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M E M O R A N D U M

of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the
Socialist Republic of Viet Nam on the U.S.
criminal use of toxic chemicals in Viet Nam,
Laos and Kampuchea

Public opinion in many countries, particularly in the United States and Australia is, with growing concern, demanding further investigations of the consequences of the U.S. chemical warfare in Viet Nam. A significant number of American servicemen who took part in the Viet Nam war have sued the U.S. government and those chemical companies that manufactured the defoliant for the damage done to themselves and their children by the latter's uses of toxic chemicals. The U.S. Congress has held hearings on the problem. In Australia, under the pressure of public opinion, the Australian government declared on January 7, 1980 that it would investigate the extent of damage caused by U.S. toxic chemicals to the offsprings of Australian Viet Nam war veterans. Research by Vietnamese and American scientists have provided important conclusions on the subject. Yet the U.S. ruling circles have been trying to cover up the truth and evade their responsibilities. In close coordination with China and its henchmen, the United States has come out with slanderous accusations against Viet Nam of "using toxic chemicals in Laos and Kampuchea" in order to mislead public opinion.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam deems it necessary to point out the responsibility the U.S. has to bear for the consequences of the chemical warfare it carried out in Viet Nam and expose the machinations and tricks of the U.S. ruling circles who are trying to evade their responsibility.

1- In its war of aggression against the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, besides bombs and shells and war means of various kinds, the United States used systematically and on a large-scale toxic chemicals and gases to kill civilians and destroy the

environment in the three Indochinese countries.

The United States sprayed more than 100,000 tons of toxic chemicals on almost all provinces of South Viet Nam, where 13,000 km² (43%) of land areas and 25,000 km² (44%) of forests were targets for one to several sprayings.

70% of coconut orchards, 60% of rubber plantations, 110,000 acres of pine-woods along the coast and 150,000 acres of mangrove-forests were sprayed for defoliation, an amount of food enough to feed millions of people was destroyed as a result of this chemical warfare.

There were 2,000,000 victims of toxic chemicals among whom 3,500 were dead. According to the figures released by the Foreign Affairs division, library of the U.S. Congress, on June 30, 1971 toxic chemicals used by the U.S. in South Viet Nam amounted to about 6 pounds for every South Vietnamese.

Many scientists the world over have stated that the spraying of toxic chemicals throughout South Viet Nam by the United States was an undeniable genocidal crime. Professor Arthur W. Galston, an American biologist, in a testimony before members of the U.S. Congress and the public on February 9, 1977, said : " I believe that the resulting damage done to Viet Nam and to the environment on which all of that civilization depends, is still inadequately calculated".

U.S. Senator Gaylord Nelson condemned this crime in August 1970, said : " History of mankind had never known a case in which a country declared war against the environment of another nation, yet the United States had embarked on the ecological experiment which no nation else dared to do."

2- The consequences of the uses of 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T, known as herbicide "defoliant", are the cause of growing concern for different circles in Australia, and especially in the United States. These chemicals, used in South Viet Nam from 1962 to 1971, had much greater toxicity than those used for agricultural purposes in the United States and Australia.

Since 1970, Vietnamese scientists have shown that herbicide 2,4,5-T contains dioxin, one of the most toxic substances known.

(Note : Km² : square kilometer ; 1 Sq.m = 2.599 sq.km).

Vietnamese scientists' research works, as verified in Australia, Switzerland and the United States, indicate that a micro-amount of the agent can endanger miscarriages, birth defects, still births, chance of chromonomes and cancer. Dioxin exists for a very long time in natural conditions, defoliating trees, rendering crop land uncultivable for decades and changing the environment of a country, thereby causing floods and droughts.

In the United States, many Viet Nam-war veterans are suffering from the effects due to dioxin herbicide exposure. A Chicago-based organization known as "caveat" alone reported to represent 2,000 Viet Nam - war veterans carrying dioxin symptoms.

Through their organizations, these veterans filed lawsuit against the 5 large chemical companies that produced these toxic herbicides.

The trust fund they asked for could amount as much as 40 billion U.S. dollars. The chemical companies, which, at first, had not acknowledged any responsibility, recently came to put the blame on the U.S. government for not advising the U.S. servicemen of the long-term effects of these chemicals and demanded that the federal government bear part of the responsibility.

In Australia, a research by an Australian doctor showed that the rate of birth defects was very high among the new-born children of the Australian Viet Nam - war veterans. On the average there was one birth deformity or a miscarriage out of every four pregnancy cases.

According to U.S. air force figures which are far from the truth, from 1962 through 1970, some 44 million pounds of 2,4,5-T were sprayed in South Viet Nam. Since 60% of the combat zone was sprayed, the chances of coming into contact with dioxin herbicides were significantly high. Evidently, the U.S. spraying of toxic chemicals left the people and environment in Viet Nam with extremely serious and inestimable consequences.

3- Of late, in close collaboration with China and its henchmen, the United States has circulated fabrications and slanderous allegations about what is called "Viet Nam's use of toxic

chemicals in Laos and Kampuchea''.

In so doing, the United States, obviously, tries to mislead public opinion, cover up and blot out its genocidal crimes in the Indochinese peninsula and shirk its responsibility for the crimes it committed against the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, and its responsibility towards victims chemical warfare, who were U.S. servicemen and soldiers of U.S. allies engaged in the war of aggression against Viet Nam.

While striving to stage this scene of "Viet Nam's use of toxic chemicals", the United States deliberately conceals the war crimes against the Vietnamese people in February 1979 by Chinese troops including the use of toxic gas in some populated areas and the poisoning of drinking water sources in the areas they set foot in. More serious still, the United States is trying to justify and help in China's efforts and is even directly taking part in the criminal manoeuvre of restoring the genocidal regime of "Democratic Kampuchea" which massacred 3 million Kampuchean people and drove the Kampuchean nation to the brink of extermination. Concocting this story, the United States is attempting to distort the justice-radiating cause of the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, sow discord among these three countries and to meet the political need of the internal situation in the United States.

What the U.S. has been doing in this connection can only be termed hypocrisy as representative Robert Kastenmeier put it when the U.S. house of representatives voted on the resolution on this question.

After a series of hysterical slander campaigns about "human rights", "refugees", "Vietnam's dry-season offensive" and "Viet-Nam's obstruction of the relief activities in Kampuchea'', the problem of "Vietnam's use of toxic chemicals in Laos and Kampuchea'' is nothing but another vicious attempt in their hostile policy to carry out the dark designs that the Peking-Washington alliance is hatching against the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea.

The U.S. crafty manoeuvre can deceive nobody. The debits for the genocidal crimes the U.S. committed against the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea can in no way be liquidated by its deceitful and slanderous allegations.

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam resolutely denounces and condemns the slanders of the United States which is trying to evade its responsibility for the chemical war crimes in Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea, calls on the governments of other countries and world public opinion, especially American public opinion, to be vigilant against the U.S. cunning manoeuvres and demands that the U.S. administration be responsible and compensate for the losses caused to the peoples of Viet Nam, Laos and Kampuchea and to those servicemen of the U.S. and that of its allies engaged in the war of aggression against Viet Nam, who are now victims of the toxic chemicals used by the United States.

Hanoi, January 21, 1980.