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Vietnamese Canadian Federation

Fédération vietnamienne du Canada

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FEDERATION NEWS

Federation continues to lobby for resettlement of refugees

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation's effort in lobbying the government to allow Vietnamese refugees stranded in the Philippines to be sponsored for resettlement in Canada is continuing. On August 30, 2002, Danh Nguyen, President of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation wrote a second letter to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration of Canada, Denis Coderre, to urge him to allow those refugees who have relatives in Canada to be sponsored by "Groups of Five" or by charitable organizations in Canada.

In his reponse dated October 2, the Minister informed the Federation that the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is currently working with the Filipino government to develop a long-term plan for these unfortunate refugees. At present, the Filipino government has a bill in Congress to regularize their residency status. The Minister also encourages the Federation to continue to work with Mr. Rick Herringer, Director of Resettlement of the Refugee Branch of his Department on this file.

To follow this up, Can D. Le, the Federation's Commissioner for External

Affairs, met with Mr. Herringer on October 17 and gave him the list of the refugees who are seeking admission to Canada. This list was compiled by Lawyer Trinh Hoi in Manila with the assistance of the Federation's office in Ottawa. At this meeting, Mr. Herringer indicated that while in Geneva for a meeting of the UNHCR in November, he will consult his counterparts in Australia, the U.S., and the U.K. on their respective governments' position in this matter. Subsequently, he will discuss it with his colleagues in Citizenship and Immigration Canada before making a recommendation to the Minister.

A final decision by Mr. Coderre is expected by the end of this year.

Following is the letter that was sent to the Minister in August.

August 30, 2002

The Honourable Denis Coderre, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Citizenship and Immigration
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Re. Vietnamese Asylum Seekers in the Philippines

Dear Sir:

I acknowledge with thanks receipt of your letter dated July 11, 2002, in response to my May 26 letter to you regarding the status of Vietnamese asylum seekers who have been stranded in the Philippines since 1989. We appreciate the information that you sent us regarding Canadian immigration laws and procedure and how they relate to the case of these people.

As you are aware, the new Canadian law which came into effect on June 28, 2002, includes provisions for humanitarian resettlement under the "Country of Asylum" class. It is our hope that, through the Canadian embassy in Manila, the humanitarian resettlement of those individuals with relatives and sponsors in Canada might be considered under this category, especially in light of the recent UNHCR endorsement of this on-going effort worldwide. We enclose a copy of the letter from the UNHCR Headquarters addressed to our representative in Manila, Mr. Hoi Trinh, for your information.

Since receiving your letter, Mr. Trinh and Dr. Can D. Le of our Federation have had very fruitful discussions with Mr. Rick Herringer, Director of Resettlement of the Refugees Branch of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, to exchange information on this case and to learn more about the newly implemented *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*. In the light of these discussions, we earnestly hope that you will allow the above asylum seekers to be sponsored for resettlement in Canada by either Groups of Five or by Community Sponsors as featured in Regulation 150 of the *Act*.

Trusting that our request will receive a favourable response from you, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Danh T. Nguyen, President

Federation's XII Biennial Meeting

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation will hold its XII Biennial Meeting on November 8-9, 2002 at the Vietnamese Canadian Centre in Ottawa. The representatives of the

Federation's member associations will carry out a number of activities on this occasion, including: presentation of the Federation's and its members' achievements in the last two years; election of the Representative of the Board of Presidents for 2002-2003, election of the Executive Committee for 2002-2004, and discussion of an action plan for the next two years. The meeting will conclude with a banquet dinner to raise fund for the Vietnamese Canadian Centre.

At present, the Representative of the Council of Presidents is Dr. Tuyen Nguyen of Montreal and the Executive Committee consists of the following members: Danh Nguyen (Ottawa), President; Tung Pham (Toronto), Vice-President; and Thuong Duong (Ottawa), Treasurer.

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation was founded in 1980 to coordinate the activities of Vietnamese community associations across Canada. Currently it has 14 member associations from coast to coast.

