Chinese authorities closed the frontier, leaving the rest stranded in pretty desperate straits. Disorders and violence increased as people stampeded trying to get across. Armed Chinese units again and again seized the opportunity to attack Vietnamese border guards and officials.

PROVOCATIONS AGAINST VIETNAM

China continued its provocations with armed intrusions into Vietnam, leading to the death of peaceful citizens and frontier guards. Chinese aircraft and ships systematically violated Vietnam's air space and territorial waters. Large detachments of ground troops were concentrated in areas bordering on Vietnam. China attempted to cover up its real intentions under a smokescreen of misinformation and slander, so as to create hostility against Vietnam.

The plan that Kampuchea, which was simply a client state of China, would inflict a severe military defeat on Vietnam ended instead in the downfall of the Kampuchean Government. Chinese leaders did not hide their rage at this setback, and announced their intention to invade Vietnam, at the same time accusing Vietnam of being the warlike party.

CHINA INVADES VIETNAM

On February 17th, China invaded Vietnam expecting an easy victory so that it could impose harsh penalties on a defeated Vietnam, putting more difficulties in the way of reconstruction. At first 200,000 troops along with tanks, powerful artillery and armoured cars were thought sufficient, but were hastily increased to 600,000 and even more



As a result of Chinese aggression, thousands of people in the border areas lost their homes.

armament. The GUARDIAN newspaper (April 9th) carried a despatch from Wilfred Burchett, then in Hanoi. He writes:

"The Vietnamese claim to have destroyed 280 tanks (they are the world's greatest tank destroyers as the Americans discovered in South Vietnam) and inflicted 62,500 casualties on the invaders, killed, wounded and captured.

"Vietnamese casualties were also heavy, but it was the frontier defence guards and regional forces who not only took the first shock of the attack, but bore the brunt of the whole battle — a sobering thought for the Chinese if they are thinking of a second round."

So this Chinese plan also miscarried, though its aggression brought much suffering and destruction in the invaded areas. Instead of a swift, glorious victory, they have had to agree to meet for talks with the Vietnamese in Hanoi, with their troops withdrawn back into China.

The Chinese accusation that Vietnam presents a military threat cannot hold water. Vietnam, a small country with its 50 million people, trying to reconstruct the country after devastating war destruction, obviously could harbour no warlike aims against its large, powerful neighbour with the largest population in the world.

China does not want strong nations on its borders. It certainly seems that the Chinese leaders have long hankered after the past when China ruled over large tracts of Asia.

A map entitled An Historical Sketch of Contemporary China was published in 1954, republished in 1960 and printed in Chinese school books. It shows the following countries as parts of Chinese territory: Mongolia, Nepal, Sikkim, Korea, Vietnam Kampuchea, Laos, Burma, Malaysia, Thailand, a part of India, the Japanese Ryuku Islands, and

parts of Soviet territory in the Republics of Kazakh, Kirghiz and Tadshik.

China also makes expansionist claims on large stretches of the sea. Every official Chinese map draws China's borders far out to sea, southward along the whole of Vietnam and several hundred miles further south, and westward stretching practically to the coasts of Malaysia and the Philippines.

The first step would be the conquest of the countries of Indochina — Vietnam, Laos and Kampuchea. Standing as a bulwark against this is Vietnam with a record of heroic struggle to maintain its national independence second to none and a united people working might and main to build up their country.

China's anxiety to get hold of a supply of Britain's Harrier Jump Jets is understandable. Of all aircraft they would be the most useful in the mountainous regions bordering China and Indochina, and for maintaining garrisons on the islands dotted about the sea it calls its "sacred territory".

The British Government would best protect world peace and our people by supporting Vietnam.

THE YEAR OF THE CHILD

Appeal for aid for the Children of Vietnam

The children of Vietnam are suffering the effects of 30 years of war, followed by drought, then floods and now the Chinese invasion.

Money is badly needed to supply milk and vitamins to keep them well in the present hard conditions. These children, already debilitated by war, need our help and we appeal for your generous support.

Please send contributions to the Britain-Vietnam Association, 12 Wernbrook Street, London. S.E.18 7RX.

NEW YEAR LETTER TO A EUROPEAN FRIEND

Flowers will be on hand for our New Year Festival, but food will be less than plentiful on family tables. 1978 has been a hard year. Kampuchean attacks, Chinese provocation and attacks, and the floods, when for a whole month fields, houses and gardens were under water. The rice crop was lost and the fruit trees have died.

The Government has nonetheless managed to ensure the rice rations — 25½lbs a month for adults; 37½ for schoolchildren and students; 40 for miners and others doing heavy work.

