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FEDERATION NEWS

VCF participated in DFAIT consultation meetings

In response to the invitation from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), the Vietnamese Canadian Federation sent a representative to the department's consultation meeting held in Ottawa and the Vietnam Conference in Toronto, both in February 2003.

The summary of the discussions at the Vietnam Conference in Toronto is available from Eileen Lam, Manager, Asian Institute, Munk Centre for International Studies, University of Toronto, <eileen.lam@utoronto.ca>.

Following is a letter written by VCF President, Danh T. Nguyen, to Bill Graham, DFAIT's Minister to offer some suggestions regarding these meetings.

March 4, 2003

The Honourable Bill Graham, P.C., M.P.

Minister of Foreign Affairs and
International Trade
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Re. Consultation on Vietnam

Dear Sir:

I am writing to express our gratitude for your Department's invitation to the Vietnamese Canadian Federation to participate in the 2003 DFAIT-NGO Consultations on February 3-5 in Ottawa and the Vietnam Conference held at the University of Toronto on February 24, 2003. I was very pleased that Dr. Can D. Le, our Federation's Commissioner for External Affairs, was able to attend both events on our behalf. I was also encouraged to know that he found both events quite interesting and useful.

I noted that there was no discussion of violations of human rights in Vietnam at the DFAIT-NGO Consultations since Vietnam was not featured in the Geneva meeting of the UNHCR, and there was no background document on this issue at the Vietnam Conference in Toronto. I am therefore taking the liberty to forward to you a document recently released by International PEN on ten Vietnamese writers who are currently in prison or under house arrest in Vietnam for advocating respect for human rights and political reform. I hope that Ambassador Richard LeCoq in Hanoi will be able to pursue this matter with the Vietnamese government at his earliest convenience to urge them to release these writers.

Also, I would like to suggest that in order to give adequate background information to the participants of future meetings similar

to the events mentioned above, your Department may wish to commission the International Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Development to prepare a document on the situation of human rights and democratic reform in Vietnam. As a donor country providing development aid to Vietnam, Canada has every right to see whether its assistance contributes to progress in these areas.

Trusting that our suggestions will receive a positive response from you, I remain,

Yours sincerely,

Danh T. Nguyen
President

Attachment

MEDIA REVIEW

Vietnam Curbs Freedom of Expression and Peaceful Demonstration: Is Europe turning a blind eye ?

by Olivier Dupuis
Member of the European Parliament
European Community

Brussels, 25 February 2003

Despite the reaffirmed support of the EC and Member states for Vietnam "Legal Reform Strategy", the Vietnamese authorities continue to flout their international obligations by adopting a multitude of new laws restricting the exercise of fundamental freedoms and rights. According to the Paris-based Vietnam Committee on Human Rights, freedom of expression has come seriously under assault with the adoption of Decision 28 on Foreign Publications

(Ministry of Culture and Information, November 21, 2002). Under this Decree, the publications of all foreign organizations in Vietnam, including diplomatic bodies, international NGOs, foreign business companies and even press agencies will be subjected to State censorship. Press releases, Internet output and all other documents deemed to infringe upon the interests of the Socialist State (Article 22, SRV Press Law) may hitherto be sanctioned.

The right to peaceful demonstrations is soon to be curtailed. According to the official daily "Lao Dong" (13, January 2003). Minister Doan Manh Giao is preparing legislation to ban public gatherings in front of Party and government offices, and sanction anyone who "uses complaints and petitions" to incite people to demonstrate. This law is aimed to suppress the upsurge of peaceful demonstrations by peasants and farmers protesting official corruption and State confiscation of land. Many peasants have been arrested in the wake of these protests. On October 21st 2002, twelve villagers in Ninh Binh (northern Vietnam) received jail terms of up to 13 years on charges of "causing social unrest", and twenty-one others were jailed in December 2002. Reacting to the peasants' demonstrations in May 2002, Communist Party Secretary-general Nong Duc Manh declared that "The fact that people gather with placards is abnormal," and that democracy in Vietnam was "in many cases excessive". Question by the Olivier Dupuis, Secretary of the Transnational Radical Party and member of the European Parliament, to the Commission: "Is the Commission aware of this trend of restrictive legislation in Vietnam ? What steps is the Commission

taking, or does it intend to take, to prevent European taxpayers' money being used to finance such anti-democratic measures ? Will the EC and Member States continue to support the 10-year Legal Reform Strategy if Vietnam continues to misuse the funds in contradiction of its international obligations ?"

