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# Vietnamese **BULLETIN** vietnamien

Vietnamese Canadian Federation

Fédération vietnamienne du Canada

Vietnamese Canadian Federation  
Fédération vietnamienne du Canada  
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## FEDERATION NEWS

### Message of Greetings from the Prime Minister of Canada

I am pleased to extend my warmest greetings to the members of the Vietnamese Canadian Federation and everyone celebrating Vietnamese New year.

The holidays give us a chance to get together with family and friends, to share our treasured memories and to celebrate our many blessings.

As you gather with loved ones during this special time for your community may you enjoy moments of joy and laughter, while looking forward to a future with peace, hope, and happiness.

Aline joins me in wishing you and yours the very best in the Year of the Goat.

Jean Chrétien

Ottawa

### Report on the XII Biennial Meeting

The Vietnamese Canadian Federation has held its 12<sup>th</sup> biennial meeting November 8-9, 2003 at the Vietnamese Canadian Centre in Ottawa. The purposes of this meeting were: (1) for the Executive Committee to present the progress made over the past two years; (2) to discuss the plan of action for the coming years; and (3) to elect the

Representative of the Council of Presidents, the Executive Committee, and the Internal Auditors.

Following is a summary of the proceedings of this meeting.

### **Report of the Executive Committee**

The President of the Executive Committee, Danh T. Nguyen, presented the following report on the activities of the Federation over the period 2000-2002.

#### **(a) Federation's Office**

- The Federation's office in Ottawa has operated smoothly in the last two years.

- The News Bulletin (*Ban Tin Lien Hoi*) in Vietnamese and the bilingual *Vietnamese Bulletin vietnamien* have appeared regularly and have been distributed to all Federation's member associations. Without any government funding since 1999, the Federation has tried very hard to raise funds for its activities and has achieved some success, especially due to the special efforts made by its Commissioner for Women Affairs, Thanh Hoai Nguyen, of Regina (currently Commissioner for Finance). However, in the future, the Federation may have to rely more and more on the use of the Internet for its communications in order to reduce costs.

#### **(b) Supporting the Vietnamese Canadian Centre**

The office of the Federation is located at the Vietnamese Canadian Centre, 249 Rochester Street, Ottawa. The "Project 360" that Federation initiated in 1999 to raise funds for the Centre's mortgage has worked very well. With contributions from supporters

across Canada and some in the U.S., and with two fund-raising events in Ottawa on October 14, 2001 and November 9, 2002, the Centre was able to reduce its mortgage by close to \$20,000 over these two years.

In addition to the above efforts, the Federation has also published a booklet to assist applicants for citizenship in learning about Canada (including a translated version of the document "A Look at Canada" and 196 questions and answers) and collaborated with the Health Department of the City of Ottawa in the production of a video in Vietnamese to promote health fitness. The Federation is currently collaborating with the Canadian Ethnocultural Council in the production of a 4-hour documentary film on multiculturalism in Canada.

#### **(c) Supporting the Community**

- The Federation worked together with the Vietnamese communities in the Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa regions to organize a demonstration on April 27, 2002 in front of the embassies of the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to protest against the recent border treaties whereby a large portion of Vietnamese territory was ceded to China, and to denounce China's continuing violations of Vietnamese sovereignty.

- Participated in a demonstration in front of the Embassy of Thailand on March 5, 2001 to demand the release of Ly Tong, a former pilot of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Vietnam, who used an aircraft to drop leaflets over Vietnam to call for democracy and respect for human rights.

- Collaborated with the International Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam to collect signatures for a petition

to the United Nations to demand the release of religious leaders who were being imprisoned by the Vietnamese government.

- Collaborated with the Vietnamese communities in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, the Toronto Committee for Human Rights in Vietnam, and the Vietnamese Veterans Associations in Montreal and Ottawa in the organization of a demonstration on April 27, 2001 in front of the embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam to denounce the suppression and detention of religious leaders. On this occasion, a petition with over 400 signatures was sent the Parliament of Canada to urge the Canadian government to request the Government of Vietnam to release these leaders immediately.