MEDIA REVIEW

Vietnam plans to monitor internet cafes

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) -- Communist Vietnam plans to monitor customers at Internet cafes to prevent them from accessing politically and morally objectionable Web sites, state-controlled media reported Wednesday.

Vietnam's government has recently sought to toughen its control over access to information, including foreign television broadcasts, as the country opens up economically to the outside world.

Increasing numbers of people use the Internet and are able to see sharp differences

between Vietnamese and foreign news reports, particularly of events in Vietnam.

The Vietnam Economic Times newspaper said the country now has 4,000 public Internet cafes, according to the Ministry of Culture and Information.

"No authorities have been responsible for monitoring the shops after their owners receive licenses, resulting in abuses," it said.

In a report to the government, the ministry described the violations as "very serious," it said.

The newspaper said young people could access pornographic material on the Internet, but that the ministry was more worried about the spread of state secrets and "reactionary" documents.

Some Vietnamese living overseas and dissidents in Vietnam use the Internet to circulate documents critical of the government. Vietnam's constitution provides for freedom of speech and the press, but in practice both are significantly restricted.

In March, a Vietnamese doctor, Pham Hong Son, was arrested for translating and circulating on the Internet an article about democracy taken from a U.S. State Department Internet site.

In February, a computer science lecturer, Lam Chi Quang, was detained for posting on the Internet an essay critical of a border agreement signed with China in 1999. Critics say the agreement, which has never been released, unfairly favors China.

Both Son and Quang are still in detention.

Internet service providers in Vietnam are

held responsible for filtering undesirable Web sites, but the culture ministry said it was difficult to do so because of the large number of sites.

In its report, it said Internet cafe owners should be required to monitor customers to ensure they do not misuse the Internet.

The Vietnam Financial Times reported on Monday that Prime Minister Phan Van Khai has ordered local authorities to inspect and assess all Internet cafes and report back to the government by July 7.

Last week, Khai issued a directive prohibiting all citizens, except for top Communist Party and government officials and a few others, from watching international satellite TV.

All TV stations in Vietnam are operated by the government, and all newspapers are published by government or party-controlled organizations. The media are viewed as the voice of the Communist Party.

The party marked last week's annual Revolutionary Press Day with declarations that it would continue to control the media.

The party's top ideology official also instructed all newspapers to limit their coverage of a corruption scandal in which senior officials and dozens of police are accused of protecting a notorious underworld gang.

He said newspaper stories about the scandal had revealed state secrets and caused internal divisions -- both of which are punishable by long prison terms.

Vietnam to tighten control of Internet cafes

Associated Press, Sat Aug 3, 2002

HANOI, Vietnam - The Vietnamese government has called for tighter control of Internet cafes and stricter enforcement of regulations that limit dissent, state media reported Saturday.

Severe punishments will be levied against violators, particularly those who abuse the Internet to download and spread "poisonous and harmful" information, the Tuoi Tre (Youth) newspaper said.

Regulations prohibit using the Internet to spread pornographic or anti-government information.

The Directorate General of Post and Telecommunications, the state regulatory body, has asked provincial governments throughout the country to strengthen inspections and control of public Internet cafes, the newspaper said.

In June, the communist government instructed authorities in southern Ho Chi Minh City to strengthen controls against anti-government materials posted by "hostile forces" on the Internet.

Also, the Ministry of Culture and Information recently proposed that owners of Internet cafes be responsible for monitoring their customers' use of the Internet.

Some Vietnamese living overseas and as well as dissidents inside the country use the Internet to circulate documents critical of the government.

Two dissidents have been detained recently for posting anti-government materials on the Internet. Phan Hong Son was detained for

translating a U.S. State Department article "What is democracy?"; and posting it on the Internet, while Lam Chi Quang was arrested for posting an article critical of Vietnam's concessions in its 1999 land border deal with China.

Vietnam has about 4,000 public Internet cafes, according to the Ministry of Culture and Information.

Hundreds attend funeral of prominent Vietnamese dissident

By David Thurber, Associated Press
August 14, 2002

HANOI, Vietnam

Supporters of Vietnam's most prominent dissident cheered at his funeral Wednesday when his son rejected the government's official eulogy, which described his calls for reforms as a mistake.