Religious cadres will establish cells to foil the hostile forces. Vietnam party chiefs strengthen their grip on religion from inside the faith.

Clare Arthurs in Hanoi
(South China Morning Post
January 27, 2003, p. 10)

Vietnam's communist government has moved to tighten its grip on religion by calling on party-friendly religious believers to help foil "hostile forces". The move effectively steps up monitoring of the country's six approved religions and was mandated by a meeting of the Communist Party's Central Committee after a nine-day plenum.

The committee's 150 members had three sensitive issues on the agenda, religion, ethnic minority issues and land distribution - all of which have been causing unrest and threatening, in the minds of its leaders, Vietnam's national unity. Deputy Prime Minister Vu Khoan said the central committee had never before issued a resolution on religion. "There's one main point in this resolution", said Thich Minh Tien, a spokesman for the board of the national Buddhism association. "It focuses on building and strengthening a pool of hard-core civil servants who are religious

leaders within the Communist Party." This is the first time that being a religious member is institutionalised within the party.

The resolution calls for the establishment of cells of Communist Party members within each of Vietnam's six approved religions. According to Communist Party figures, a quarter of Vietnam's eighty million people are religious, most of them Buddhist or Catholic. It appears to call for a concerted effort against dissent, by appealing to the patriotism of religious people as they "volunteer"; in the struggle to "foil all attempts of hostile forces who abuse religious and ethnic minority issues to sabotage national unity and act against our political regime".

Vietnam's constitution provides for religious freedom. The party has religious members as well as guaranteed seats for religious leaders in the single - chamber parliament, the National Assembly. The new resolution appears to cement control of religion from within. It provides for a programme to specifically increase the state management of religious affairs, and to "guide" the six approved religions in line with party policy.

The announcements coincide with the release of the annual report of the independent monitoring group, Human Rights Watch (HRW). The HRW report said that Vietnamese authorities "continued to suppress and control the activities of religious groups, including ethnic minority Christians in the northern and central highlands, members of the banned Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, (UBCV) and Hoa Hao Buddhists in the south." Vietnam denies dissidents are being harassed and

jailed, saying that punishment is meted out to those who break the law.

The HRW allegations included police beatings of ethnic Hmong and Tai Christians in the north, the detention of a Protestant house-church leader, Nguyen Dang Chi for unauthorised preaching, and the disappearance of UBCV monk Thich Tri Luc. He vanished while under United Nations protection in Cambodia and is feared to have been forced back to Vietnam. The human rights group also alleged that there had been suppression of the Montagnards, or mountain people, of the Central Highlands. This comes despite official statements about steps being taken to improve conditions.

Human Rights Watch

Vietnam: New Documents Reveal Escalating Repression

(New York, April 21, 2003) - Vietnam's campaign of persecution against ethnic minorities known as Montagnards is increasing, Human Rights Watch said today, making public new documents smuggled out of the country's Central Highland region.

A nineteen-page briefing paper published by Human Rights Watch details recent events in the Central Highlands through March 2003 and provides English translations of previously unavailable documents, including several hand-written Montagnard testimonies on the crackdown, and two internal Vietnamese government directives.

"Despite Hanoi's statements of concern for its ethnic minorities, Vietnam is clearly escalating its repression of the

Montagnards," said Brad Adams, executive director of the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch. "The United Nations and Vietnam's international donors must take a more active role in protesting and preventing such serious human rights violations."

Nine letters written by Montagnard church leaders in Dak Lak province detail ongoing human rights violations up to the end of February 2003. They describe beatings of church leaders by police and other officials, destruction of churches, official prohibitions on nighttime gatherings and travel outside of villages, and widespread confiscation of villagers' farm land by authorities.

Human Rights Watch has obtained original copies of official Vietnamese government documents issued in February 2003, describing ceremonies in which Montagnard villagers are forced to "Swear Brotherhood" (le ket nghia) with local party cadres in front of pictures of Ho Chi Minh. Local officials are instructed to coordinate with party officials to "step by step, eradicate out-dated and backward ways, and eradicate all illegal religious organizations."

To enforce the new directives, in February 2003 the Vietnamese government launched a fresh round of arrests of Montagnard Christians as well as those suspected by the government of seeking to flee to Cambodia or of supporting the Montagnard movement for greater land rights. Widespread peaceful demonstrations took place in the Central Highlands in February 2001.

Other documents obtained by Human Rights Watch show how government officials are forcing Montagnards to sign "voluntary"

papers pledging to withdraw petitions opposing government confiscation of their land.

