



The Truth About Vietnam

Dear Joan Baez,*

We too are partisans of peace and human rights. We too marched and sang in opposition to our government's war of atrocity against Vietnam. And though we may have many differences among us, on this we agree: we are appalled at your recent attack on Vietnam and embarrassed by the ignorance it displays.

You write: "The cruelty, violence and oppression practiced by foreign powers in your country for more than a century continue today under the present regime." This is absurd. The French waged war on and pauperized Vietnam, robbed it of its natural resources, ruled with naked terror. Under the Japanese occupation, two million Vietnamese died of starvation in a single year. Our own government dropped more bombs on Vietnam than any country in history and ravaged the countryside with carpet-bombings, "free-fire zones," and defoliants that continue to take their toll in deformities, still-births and cancer. In the city of Saigon, according to the same newspapers in which you advertised, we left behind a half-million prostitutes, 140,000 heroin addicts, tens of thousands of orphans, and scores of thousands more crippled, deformed and driven insane by war, torture, imprisonment.

Have you forgotten? Do you not care? Does any of this "continue under the present regime"? Of course not.

A sense of continuing responsibility and caring should lead one not to make outrageous charges without foundation but to demand that our government pay the \$3.4 billion in reparations promised in the Paris accords, which it still fails to honor. Or to demand U.S. recognition of Vietnam, recognition which we alone, among major nations, vindictively deny.

You accuse Vietnam of maintaining

thousands of prisoners, whom you call, without a scintilla of documentation, "prisoners of conscience," as if they were pacifist conscientious objectors or gentle scholars whose only crime was to hold differing thoughts from those of the government. Do you feel no compunction about assailing this people, a million-times victimized by our country, without supporting your charges with proof? The only "evidence" you have offered—and this was not included in your ad—is the testimony of one Doan Van Toai, a hardly reliable source, given his ties to the Thieu regime and our own CIA. Perhaps your most immoral deception is the accusation of torture, which even our State Department has not accused Vietnam of committing. Nat Hentoff, a signatory to your letter, has publicly stated that his investigations reveal no such evidence.

Until 1975, the Thieu and Ky regimes, backed by U.S. arms and billions of our tax dollars, maintained an army of over one million, a police force of 150,000, an administration of several hundred thousand and a criminal underground of similar dimensions, according to every available source. Within days of the liberation of Saigon over one million former soldiers and police were set free despite the fact that they had destroyed villages, massacred, tortured and looted. After what other revolution has there been such a clemency program?

Some 400,000 servants of the former barbaric regimes were sent to re-education camps. Should they not have been re-educated? Of these, 89 percent have returned home. 44,000 remain incarcerated—three percent of the original 1.4 million active agents of the former repressive regimes.

We were saddened at the arrogant tone of your polemic, "As in the 60s, we raise our

voices now so that your people may live." The people of Vietnam are living—united, independent and free of foreign occupation. Despite all predictions of a wholesale bloodbath following liberation, the national executive board of the National Lawyers Guild stated in a resolution at its February 1977 meeting, following a similar "open letter" from you and others, that it, "... Clearly recognizes and acknowledges that the reeducation program for former Saigon personnel carried out by the Socialist Republic of Vietnam was absolutely necessary and does further recognize and acknowledge the remarkable spirit of moderation, restraint and clemency with which the reeducation program was conducted."

Vietnam now enjoys human rights as it has never known in history as described in the International Covenant on Human Rights: the right to a job and safe, healthy working conditions, the right to join trade unions, the right to be free from hunger, from colonialism and racism. Moreover, they receive—without cost—education, medicine and health care, human rights we in the United States have yet to achieve. This is despite the widespread dislocation, deprivation and poverty after centuries of colonialism, plunder and foreign invasions up to this year.

Finally, we are puzzled at your scale of values. If you want Vietnam to live, where are your advertisements against the Chinese invading armies that killed thousands of Vietnamese this Spring? Or against our own government which, through diplomatic, economic and political means, acts to isolate and deprive this valiant people whom it could not kill with napalm, phosphorous, Agent Orange or Operation Phoenix?