Hundreds of Vietnamese, but no senior officials, attended the funeral of retired Lt. Gen. Tran Do, who died Friday at age 78. He been hospitalized for more than a month with acute diabetes and other ailments.

Do, a decorated war veteran and former head of the ruling Communist Party's culture and ideology department, held many senior positions before becoming disillusioned over the outcome of the party's monopoly on power. He began speaking out in 1997 against corruption, abuse of power, and restrictions on freedom, and was expelled from the party in 1999 and placed under surveillance.

"He was much respected," said former National Assembly member Ngo Ba Thanh, who attended the funeral. "People think it's

good to have a man who will say that. He was speaking on behalf of democracy and the rights of the people."

The respect accorded Do created problems for the government, which never formally arrested him, but confiscated his writings and tried to limit his influence.

Scores of wreaths lined the wall of the funeral hall, including ones sent by Vietnam's most famous general, Vo Nguyen Giap, and National Assembly Chairman Nguyen Van An. But no senior officials attended, reflecting the Communist Party's rejection of all opposing political views. Authorities removed a banner from the hall expressing deep sorrow for Do's death and did not allow any display of Do's awards, which included the Ho Chi Minh Order, one of Vietnam's highest medals, participants said.

Official newspapers made no mention of Do's calls for political reform, and a delayed report of his death on state television Tuesday was read by an announcer in normal clothes, not the black customary for the deaths of prominent people.

Do was a member of the Communist Party's powerful Central Commission for more than 30 years. He was jailed in 1941 by French colonial forces, but escaped after three years. In 1951, he became political commissar of Division 312, one of the main divisions that defeated the French at Dien Bien Phu.

After the Vietnam War began in 1965, he was appointed deputy political commissar of Viet Cong forces fighting the U.S.-backed government of South Vietnam. After the war ended in 1975, he became vice minister of culture and information, head of the

party's Culture and Arts Commission, and deputy chairman of the National Assembly.

"The party, state and people honor and appreciate his praiseworthy contributions to the revolution," Vu Mao, a Central Committee member, said in the official eulogy read out at the funeral. "Regrettably, in his final years, he has made some mistakes and errors."

Do's oldest son, Tran Thang, responded by saying his father had devoted his life with integrity to the country and people. "Our family does not accept some sentences in the eulogy," he said, to loud applause and cheers from the crowd.

Do's calls for reform, including free multiparty elections and free speech, reflected his disappointment over the gap between the country's reality and the goals of the communist revolution and war of independence he had helped fight.

While the government has allowed expression of a somewhat wider range of view in recent years, it does not tolerate calls for any reduction of the Communist Party's monopoly on power.

"Our struggle for democracy in Vietnam will be difficult, but we aren't afraid," said Hoang Tien, a prominent dissident who attended Do's funeral. "The struggle will continue and we believe that more and more people are joining us."

Do's body was to be cremated later Wednesday.

Maths Prof urges free environment for creativity

Financial Times Information

July 17, 2002

Vietnam's prestigious professor of mathematics Phan Dinh Dieu has continued calling for a liberal environment to encourage creativity among young talent which he stressed is vital for the country in the process of integration, in an interview with the *Nong Thon Ngay Nay (Countryside Today)* magazine.

"Only people who are constantly prodded by a passion to seek new ideas and explanations and who live in a social environment that encourages idea exchanges, discussions or "wisdom clashes" can develop new aspirations and ideas which trigger special knowledge creativity," Dieu said. Like many other developing countries, the widening gap in knowledge compared to developed countries is the biggest difficulty in integration, he said.

"I think the ability of our younger generation to acquire knowledge is no worse than in other countries, but the fact is we are often weak in creativity. We need an environment that encourages creative aspirations and independent thinking to sustain creativity," he added.

This is the third time since the beginning of the year that Dieu has appeared in newspapers advocating a truly free environment for creativity. Dieu is one of few intellectuals who are still enthusiastically calling for a liberalized ideological environment in Vietnam.

Letter from Australia

(Article by Doan Viet Trung, President of the Vietnamese Community in Australia, published in *The Age*, Victoria)

Iraq: A New Vietnam ?