- Wrote to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Rights to request a meeting for religious and community leaders in the Vietnamese community to discuss the suppression of religious freedom and the imprisonment of religious leaders by the Vietnamese government.

- Arranged a meeting for Reverend Nguyen Huu Le, Executive Director of the International Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam, with officials of the Department of International Affairs and International Trade to discuss the imprisonment of religious leaders in Vietnam. This meeting took place on June 29, 2001.

#### (d) Lobbying Efforts and Collaboration with Other Organizations

- Sent representations to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and met with the Director of Resettlement of the department to urge Canada to accept 165

Vietnamese refugees stranded in the Philippines who have relatives in Canada.

- Organized consultation meetings for Canada's Ambassador to Vietnam, Cécile Latour, with the Vietnamese communities in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Montreal, Toronto, and Ottawa and met with the new ambassador, Richard Lecoq, before he went to Vietnam to assume his new function. In these meetings, the Federation drew to the Ambassadors' attention the continuing violations of human rights by Vietnamese authorities and expressed the hope of the Federation -- as well as that of the whole overseas Vietnamese community -- that Vietnam will be developed on the basis of democracy and respect for human rights.

- Met with Dr. Rey Pagtakhan, Secretary of State (Asia Pacific) to exchange views on the situation in Vietnam prior to his trip to Vietnam to attend an ASEAN meeting.

- Participated in a meeting -- organized by the International Committee for Religious Freedom in Vietnam -- in the House of Commons to discuss the case of Reverend Nguyen Van Ly who was sentenced to 15 years in imprisonment by Vietnamese authorities for advocating democracy and respect for human rights in Vietnam. This meeting was sponsored by several Members of Parliament and Senators.

- Participated in the Asian Cultural Day held at the Ottawa City Hall.

#### **Action Plan**

Following are the main features of the Action Plan adopted by the General Assembly to guide the Federation's activities in the next two years.

#### (a) Community development

- Since recent divisive developments within some of the Federation's member associations can harm the unity within the community, the Federation needs to be more active in its mediating role.

- The Federation reminds all members to avoid possible cases of conflict of interest.

- In the spirit of cooperation with its member associations, the Federation should send representatives to attend important events of its members whenever possible.

- In order to strengthen its communications networks, the Federation needs to create a position of Commissioner for Communications within its Executive Committee.

#### (b) Fund Raising

- Continue to work with the Canadian Ethnocultural Council to lobby the government to re-establish the Core Funding Programme for community organizations.

- Collaborate with member associations to organize three gala dinners to celebrate the achievements of the Vietnamese community in Canada in the following areas:

. Business, in Toronto

. Science/Technology, in Montreal

. Culture, in Edmonton

- Other potential projects include: publication of a video for citizenship applicants; compiling a document on the history of the development of the Vietnamese community in Canada; explore with Justice Canada the possibility of a

project to reduce criminal activities in the community.

#### (b) Youth

- Organize events to promote and encourage youths to participate in community activities. Especially, organize a youth workshop in Toronto with the participation of the Vietnamese Students Federations in Australia and in Southern California.

- The Federation and its member associations should prepare videos on youth activities and distribute them widely.

#### (c) Political Participation

- The Federation and its member associations should encourage community members to actively participate in political affairs in Canada by joining political parties and by working as volunteers in election campaigns for candidates of choice.

- Strengthen networks with governments, Members of Parliament, Members of Provincial Legislatures, political parties, and other ethnic organizations.

#### (d) Vietnamese Boat People Museum

- Proceed with the Vietnamese Boat People Museum as discussed at the last biennial meeting in 2000, with a view to complete this project within 5 years (2003-2005).

- Dr. Tuyen L. Nguyen, President of the Vietnamese Community in Montreal has been nominated to head up this project.

#### **Elections**

Following are the results of the elections held at the XII Biennial Meeting.