Sincerely,

KAREN ACKERMAN
NY Mobilization for Survival
DR. KURT ADLER
New York, NY
EDWARD ABERLIN, DDS
Staten Island, NY
PHYLLIS BENNIS
National Lawyers Guild
Los Angeles
CARL BLOICE
Editor, Peoples World
MARJORIE BOEHM
President, Womens Intl.
League for Peace & Freedom
SUSAN BORENSTEIN
National Chile Center
HARRY BRIDGES
President Emeritus, ILWU
REV. CHARLES BRIODY
Washington DC
TERRY CANNON
Journalist, former Oakland 7 defendant
REV. BENJAMIN CHAVIS
National Alliance Against Racism &
Political Repression
MARILYN CLEMENT
Center for Constitutional Rights
PROF. JOHNETTA COLE
U of Massachusetts

SYLVIA CRANE
Writer, lecturer
ATTY. JOSEPH H. CROWN
Chairman, Lawyers Comm. on American
Policy Towards Vietnam
DR. ANGIE DICKERSON
Natl. Assn. of Negro Business & Prof.
Womens Clubs
WILLIAM H. EISMAN, DDS
US-Vietnam Friendship Assn.
San Francisco
JOAN ELBERT
Clergy & Laity Concerned
Chicago
ABE FEINGLASS
Vice President
United Food & Commercial Workers
HOWARD FRAZIER
Promoting Enduring Peace
RUTH GAGE-COLBY
United Nations NGO Rep.
YVONNE S. GOLDEN
Black Teachers Caucus, San Francisco
JESSE GORDON
Writer and Publicist, NY
PROF. EWART GUINIER
Harvard University
CONN HALLINAN
DANIEL HALLINAN
MATTHEW HALLINAN

MICHAEL HALLINAN
PATRICK HALLINAN
TERRENCE HALLINAN
VINCENT HALLINAN
VIVIAN HALLINAN
San Francisco
ATTY. LENNOX S. HINDS
Professor, Rutgers U.
FR. WILLIAM HOGAN
Clergy & Laity Concerned
Chicago
GERALDINE JOHNSON
Coalition of Black Trade Unionists
San Francisco
JOSHUA KUNITZ
Writer, New York
JOSE LA LUZ
Michigan State U. School of Labor
& Industrial Relations
EDWARD LAMB
Toledo, Ohio
CORLISS LAMONT
Chairperson, National Emergency
Civil Liberties Committee
MICHAEL MALIN
Delaware Valley Peace Council
ATTY. BEN MARGOLIS
Los Angeles
JOSEPH MILLER
SANE, Philadelphia

CHARLENE MITCHELL
Exec. Sec., NAARPR
MICHAEL MYERSON
U.S. Peace Council
VIVIEN MYERSON
Vice President, WILPF
PROF. HOWARD L. PARSONS
U. of Bridgeport
ROBERT PRINCE
VP, Colorado CC Fed. of Teachers
PAULENE ROSEN
Natl. Center to Slash Military Spending
DAVID SALES
Queens NY Coalition for Peace & Justice
PROF. MARK SOLOMON
Simmons College
BESS HOROWITZ STARFIELD
Promoting Enduring Peace
DOROTHY R. STEFFENS
Fund for Open Information & Accounting
ATTY. HOPE STEVENS
Natl. Conf. of Black Lawyers
FR. WILLIAM STICKNEY
St. Peter's Episcopal Church
New York
DORIS STREITER
Chicago Committee to Save Lives in Chile
HAROLD SUPRIANO
Service Employees Intl. Local 390
All organizational listings for identification purposes only

*And the signers of the "Open letter to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam," printed in five leading U.S. newspapers on May 30, 1979.

President Jimmy Carter
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Mr. President:

I urge you to recognize the government of Vietnam and put policies of hostility behind us. Also, to this end, I urge you to make good on our pledges and signatures at the Paris peace talks by paying the money we promised for reconstruction aid.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Signature _____

U.S. Peace Council
7 E. 15th Street, Room 408
New York, N.Y. 10003

Dear Friends,

I too believe that we in the United States who believe in peace and human rights have a continuing responsibility to Vietnam. I have sent my coupon to President Carter.

- Please keep me informed of other steps your group is taking to defend human rights, promote peace and friendship.
- Enclosed is my contribution to help place this advertisement in other newspapers as well.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____
Signature _____