In March, Human Rights Watch received a hand - written list containing the names and thumbprints of 439 ethnic Montagnard Christian families (1,206 people) from Dak Lak province, Vietnam, who are requesting international protection in Cambodia. "Please have pity for us and rescue the Christian believers and help us receive back our ancestral lands," one of the petitions states. "Only those who have been persecuted have agreed to give their fingerprints below."

Hundreds of Montagnards have gone into hiding in Vietnam, unable to obtain asylum in Cambodia. On March 26, Vietnamese security police and soldiers shot at a group of Montagnards who had gone into hiding in the forest in Gia Lai province. Five people escaped, but two men were wounded and taken to the commune center, where one of the men later died. When his body was returned to his family, his skull had been severely crushed, apparently from additional beatings by security officers at the commune center. The whereabouts of the other man taken into custody are unknown. A third Montagnard was arrested and beaten on March 27, but then allowed to return to his village.

Since the beginning of 2003, more than 100 Montagnards who have tried to flee to Cambodia have been forcibly returned to Vietnam, where some have been arrested and beaten. More than seventy Montagnards are currently serving lengthy prison sentences in Vietnam for participating in

protests or trying to flee to Cambodia since February 2001.

The Cambodian government, which last year sealed its borders to new refugee arrivals, announced this month that it plans to close the refugee transit center operated by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Phnom Penh as soon as the final forty-two refugees are resettled.

"UNHCR's ability to protect and screen new refugees will be severely compromised if it is forced to close its refugee camps in Cambodia," said Adams.

Human Rights Watch called on Vietnam's international donors to insist that Vietnam cease its persecution against the Montagnards. Human Rights Watch also called on the Cambodian government to authorize UNHCR to immediately establish a field presence in Cambodia's border provinces, to re-open provincial refugee camps that were closed last year, and to provide protection and assistance to refugees from Vietnam.

Death of A River : **The Mekong River and the Chinese** **Development Projects Upstream**

(by Tran tien Khanh, February 2003)

The Mekong river is known to the Vietnamese as Song Cuu Long (River of Nine Dragons) because it flows out of nine estuaries like nine dragons. From its origin in the high plateau of Tibet, the Mekong river is 4500 km long and the 12th longest river in the world, flowing through six countries that include China, Burma,

Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. True to its name (Mekong means Mother River in Laotian), the Mekong river is the lifeline to more than 60 million inhabitants in downstream countries such as Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Most of them are poor fishermen living off the river fish catch or poor farmers using the river water and rich silt to grow rice. They also use the river as their principal means of transportation. In the next two decades, the number of the basin inhabitants is expected to increase to over 100 millions. Their daily life is constantly threatened by floods, deforestation, pollution as well as ill-planned development projects. The biggest threat to their livelihood is the hydroelectric dams built or planned by the Chinese in Yunnan Province. Moreover, the Chinese are clearing and enlarging the river as a navigation channel for large commercial boats. These development projects by China will cause serious economic and environmental consequences in countries within the river basin, especially Cambodia and Vietnam. In going ahead with these projects, China has not considered the interests of these countries. This may be the cause for conflict, political crisis and even war in the near future. Even the survival of the river may be in serious doubt in the next few decades. After examining the Chinese development projects, experts at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC have been alarmed by the prospect that some fish species may become extinct. These experts also predicted that the Mekong river may die similar to the Yangtze and other large rivers in China due to ill-planned development and widespread pollution.

In the last ten years, China has begun the construction of hydroelectric dams in Yunnan. The Manwan dam was built in 1993 with an electrical output of 1500 MW. The Dachaoshan dam has just been completed in December 2002. This dam has an output of 1350 MW, with a height of a 30-story building and a water reservoir of 88 km in length. China has just begun in January 2003 the construction of the Xiaowan dam, with an output of 4200 MW and a reservoir of 169 km in length. Costs for the Xiaowan dam are estimated at 4 billion USD. When completed in 2013, this dam will be the tallest in the world, with a height of 300 m similar to a 100-story building. At least five other big dams are also planned by the Chinese. All these dams are designed to generate electricity for Yunnan, a relatively poor province that China is trying to develop.

China has also begun the dredging of the river to facilitate the travel by large boats. The river bottom in Yunnan has already been cleared. Underwater rocks and rapids on a 300-km stretch of the river, from the Burmese-Chinese border to Laos, has begun to be destroyed. When completed, commercial boats larger than 100 MT can travel from the port of Simao in Yunnan to other ports in neighboring countries.

