

tionary thought, on the other, is that revolution today is more an end in itself, is less amenable to being checked by any notion of the ideal society. The book uses generous quotations throughout; indeed, it is really a reader of stunning diversity and comprehension. It will be valued less as a theoretical statement than as an anthology. As an anthology, it is uncommonly valuable.

Erratum

An unfortunate error crept into A. James McAdams's response to Neil McCafrey in the May issue. The skewed sentence correctly reads: "But if AH manages to sell ten thousand, even five thousand, of its books (at hardcover prices) every month, I'd say it wasn't doing badly at all." —Ed.

Correspondence

[from p. 2]

namese population. The cycle of violence did not begin with the American entrance in force into the Indochinese peninsula in 1954. In 1945-46 Vo Nguyen Giap, then Minister of the Interior, liquidated many Vietnamese nationalists. Later this systematic murder policy was applied even to those who were willing to cooperate with the Communists to fight against the French (such as Huynh Phu So, leader of the Hoa Hao Buddhists, who was killed at a meeting to which the Communists invited him). Concentration camps, such as the infamous Ly Ba So camp in North Vietnam, dated back to the very beginning of the first Indochina war. All this happened before any great power involvement in Vietnam and prior to any "collaboration" of the nationalists with the French and the Americans. Later similar camps were set up to imprison those who never collaborated with foreigners and whose only crime was being a landowner. I will give the names and addresses (in the U.S.) of some former victims of these earliest concentration camps to whomever wishes to interview them for fact-finding purposes.

To those Americans who do not dare to defend the unjustly punished Vietnamese because they are Americans, we would like to send this message: "You

should avoid publicizing your failure of nerve. If you continue in this failure, the peace you have advocated for your country is a peace with dishonor indeed."

Nguyen Ngoc Huy

Cambridge, Mass.

To the Editors: I have hesitated to make any response to "Fighting Among the Doves," knowing that making a response puts one in a position to receive one of several labels that seem to be thrown around so readily these days. How much better if we could simply relate our various experiences to each other as Christian brothers and sisters rather than feeling it necessary to try to destroy those we disagree with.

I am one of those people who had the experience of living in Vietnam under the old and the new authorities, and who also had the opportunity to return to Vietnam for a visit in January of this year. When we visited Vietnam, we went with the knowledge that we would probably be given a tour that would not allow us to see absolutely everything the new situation had created. We attempted to interpret our experiences in that light. I trust that those who are listening for the negative side of the situation remember that they too can be given a tour through the situation that is just as misleading and false. One might keep in mind that the 4 per cent of the Americans who fled America after the 1776 revolution probably wrote an account of that revolution that would make one shudder with horror.

The article mentions a letter written to Jim Forest by a longtime pacifist who now lives in Hong Kong. I too have read that letter, and feel that the quote mentioned in the article is rather taken out of context. As I understand what this particular pacifist is trying to say, unless we are seriously trying to clean up the mess we left in someone's house, our criticisms of the mess they *might* be creating in their house rings rather hollow and could seem downright ridiculous. The question of human rights is a very serious one, and one the Christian cannot ignore. But unless we accept the fact that we too are violating human rights in Vietnam and strive to correct that, we lose our basis for speaking about others' possible violation of human rights. It is a well-known fact that when America withdrew from Vietnam, it left behind thousands of tons of

unexploded munitions. These mines, grenades, bombs, etc. continue to kill and maim Vietnamese who are trying to return to their land to farm. Is it not the right of a human being to be able to return to his/her farm and till the soil without the threat of being blown to bits by an M-79 grenade or a Claymore mine?

An elderly member of a small congregation I occasionally attended returned to his farm after many years of living as a refugee. He had only begun to turn over the fallow soil when his hoe hit an M-79 grenade and he was instantly killed. We heard many reports of similar deaths. If we produced the munitions and put them there, do we not have a moral responsibility to take them out so the farmers can live? It is not only the Vietnamese who are saying "If you really believe in human rights, then give our farmers the right to farm."

Similar things can be said about the food and medical situation in Vietnam. The South was extremely dependent on the U.S. for food and medical supplies. Since the U.S. has refused to give any kind of aid to the Vietnamese people, the people must suffer serious shortages of these commodities. An unknown number of houses, schools, hospitals, factories, and churches were destroyed by bombings. I was told on several occasions by young Vietnamese students that it is common knowledge that those who destroy something have a responsibility at least to help rebuild it. Is it not the right of the Vietnamese to be able to have homes to live in, hospitals to receive care in, and schools to send their children to? If we helped destroy those structures, are we not violating the rights of the Vietnamese people if we refuse to help them rebuild those structures?

It seems to me that a constructive appeal for human rights requires many things. One is looking seriously for one's own involvement in the violation of human rights. Another is to know clearly that there is, in fact, a violation of human rights to make an appeal about. A third, perhaps, is to recognize that no government is 100 per cent good, but neither is any government 100 per cent bad. We can gain a lot of respect if we seek out, affirm, and lend support to those positive aspects of a people or a government. Not only might this encourage that people or government to strive for more positive actions

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*