I met Mrs. Nguyen Thi Binh (Minister of Education, formerly Foreign Minister of the South Vietnam Provisional Government, ED) I joked with her: "I thought you were in a re-education camp together with the 800,000 political prisoners everyone in Europe has been talking about". She laughed and said: "All that nonsense. Let's talk about serious matters".

And she went on to talk about the educational reform she is preparing for the 1980's. She also talked about the schools submerged by flood water, the millions of text books lost and the immense efforts needed to rebuild. It is amazing, this co-existence within the same mind of anxieties about the present situation and pre-occupation about the future — on the one hand, how to supply a minimum of equipment to ravaged schools; on the other how to advance secondary education for all children.

I have realised that this attitude is not peculiar to Mrs. Binh. Many of our compatriots, while clearing up the mud and debris left by the floods, are at the same time making concrete preparations — not mere dreams — about the future. For themselves and for the country.

Back from Europe, I was acutely aware of the gap between a society glutted with commodities, and one still living in penury. But I was also struck by the contrast between a society which no longer knows where it is heading, and one which is orientated toward the future and which, although steeped in poverty, nonetheless gives its members the possibilities for dreams and action. We are entering the New Year, certainly under the sign of austerity, but also with full justified optimism.

Further supplies of
VIETNAM BROADSHEET

can be obtained from
**Joan Yuille, North Downs,
Bluebell Hill,
nr. Rochester
Tel: Medway 61575**

There is no charge for the BROADSHEET, though a donation would be welcome.

NEW AGRICULTURAL ZONES

Before the American intervention in South Vietnam, the vast majority of the population worked in agriculture. The war changed this, and South Vietnam, once a rice exporter, had to import large quantities of food through the American "aid scheme".

Toxic chemicals sprayed on fields and market gardens made the land infertile; constant bombing ruined more land. Hundreds of thousand peasants were forced into refugee centres in the towns.

When the war ended in April 1975 and American "aid" ceased, finding supplies of food and work for the 3 million unemployed as a result of the war were big problems. It was impossible for most of the peasants to return to villages wiped out of existence and land made useless. But the only hope for survival of these peasants is to return to the land.

The establishment of New Agricultural Zones, where land was available and once cleared and water conservancy systems were constructed, would go some way to deal both with the food shortage and unemployment. Industries are being developed in the Zones, and the two forms of production are designed to balance each other.

Moving to the Zones is voluntary; people are free to leave, as some do, for conditions during the first stages are not easy. When new villages have to be created in rehabilitating an area, the situation is difficult. There are few huts, few trees, and those only just planted, no water supply and no light.

Members of a US Mission investigating Vietnam's relief needs in August 1978 reported on visits to New Agricultural Zones:

"At the NAZ at Den Tong, where pineapples are being grown for export, families had their own garden plots planted with banana trees, tropical fruits, tomatoes and vegetables. At one house we visited we saw a small fish pond. We were told these families grow these food items for their own use and could sell them in the free market".

The report of another member of the mission reads: "We visited a medical clinic in a New Agricultural Zone which serves 800 families (about 4,000 persons) and was staffed by a physician, an auxiliary physician and 12 nurses, two of whom were midwives. A dentist comes once a week. A hospital is being constructed".

So much for the propaganda that the New Agricultural Zones are some sort of penal settlements!

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Association**

SOUTH VIETNAM — THREE YEARS LATER

The Vietnamese do not claim to have made a paradise of Vietnam, but in this country ravaged by 30 years of war, floods and drought nobody has starved to death in the last three years. The several million illiterates have learned to read and write, schools have mushroomed, epidemics have been checked, thousands of people have been housed in requisitioned flats, thousands of drug addicts and prostitutes are being rehabilitated and have resumed normal social activities. In Ho Chin Minh City (formerly Saigon) enough creches and kindergartens have been organised to care for 40% of the children.

Millions of people separated by the long years of war — wives from husbands, children from their parents, brothers from sisters are now reunited. Police terror and fear of bombs have vanished.

It is difficult for citizens of rich countries, who have not been colonised and enslaved for long years to understand what invaluable gains liberation and revolution have brought Vietnamese people.

BRITAIN-VIETNAM ASSOCIATION

President: Lord Fenner Brockway
Chairman: Gwilym Roberts, M.P.
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Treasurer: Hilda Vernon

The aim of the Britain-Vietnam Association is to foster friendship between the British and Vietnamese peoples; to provide and circulate information about Vietnam and the policy of its government; to influence the British Government to pursue a policy of friendship with Vietnam and to extend aid and trading facilities.

Membership is open to any person or organisation agreeing with the aims of the Association.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: For individuals £2.00 (£1 for pensioners and students), Organisations: Local £2.00; regional £5.00; National £10.00

Please send applications with remittance to:

British-Vietnam Association,
12 Wernbrook Street,
London, S.E.18 7RX.