China has said that all the above hydroelectric and navigational development projects should bring several benefits to the countries downstream. The Chinese leaders also mentioned that any ecological and environmental effects, if existed, are minimal. The hydroelectric dams should alleviate the flooding problem during the monsoon season and the drought problem

during the dry season. Turning the river into a shipping channel should also increase trade between China and other neighboring countries and bring prosperity to all.

The above development projects are conducted in secrecy and little details are known. China frequently minimizes or hides all adverse environmental impacts. Recently an environmental impact assessment for the river enlargement has been criticized by the Mekong River Commission as incomplete and fundamentally flawed. All four downstream countries (Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam) are members of this commission, while the two upstream countries (Burma and China) have refused to join but have frequently sent in observers.

Contrary to the Chinese findings, hydroelectric dams will cause economic and environmental disasters, affecting the lives of millions in countries downstream. Floods occur annually from June to October and hundreds have lost their life. Most of the flood victims are children who die of drowning due to lack of supervision by older members of their family. There are signs that the Yunnan dams have increased the flood intensity in 2002. Since the water reservoirs have been full, the dams have released excess water that further raised the floodwater level of the Mekong. The number of flood victims and damages to crops and homes have increased in Cambodia, Thailand and elsewhere.

During the dry season, the Mekong water level is markedly low because only the glaciers in Tibet and Yunnan remain the water sources. The average flow rate decreases from 50,000 m³/s during the rainy

season to only 2000 m³/s during the dry months. The dry season normally lasts from November to May. If the upstream dams do not release water because of drought or water needs of the reservoirs, serious consequences can occur downstream. All downstream countries will be affected by saltwater intrusion, and rice fields in many places will have to be abandoned because of saltwater or lack of water for growing crops.

In addition to changing the water levels and the natural cycles of the Mekong, water reservoirs at the dams will retain the rich sediment. Lacking water and rich silt will render the rice fields downstream less fertile. Rice production will decrease drastically, especially in the Mekong delta of Vietnam. The amount of rich silt may decrease up to 50% because of the dams. This may cause widespread famine since the delta is the main rice producer for the whole Vietnam. In 1997, China has closed down the Mekong for four days due to the dam construction, costing the Vietnamese \$100,000 USD per day.

While rice fields downstream lack the rich sediment, the dams in Yunnan will be silted up. The rate of silt flowing into the Manwan dam has doubled compared to initial estimates. One of the reasons that the Chinese have used to justify the building of the Xiaowan dam is that this dam is upstream of the Manwan dam and, therefore, can reduce the amount of silt flowing into the Manwan dam. Nevertheless, the Xiaowan dam and all other dams will be filled by silt in the next few decades. All water reservoirs will become vast and useless wasteland! On average, the useful life of each dam will be shortened to about

20 years, compared to the initial estimate of 70 years. A study completed in November 2000 by the World Commission on Dams has found that most big dam projects in the world have not resulted in any economic benefits when compared to the construction costs, the resettlement of people and adverse environmental impacts.

With 1245 fish species, the Mekong river is the second river in the world with the most fish species, just behind the Amazon river in South America. Among these are rare species like the giant catfish weighting up to 300 kg and the river dolphin. Up to 1.8 metric tons (MT) are caught in downstream countries. Lake Tonle Sap in Cambodia alone has produced 400000 MT.

The Yunnan dams will modify the water levels, temperature and cycles of the Mekong river. All these changes will adversely affect the birth and growth of all fish species. Dredging the river will also make its water flowing faster and cause the erosion of the river banks. Underwater rocks that are currently prime breeding sites for fish will be destroyed. Several fish species will disappear because they cannot adapt to the unnatural changes. Fishermen in several locations along the Mekong have already complained that their fish catch has drastically been reduced in the past few years. This is an adverse impact affecting the livelihood and health of millions of people since fish is their primary source of protein.