### Council of Presidents

Representative: Dr. Tuyen L. Nguyen,  
Montreal

Deputy Representative: Mr. Ut V. Ngo,  
Edmonton

### Executive Committee

President: Mr. Danh T. Nguyen, Ottawa  
Vice-President: Dr. Tung N. Pham, Toronto  
Treasurer: Mr. Thuong Q. Duong, Ottawa

### Internal Auditors

Mr. Tuyen Do, Vancouver  
Mr. Tho T. Nguyen, Halifax

### **MEDIA REVIEW**

#### VIETNAM: Dissident writer Le Chi Quang sentenced to four years' imprisonment

Rapid Action Network (RAN)  
November 12, 2002

International PEN is deeply alarmed by the heavy sentence handed down to the dissident writer and attorney Le Chi Quang on 8 November 2002. PEN considers him to be detained primarily for his criticism of the Vietnamese authorities and in contravention of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Vietnam is a signatory. We therefore call for his immediate and unconditional release.

Le Chi Quang was arrested on 21 February 2002 at an internet cafe, and was charged with 'communicating with overseas elements' via the internet for an October 2001 essay entitled 'Beware of Imperialist China'. The essay reportedly disclosed

previously unreleased details of the land and sea border treaties signed in 1999 and 2000 respectively. Quang, an outspoken critic of border agreements, was tried on 8 November 2002 by the People's Court of Hanoi and sentenced to four years' imprisonment and three years' house arrest for the 'dissemination of propaganda against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam' under Article 88 of the Vietnamese Criminal Code. During his trial, which lasted only three hours, Quang's lawyer was forbidden from presenting a case in his defence and only his relatives were allowed to be present. Nearly one hundred people reportedly gathered outside the courtroom in protest, one of whom was believed to have been arrested.

Le Chi Quang is currently being held in B14 labour camp in Ha Dong province, northern Vietnam. Already suffering from a serious kidney problem, his health has reportedly gravely deteriorated since his detention began.

International PEN is extremely concerned at the recent crackdown on dissenting voices in Vietnam as illustrated by the case of Le Chi Quang and those of the dissident writers Pham Hong Son, Nguyen Vu Binh, Bui Minh Quoc and Tran Van Khue. It reminds the Vietnamese government of its commitment to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Vietnamese Constitution and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and calls for the release of all writers held solely for the exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

Please send appeals:

- Denouncing the crackdown on freedom of expression in Vietnam;
- Protesting the severe sentence recently handed down to Le Chi Quang;

- Expressing concern at the rapid deterioration in his health;
- Calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Le Chi Quang, Pham Hong Son, Nguyen Vu Binh, Bui Minh Quoc, Tran Van Khue and all other writers held solely for the exercise of their right to freedom of expression.

### Vietnamese star defends roles

Anita M. Busch , Times Staff Writer  
November 11, 2002

In a letter to his sons, persecuted actor Don Duong speaks out, saying the government has confused fiction and reality.

Actor Don Duong, under virtual house arrest since he was labeled a traitor by authorities in his native Vietnam, is speaking out for the first time since his plight made him a Hollywood cause "célèbre".

Although he has not granted interviews, Duong has written an impassioned letter to his sons in which he decries the persecution of artists in Vietnam and defends his work in the movies that have drawn the attention of the government: "We Were Soldiers" (2002) with Mel Gibson, and "Green Dragon" (2001) with Patrick Swayze and Forest Whitaker.

The letter was made available to The Times by Duong's family.

In September, the actor, once one of Vietnam's top stars, ran afoul of authorities who viewed the films and seized his passport. Since then, Duong, who has worked as an actor for 20 years and is a member of the Screen Actors Guild, has been denied movie roles in his country.

The actor, who lives in Ho Chi Minh City with his two sons, 16-year-old Long and 11-year-old Linh, also faces jail time and may be prohibited from acting or leaving the country for five years.

He wrote the letter to his sons as one of them sobbed in the next room, seeking to give them courage and an understanding of why he is refusing to confess to the crime of which he is accused. Duong, 45, writes that since he has been "silenced," he is writing so his children "can know the truth, to affirm ... that I am always and forever not a traitor."

