

Note No. 21/83-DSQ of the Embassy of  
the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Sent to Amnesty  
International on the Question of Detainees in  
the Re-education Camps in Vietnam

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The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam presents its compliments to the Amnesty International and, in reference to the Amnesty International's letter dated April 6, 1983 addressed to the President of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, urging the release of the detainees in re-education camps in Vietnam, is authorized to state the following points :

1- These detainees have all committed serious crimes against the people of Vietnam during the resistance against the U.S. aggressors. If they were to be brought to Court, they could well be convicted with heavy sentences, including the death penalty, for their betrayal of the Fatherland and murder of the people.

However, stemming from its policy of humanity and leniency, after the liberation of South Vietnam, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam did not convict them.

Not to bring them to court is to save them from a dirty stain it might be brought to bear on their families and themselves. To re-educate them is to help them to realize their crimes, to offer them an opportunity to listen to reason and to reform themselves into honest-minded people, thus contributing to the common cause of national reconstruction.

Those who were conscious of their crimes and have reformed well have been brought back to normal life, becoming citizens of the country with honest jobs, and some of them have even had permission to go abroad through the arrangements of UNHCR.

Up to now, three fourths of those detained after 1975, including some senior officers up to general rank, political leaders and members of Parliament in the former Saigon puppet administration have been released.

2- In December 1979, at the invitation of H.E. Mr. Pham Van Dong, President of the Council of Ministers of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, a delegation from A.I. led by Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, the Secretary General, visited some of the camps re-educating those who collaborated with the enemy and committed crimes against the Vietnamese people.

Early in 1982, the Foreign Minister of Vietnam, H.E. Mr. Nguyen Co Thach, declared that the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam were prepared to allow all those still detained to go to the U.S.A. or any other country if it receives them all and they themselves agree to go.

Those who are still obstinate and have not realized their criminal acts and wrong doings, continue to oppose the people of Vietnam, will have to continue to be re-educated.

Those considered not able to be re-educated will be brought to court. But this is only the last resort, because, with their crimes, the verdict will be very heavy.

This is an internal affair of the Government and people of Vietnam. No one has any right whatsoever to interfere in it.

To keep law and order, any country has its own right to apply all appropriate measures to those who commit crimes. It is in accordance with the present international laws.

The Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam avails itself of this opportunity to renew to Amnesty International the assurances of its highest consideration.

London, April 29, 1983.