When the world tried to get Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, people said remember the Vietnam War. Then the Taliban promised a Vietnam War treatment. Now, with Canberra supporting a strike against Saddam, people again say remember the Vietnam War lesson.

What is the lesson? For me, it is this: the Vietnam War was for a good cause, and if we fight a war, we should not fight half-heartedly.

Some say that the Vietnam War was not for a good cause, it was American expansionism in disguise. But the Soviets and Chinese poured in billions of dollars and a total of several hundred thousand military personnel to help North Vietnam invade the South.

Some say that the "domino theory" about the spread of communism was just a scare created by Washington. But even the official biography of Ho Chi Minh says "He deemed it his task to spread communist doctrine in Asia in general and in Indochina particularly". Hanoi-friendly regimes in neighbouring Laos and Cambodia are the evidence.

Some say that the Vietnam War was not a good cause because the West killed innocent civilians. But anti-Saigon journalists did not reveal that communist guerillas posed as civilians, to ensure that civilians were killed. And, while they highlighted the hundreds of My Lai victims, they stayed silent about the thousands massacred in Hue in 1968 by the communists.

Some say that Ho Chi Minh rightly invaded

the South, because the South avoided holding a national reunification election which he was certain to win. But in North Vietnam there would have been only communist candidates, because Ho had assassinated all nationalists who fought alongside him against the French. And in the South, his cadres were ready to assassinate non-communist candidates.

That Australia fought for the honourable cause of protecting South Vietnam's freedom, became clear in 1975: When Saigon fell, a million people were thrown into concentration camps, where thousands were killed. Newspapers, unions, sports clubs were immediately disbanded and new ones formed under the control of the Communist Party, the only party allowed under the Constitution. Several times, all South Vietnamese woke up in the morning to find themselves equally poor because the dong had been declared invalid overnight, and they had to hand in all their savings in exchange for a subsistence amount of new dongs.

Today, while western tourists see Saigon's apparently happy face, behind that face is agony. In the central highlands, political dissidents among Vietnam's aborigines - the Montagnards - are tortured and killed, and their Christian churches outlawed. Thousands, or at least hundreds, of political and religious prisoners remain throughout Vietnam. I have a list of more than a hundred nuns and monks and priests, many having rotted in prison for at least 2 decades. Unless some have died from maltreatment, the list is growing because new arrests and imprisonments take place often.

Like the Vietnamese, the Iraqi people are ruled by ruthless totalitarianism. Replacing

Saddam with a more democratic government to help long-suffering Iraqis, and to stem the flow of refugees, is the first part of the West's honourable cause.

Unlike the Ha Noi rulers, who currently try to present a benign face in order to get foreign aid, including more than half a billion dollars from Australia over the last decade, the Baghdad rulers openly espouse terrorism. Given Saddam's alleged terrorist weapons and links, self-defence forms the second part of the West's cause.

But the Vietnam War experience tells me that the Australian government must do three things to gain public support for a war against Saddam.

First is to show the people that there is a good cause. That is, the terrorism threat is real, and Saddam's regime is what makes people flee (although this might conflict with Canberra's current boat people policy).

Second is to show that the war is winnable.

While military secrets may understandably remain secret, some information must be given to the public, and a lot must be disclosed to relevant parts of the Parliament.

Third is to show that the peace is winnable too. Just as infiltrated communist agents created division in society and destabilised the Saigon government, Saddam's loyalists can, even after military defeat, try to destabilise the new regime. A post-Saddam government with infighting problems and violent crackdowns on dissent would still drive asylum seekers out, and create fresh breeding ground for terrorism.

Without all of these things, any public

support will wane. Just as with the Vietnam War, that would lead to half-hearted involvement and perhaps early withdrawal by Australia. For our soldiers and their families, half-hearted involvement is no good.

The **Vietnamese Bulletin** *vietnamien* is a quarterly newsletter published by the Vietnamese Canadian Federation.

The Federation welcomes contributions to this publication from its member associations and from the public, as well as suggestions or comments that may help improve its format or enrich its content.

Additional copies can be obtained by writing to:

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