

and policies, but it also makes one's criticism of negative policies much more powerful. I would simply like to mention a few of those positive things I witnessed in Vietnam.

During our visit to North and Central Vietnam this past January we were told by church leaders and lay people that the past Christmas was one of the happiest Christmas celebrations in many years. The government had helped the churches purchase the items they needed to make the Christmas season as joyous as possible. As we visited churches we saw evidence from the decorations still up that indeed a lot of time, effort, and resources had gone into the celebration.

We were also informed by pastors, priests, and Buddhist monks that the government was assisting in the rebuilding of destroyed religious structures. One such Protestant church is the Que Son church in Quang Nam province, which was completed and dedicated on Christmas day. This church received a direct hit from an American bomber in 1971, which resulted in the death of eighty Christians who had taken refuge there.

We also saw programs set up to help former prostitutes and drug addicts receive training so that they could reenter society as productive members of that society rather than as outcasts.

We visited a Buddhist seminary that has recently opened in Hanoi and that not only trains monks for service in the numerous pagodas throughout the country, but also is working at translating the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Vietnamese so that it will be available to all Vietnamese. This seminary is operating with the full approval of the government.

We visited a rural area in Central Vietnam where the government is putting in a large irrigation system so that the farmers there will no longer lose their crops to drought and can, in fact, increase their harvest from two to three crops a year.

During my stay in Saigon after the war ended I saw serious efforts being made to reunite family members separated for as long as twenty years because of the war. Close friends of ours would bring by for a visit uncles and aunts they had not seen since 1954, and even brothers.

I met several old friends who, because they were officers in the old army,

spent nine months in reeducation camps. They made no mention of torture or mistreatment. Rather, they talked about learning how to work with their hands in the gardens and how they spent time learning about the new economic and social system they were living under. One young doctor, after completing his reeducation course, was made director of a drug rehabilitation center near Saigon.

In conclusion, I think we as Christians need to be very aware of what is going on in Vietnam. We need to be sensitive about our own failure to offer human rights to all people, and we need to be ready to admit our failures and seek ways to correct them. We need to be willing to take the time to try to understand the many complexities of this situation. And above all we need to try to listen to each other without trying to destroy those whose ideas are different from our own. Otherwise our witness is one of disorder and hatred rather than a serious search for human dignity and unity.

Max Ediger

Liberal, Kansas

To the Editors: The three articles in your April issue regarding human rights in Vietnam (and the controversy occasioned by the appeal from antiwar activists, asking Hanoi to allow an impartial investigation of charges) deserves applause.

As one of those intimately involved in the preparation and submission of the appeal to the Vietnamese Government, I would offer two comments that might be of use to your readers.

First of all, though I say this with the sympathy of an editor well acquainted with the surgeries required by space limitations, I wish you could have found the extra inches to print the entire appeal. The signers went to considerable pains in coming up with a text that would put our human rights concern in a very special context. I realize Jim Finn made reference in his essay to the emphasis in the appeal on reconstruction aid and the normalization of ties with Vietnam, but the partial text reads very differently without these and other elements. You might consider publishing, in the correspondence column, some of these missing paragraphs. [The missing paragraphs appear on p. 59.—Eds.] Readers wishing the full text could write

to the International League for Human Rights (777 U.N. Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10017) and request a copy.

Second, it is worth mentioning that public circulation of the appeal was undertaken very reluctantly. Throughout the appeal's drafting process I regularly wrote to Vietnam's observer to the United Nations, sending him the appeal in draft form as well as the documentation that was pushing us toward an appeal. In every letter I expressed our hope that a quiet meeting might take place at which some sharing of views might occur. Our concern was to influence the Vietnamese Government, not to be an occasion of embarrassment or an excuse for a hardening of attitudes on the part of the U.S. Government.

Unfortunately, Dinh Ba Thi, the U.N. observer, never replied. When Dan Berrigan, Robert Ellsberg, and I tried to visit without an appointment, all we were able to do was slip a note under the door—as Jim Finn recounts. This was after the appeal had been formally submitted and, incredibly, returned with its documentation—but minus acknowledgment or response.

It was the unwillingness of the Vietnamese authorities to respond in any way—plus a news story in the *Washington Star*—that prompted the International League for Human Rights to adopt the appeal as part of a project and to make it public. (It appears the *Star* had obtained the appeal, ironically enough, from a source hostile to its text, and it published a story on the controversy that made little reference to those elements in the appeal on which both sides in the controversy agreed.)

Nat Hentoff's essay, "Is It Any of Our Business?" in *The Village Voice*, February 28, would be of interest to many *Worldview* readers—an extraordinary piece of reportage.

Meanwhile, the human rights crisis appears to be continuing in Vietnam. Five leaders of the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam were reportedly arrested the night of April 6-7. One is reminded of earlier collisions between Church and State—whether between Diem and the same Buddhists more than a decade ago or further back, with such troublesome individuals as Thomas More.

James H. Forest

*Hof van Sonoy
Veerstraat 1
Alkmaar, Holland*