Duong's sister, Susie Bui, who lives in the U.S., obtained the letter and released it with his permission because he has not been permitted to give his side of the story in the Vietnamese press, which is owned by the state.

"I believe there are a lot of people waiting to hear from him, and this is the only way for him to communicate to the outside world," Bui said.

During the past few weeks, according to Bui, Duong's children have been harassed and the 16-year-old was pulled out of his classroom and interrogated by school officials. Duong's home and his actions are constantly monitored by the police, Bui said.

Duong's plight has prompted many in Hollywood to send letters to U.S. and Vietnamese officials. Gibson, "Soldiers" filmmaker Randall Wallace, Swayze, Whitaker, and actor Harvey Keitel have rallied behind Duong, defending his patriotism and asking for leniency. U.S. officials also have contacted Vietnamese officials in an effort to find a resolution. In his letter, Duong says Vietnamese officials have confused cinema and reality.

"Movies must reflect the portrait of history. 'Green Dragon' re-creates the refugee camps full of tragedy and chaos but still not lacking love and fellowship....When I portrayed the character Tai, I had to assume the viewpoint of that character, not my own viewpoint. Only idiots who know nothing about movies would confuse Don Duong with the character Don Duong portrays."

He cites lyrics of a song sung by his character in the film, and adds: "To attribute those sentiments to the actor Don Duong is truly ridiculous and extremely cruel."

He said he took the role in "Green Dragon" -- which was produced, written and directed by Duong's nephews, Tony and Timothy Linh Bui -- to offer a more realistic perception of Vietnamese refugees.

"Some conservatives ... have always considered those refugees as people who betrayed their country and their people," he writes. "Now that the war is more than a quarter of a century removed, perceptions must change.... They are an integral part of the Vietnamese people."

In his letter, Duong notes with irony that the other movie to draw government disapproval -- "We Were Soldiers" -- was condemned by the same Vietnamese official who lauded a Vietnamese film, "Farewell of River Ba," even though that movie showed a "very negative image" of Vietnamese soldiers.

In the last month, Duong has been taken from his home and interrogated twice by Vietnamese government officials and ordered to sign a statement admitting his crime. Duong refused.

In the letter, Duong explains why he agreed

to appear in "We Were Soldiers."

"I had been invited by filmmaker Randall Wallace to Paramount to discuss Vietnamese soldiers as heroes and with an attitude of great respect," he writes.

Gen. Harold Moore, author of the book on which the movie was based, admired the leadership of the Vietnamese military leader Duong would portray and the courage of the troops he led.

"Filmmaker Randall Wallace made this film in that spirit. I was very proud and happy to be allowed to portray Lt. Col. Nguyen Huu An. This film was made out to honor the young soldiers who lost their lives in this war."

In the letter, Duong concludes with an emotionally charged homage to his art, his country and his supporters.

"A film is a work of art, so each person can view it from a different perspective, but if you take the view of just a few people and condemn me as a traitor, that would be a precedent in the history of international cinema.

"I might be 'naive' about politics, but there's one thing I'm sure of: I have done nothing that bothers my conscience, have done nothing that is untruthful, have done nothing that I would want to take back. I have [acted in these films] to erase hate and promote love.

"Luckily, in [Vietnam] I have encountered many people who share my views. They help me and encourage me not to give in, not to lose hope and humanity in our country.

"No matter where, at Sundance, Berlin, Japan ... I always am proud to be Vietnamese. I have never done or said anything that would have negative consequences for my homeland. I forever respect and value the spirit of the people of Vietnam, just as the sentiment of the people who are not limited by national borders who have supported me.

"My dear children, make sure you always remember that relationships between people, even if in other countries, have no border. Despite governments, people around the world have one heart."