With the hydroelectric and navigational projects described above, China will have almost complete control of the Mekong. All these development projects will cause social, economic and environmental disasters in

downstream countries, especially Cambodia and Vietnam. The survival of these countries along with the livelihood of over 60 million people will be in the hands of China. Facing with these development projects, the countries downstream often react weakly, either under political pressure from China or because of the Chinese promises of economic aid. International organizations, such as the Mekong River Commission, ASEAN, the United Nations, World Bank and Asian Development Bank, will need to force China to consider seriously and objectively all potential adverse impacts in downstream countries that may result from any development project. Especially the international banks will also need to reconsider all dam projects that they currently provide the financing, not only from China but also from all other nations as well. Most dam projects have not brought any economic benefits when compared with the building costs and the adverse environmental impacts. China needs to realize that the Mekong river is not only for upstream countries like Burma and itself, but also for downstream ones like Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Former Premier Zhou En Lai used to say to the leaders of countries downstream: " I live upstream and you live downstream. We all drink water from the same river. So we are like members of a close family". The current leaders of China need to put these words into practice in order to promote mutual understanding, full cooperation and respect of interests of other countries. Only through these efforts can future conflicts, economic and environmental disasters be avoided both in Yunnan and in downstream countries and, especially, the Mekong river can be spared

of a terrible death in a very near future!

BOOK REVIEW

The lessons of Vietnam

Ending the Vietnam War: A History of America's Involvement In and Extrication From the Vietnam War

Henry Kissinger, Simon and Schuster: 640 pp., \$18 paper

(Reviewed by Larry Berman, the author of *No Peace, No Honor: Nixon, Kissinger and Betrayal in Vietnam*)

Richard M. Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger did not start the Vietnam War, but much death and destruction occurred during their watch. As authors of that carefully choreographed script titled "peace with honor," they were responsible for the etching of an additional 20,000 names into the Vietnam Veterans Memorial wall and the addition of hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese names to countless graves and war memorials. Calculate the number of maimed and wounded and the tragedy of this war and its aftermath becomes too much to bear. Despite the passage of time, the Vietnam War remains an enigma: for some, a metaphor for defeat; for others, a moral tragedy of betrayal; and for everyone, a war from which a lesson can be drawn for another American military intervention in a distant land. Which brings us to this curious book, which appears 30 years after the signing of the Paris Agreement, by Kissinger, its Nobel Peace Prize-winning architect. Why now, after having penned four previous treatises totalling thousands of pages on the same subject (from which

Kissinger has extracted almost the entirety of this narrative, albeit with a smattering of what the publisher describes as "new and updated material"), has Kissinger written another book? Is there anything here that he has not already told us?

"Ending the Vietnam War" is Kissinger's most recent attempt to insist that he and President Nixon ended the war with honor. But the truth is that peace did not come to Vietnam when the Americans went home. Kissinger rejects the oft-made charges that: 1) he made too many concessions, especially with respect to the continued presence of North Vietnamese forces; 2) the Nixon administration should have known Congress and the public would never support the use of American airpower to enforce the agreement; and 3) neither he nor Nixon ever endorsed a decent interval between military disengagement and eventual collapse. Rather, he argues that he negotiated a proper and honorable interval between an American disengagement and the expected subsequent holding of free elections in South Vietnam.

Each of his points deserves careful consideration. When the United States began private talks with North Vietnam in 1969, it did so from the basic position of mutual withdrawal of troops. The United States would withdraw its military forces from South Vietnam and North Vietnam would also withdraw its army from South Vietnam. Such reciprocity was immediately rejected by Hanoi, which refused to acknowledge that it had foreign forces in what it considered its own country. Under the terms of the Paris Agreement, about 150,000 communist troops were permitted to remain in South Vietnam.

Kissinger writes that permitting North Vietnamese troops to remain in South Vietnam was not considered a concession, because this position had already been implicitly accepted in all standstill cease-fire proposals since 1970. South Vietnam's president, Nguyen Van Thieu, was aware of this. What Kissinger does not say is that in 1970, the balance of forces in South Vietnam was in the United States' favor, and that over the next two years, Hanoi flooded its troops into the South in anticipation of a complete unilateral American withdrawal. By late 1972, the balance of forces in the South was in Hanoi's favor, and Hanoi instructed its advisor to the Paris Peace Conferences, Le Duc Tho, that he could concede on the point of Thieu remaining in power. Kissinger never mentions any of this. Instead, he insists that he and Nixon did not impose a political settlement on the South.

Between 1969 and 1973, the secrecy surrounding the talks between Kissinger and Tho was so complete that no one knew of any precise negotiating position agreed upon between the United States and South Vietnam or, for that matter, between the bureaucratic agencies of the U.S. government. Even today, these details are being released slowly and not without a battle involving Freedom of Information Act requests and mandatory declassifications. The slowly emerging declassified record, contrary to the tale Kissinger tells in "Ending the Vietnam War," makes it clear that Thieu, the Joint Chiefs and the State Department were informed but rarely consulted. Thieu was kept in the dark by Kissinger, who negotiated the future of South Vietnam directly with his North Vietnamese counterpart.

Thieu was outraged when he read for the first time the text of an October 1972 draft treaty that allowed Northern forces to remain in the South.

Thieu had wanted all invading armies out of South Vietnam. Kissinger maintains that the key concession was the abandonment of an American residual force. The United States had to withdraw all forces and dismantle all its bases within 60 days of the agreement and this, according to Kissinger, "was the principal weakness of the agreement, far more significant than the continued presence of North Vietnamese forces."

Kissinger writes that he and Nixon wanted to retain a residual force in Vietnam to police the agreement, but domestic pressure dictated otherwise, and this led Nixon to rely on air power as the enforcing mechanism for future communist violations.

Three decades later, this version has an Alice in Wonderland quality to it because Kissinger has invented the concept of a residual force. There is no evidence that such a force was ever contemplated.

In addition, Kissinger told the Joint Chiefs in November 1972: "The agreement does not legalize the presence of North Vietnamese troops in the South. They claim they have none there. This is a lie, of course, but contrary to some misunderstandings, there is no legal basis for them being there. Therefore we can retaliate strongly if they move troops in." What can he possibly have meant by "retaliate"? In reality, Kissinger and Nixon did not expect the cease-fire to last long, which would guarantee a prompt military retaliation, but neither Congress nor

the American people were to be told.

Kissinger writes that the U.S. position rejected a coalition government and favored "free elections to be supervised by an Electoral Commission." Thieu believed that with Northern troops in the South, free elections would be impossible. Nixon and Kissinger agreed, telling him repeatedly that the timing of the election was up to Thieu. "Without a North Vietnamese withdrawal, there is no reason to risk the political solution," Kissinger advised Thieu. A National Council of Reconciliation and Concord was created whose purpose was to organize and supervise free elections.

Thieu viewed the council as a coalition government in disguise but was told not to take the council seriously. There would be no need to hold elections until the communist troops left South Vietnam. Kissinger is silent on these matters.

If not for Watergate, Nixon would have unleashed the B-52s, as he secretly promised Thieu, in return for unity on the negotiated settlement. As Kissinger writes, "none of us could imagine the collapse of presidential authority" that followed Nixon's overwhelming 1972 electoral victory.

Nixon and Kissinger believed that after American POWs came home, they would be able to rally the American public. "You won't be able to wave a document at them, whatever is in it," Kissinger warned. "The North Vietnamese fear is whether the B-52s come again..." Ambassador William Sullivan told the South Vietnamese that the accord was only "a piece of paper." Nixon added that "more important than any other

factor was not the language of the agreement, or a piece of paper, but the United States commitment to enforce the agreement." No one expected the communists to honor the agreement, and when they violated it, "it won't be necessary to haggle over proof."

In December 1972, Kissinger told the South Vietnamese delegation to the Paris peace talks: "Do you think I will believe Le Duc Tho? Of course they will cheat. But if they use the Ho Chi Minh Trail and we bomb the Ho Chi Minh Trail, we have a legally strong position.... You have missed the real issues. The key is whether the American people know they have achieved something. No one knows what the Korean Armistice says. But the people know they have achieved something, and if the North Koreans violate it, the president can defend it.... The major use of the agreement to you is that it links us legally to you on a long-term basis for an indefinite period." Shortly thereafter, Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr. told Thieu that "the American people will be willing to make whatever sacrifices are necessary to ensure that the agreement succeeds ... should Hanoi violate the agreement, then the legal, psychological and patriotic basis will exist for brutal U.S. retaliation."

In "Ending the Vietnam War," Kissinger writes that "we had a moral duty to our allies in Saigon not to abandon millions who had put their trust in our word." He describes "one of the saddest experiences of my period in office: the visit of America's ally, President Thieu, to the United States. There was little about the visit of which America could be proud." Thieu visited Casa Pacifica, the western White House,

before flying to Washington, D.C. According to Kissinger, "Nixon made a polite speech that referred to South Vietnam's capacity to defend itself -- a dubious proposition if Hanoi launched an all-out attack with Soviet weapons. Thieu fell in gracefully with this fairy tale...."

What Kissinger does not write is that the terms of American disengagement constituted a suicide pact for 20 million innocent South Vietnamese who preferred not to live under communist tyranny. By all rights, Henry Kissinger ought have the decency to return his peace prize.

The **Vietnamese Bulletin**

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