### Vietnam - Corruption abounding

Sep 12th 2002 | HO CHI MINH CITY  
The Economist

The issue that could undermine the government

THE Vietnamese have never seen anything like it: more than 100 government officials arrested, some 50 police officers suspended from duty, and two members of the all-powerful Central Committee expelled from the ruling Communist Party. It is hard to find an official in Ho Chi Minh City, it seems, who was not in cahoots with Nam Cam, a local crime boss. Over the past eight months, a much-publicised investigation has implicated public prosecutors, prison wardens and journalists, among others, in the gangster's drug, prostitution and protection rackets. The arrests are proof, say Vietnam's rulers, that they are serious about fighting corruption, which has spread since the introduction of market reforms in the late 1980s. In fact, the government's attitude is not so clear-cut. But the scandal certainly is proof of how widespread corruption has become, and how hard it will be to uproot.

Transparency International, a global counter-corruption watchdog, ranks Vietnam as the second most corrupt country in South-East Asia (after Indonesia), based on a survey of international businessmen. The Vietnamese government itself recently estimated that light-fingered bureaucrats cream off at least 20% of infrastructure spending. At the National Assembly in July, the prime minister, the speaker, and the secretary-general of the Communist Party all identified corruption as one of the government's main challenges.

With good reason: ordinary Vietnamese gripe about corruption far more often than they do, say, about the regime's restriction of political freedoms. It is the chief rallying cry of dissidents, and the most frequent cause of popular protests. The party's chief ambition, now that it has abandoned Marxism, seems to be the maintenance of its own power. Public disenchantment brought on by corruption is one of the biggest threats to that cause.

Yet the regime's response so far, whatever its public stance, seems half-hearted. Suspicions persist that the Nam Cam affair might go even higher than the two Central Committee members - but the investigation will not. There is no reason to imagine that Ho Chi Minh is the only big city with greasy-palmed apparatchiks, but there is no sign of a crackdown elsewhere. A deputy prime minister, sacked for corruption in 1999, is back in an advisory role. Proposals for legal reform will take years to implement. The cautious government still allows only a summary of its budget to be published, and is even dragging its feet over a proposed survey, to be paid for by a Swedish government agency, to establish just how widespread corruption is.

The cynical explanation for all this holds that the government is simply doing the minimum to dispel public anger. More charitable observers insist that it is genuinely determined to tackle corruption, but in the same cautious, consensual manner with which it has approached every sensitive subject from the adoption of market reforms to the restoration of ties with the United States. Those two steps, however, pandered to the interests of senior officials - many of whom have businesses on the side-by expanding the scope for private enterprise. This time around, the opposite is the case: the same officials who commit many of the abuses will now be charged with putting a stop to them. Appointing an independent anti-graft agency would be anathema to the party, which insists on preserving a parallel bureaucracy to enforce its will over the main one. On corruption as with all pressing issues, the party faces the same paradox: to preserve its power, it must relinquish some.

### Opinion

*The following op-ed appeared in The Washington Times, Sunday, September 8, 2002 (p. B5). The author is a young Vietnamese American professor at CSU - Bakersfield.*

Vietnamese Communist Party not interested in "real reform".

After former President Clinton's historical visit to Vietnam before leaving office, he asserted that Vietnam's "new chapter," its economy becoming more integrated with the rest of the world, was on a "virtually irreversible" road to greater prosperity and political freedom.

And the growing economic relations, like

the Bilateral Trade Agreement that recently went into effect, between the United States and Vietnam would speed up these "peaceful revolutions," which would also be beneficial for American businesses. This view is held by many in Washington, including U.S. Senators John Kerry, Massachusetts Democrat, and John McCain, Arizona Republican - both former Vietnam veterans.

This is why both senators have recently prevented a House Bill -- that would restrict non humanitarian aid unless Vietnam made progress in human rights - from Senate's consideration; and why a month earlier the House of Representatives rejected a bill that would derail Vietnam trade relations renewal.

However, as noted by David Lamb's *Vietnam, Now*, interpreting Vietnam is "like peeling the skin of an onion: You went deeper, layer by layer, but never got to the core." In fact contrary to the common view, the stop-go cycle of *Doi Moi* (economic reforms) and the short-lived (*sic*) *Coi Moi* (political reforms) by the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) since the mid-1980s illustrate that the Vietnam government was not, and is not, interested in becoming the next "Asian Tiger." Instead, the VCP's motivation to reform is to maintain its political monopoly. This appears to be, and probably has always been, the core of the party.

For the VCP, not enough reform creates social instability that would challenge its legitimacy, but too much reform can do the same. Thus, the VCP has made, unmade, and remade reforms since the mid-1980s in order to control social instability.

This stop-go cycle, however, will inevitably disappoint American businesses again -

many U.S. businesses pulled out of Vietnam in the mid-1990s during a broad reversion to *Doi Moi* earlier phases. It will also again disappoint the aspirations of Vietnam's young, industrious population who yearns for more freedom and more capital.

From 1975 to 1986, Vietnam was virtually living in the "dark-ages." Its state-owned enterprises were losing money, food was rationed, and shoes needed to be rationed. These crises drove the party leadership to reform in order to pump up legitimacy. *Doi Moi* was to encourage small private enterprise among Vietnamese, so they could feed and clothe themselves. *Coi Moi* was to give Vietnamese more political freedom, so they could coax the entrenched communist bureaucracy to carry out *Doi Moi*. Neither reforms were retreats from dictatorship but were deliberate, cautious and practical attempts to make a more efficient dictatorship in response to a new economic world order.

However, after witnessing the Tiananmen Square massacre, the VCP realized that it could not afford to open itself up to public self-criticism and ended *Coi Moi*. But some degree of self-criticism is allowed within the party. In fact, known dissidents are often party members such as the late general Tran Do who called for "a true democracy." Nonetheless, any challenge to the VCP has been, and will be, "silenced" as was Tran Do's 83-page manuscript about life in Vietnam before his death in early August 2002.

In the case of *Doi Moi*, it was continued until the mid-1990s. "The rages to riches" that resulted from *Doi Moi* brought about "social evils" that the leadership thought a reversion was needed, which resulted "the riches to rages." Now emerging from the

region financial crisis, the VCP is ready for another stop-go cycle of reforms.

The VCP, to its credit, has confused many observers about the recent phenomenon of the marriage between communism and capitalism, particularly of which is the stronger partner. Neither is. Rather, it is about sustaining political power. Overall, the VCP is making its dictatorship more economically and politically efficient, as well as more integrated, in the global economy. That has drawn adequate foreign investments and found trade-partners for its exported goods, and whose citizens have been better off relative to the first ten years after the war. All are to shore up its legitimacy.

At the same time, however, the VCP is further strangling the development of the country's "social capital"- the ability of people to trust, debate, compromise and respect for differences with each other that creates capitalism and produces democracy. This is done by barring ideas and arresting individuals that call for such development, and by withholding individuals' unalienable rights. . All are to safeguard against "peaceful revolutions."

These trends are the paradox of today's Vietnam. And this is why Vietnam is the best-worst country. It no longer lives in the dark-ages, but it will remain one of the poorest countries in the world.

The late economist Mancur Olson observed that America continued economic power, unlike dictatorships of any form, lies in its respect for individual rights. Vietnam will never have growth in the long run until individual rights are respected. There is a consensus among human rights watch groups, including the U.S. State Department,

that human rights are a problem in Vietnam and, perhaps, have gotten worse in recent years.

At a time when the Vietnam government is willing to make reform, America is better off having annual conditional Vietnam trade relations renewal. This will more likely lower U.S. investment risks in Vietnam, make sure Vietnam exported goods meet U.S. standards, and facilitate some changes in Vietnam's human rights record up-front rather than expecting "returns" somewhere down the line.

If not, Vietnam will walk away with the benefits when it has enough of reform, since most of the initial benefits of the trade agreements will go to Vietnam, and that there are no real sanctions for Vietnam to implement those agreements.

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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.

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