



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH VIETNAM ARMED FORCES

June 19th is the Armed Forces Day of the former Republic of South Vietnam.

For more than 20 years, the Vietnamese military fought under difficult situations. Military servicemen were paid low salaries, while they were fighting against the enemy who abided by none of the Geneva Convention rules concerning warfare. Their enemy used terrorism as the principal weapon along with wily propaganda schemes. Meanwhile the South Vietnamese soldiers had to act conformingly to laws and rules.

There was an attempt to start a dog program for the Vietnamese military. It never had a chance to become effective. The handlers were only slightly bigger than their dogs. The dogs were more expensive to feed than their own soldiers.

By April 30, 1975, the Vietnamese military had suffered about 230,000 KIA's, over 300,000 WIA's - among them about 150,000 were disabled including nearly 4,000 who were 100 per cent disabled. Only the MIA figures were low, a few thousands. This was due to their efforts to bring back most of the dead to bury them in their home towns or in military cemeteries.

The heavy losses they suffered proved that they had been fighting hard for their country, not running like rabbits as described in many reports. They fell before their enemy on the battlefields as any other brave warrior. Corrupt officers did not mean they all were cowards.

At least, the RVN Armed Forces were well organized, with efficient institutions, and with a strong sense of honor, with right cause and lofty ideals. They might have not been the best, but at least better than most of the contemporary armed forces of the pro-American nations in the Third World. The murder of thousands of civilian teachers, doctors, and other educated persons, during the Tiet offensive of 1968, showed the world what the future held for South Vietnam. The Viet Cong & North Vietnamese army did not want survivors that knew the word freedom. Jane Fonda and the majority of other anti-war protestors never complained about the atrocities committed by the communist.

Only folk singer and anti-war protestor Joan Baez protested the treatment of the South Vietnamese after they were conquered. "Joan founds Humanitas International Human Rights Committee, a human rights organization she will head for the next 13 years. The first course of action for Humanitas is to publish the "Open Letter to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam" in five major U.S. newspapers. The letter protests human rights violations occurring in that country. Joan travels to Southeast Asia to substantiate reports of human rights violations there, and back in the U.S., she successfully prevails upon President Jimmy Carter to dispatch the Seventh Fleet to rescue large numbers of "boat people" fleeing the region. Humanitas, along with KRON-TV and the San Francisco Examiner newspaper, forms the Cambodian Emergency Relief Fund and raises over one million dollars in aid."

<http://www.joanbaez.com/chronology.html>

Open letter to the Socialist Republic of Vietnam

Published in the New York Times 1/5/1979

Four years ago, the United States ended its 20-year presence in Vietnam. An anniversary that should be cause for celebration is, instead, a time for grieving. With tragic irony, the cruelty, violence and oppression practiced by foreign powers in your country for more than a century continue today under the present regime.

Thousands of innocent Vietnamese, many whose only «crimes» are those of conscience, are being arrested, detained and tortured in prisons and re-education camps. Instead of bringing hope and reconciliation to war-

torn Vietnam, your government has created a painful nightmare that overshadows significant progress achieved in many areas of Vietnamese society.

Your government slated in February 1977 that some 50,000 people were then incarcerated. Journalists, independent observers and refugees estimate the current number of political prisoners between 150,000 and 200,000. Whatever the exact figure, the facts form a grim mosaic. Verified reports have appeared in the press around the globe, from Le Monde and The Observer to the Washington Post and Newsweek

We have heard the horror stories from the people of Vietnam from workers and peasants, Catholic nuns and Buddhist priests, from the boat people, the artists and professionals and those who fought alongside the NLF. The jails are overflowing with thousands upon thousands of «detainees.» People disappear and never return. People are shipped to re-education centers, fed a starvation diet of stale rice, forced to squat bound wrist to ankle, suffocated in «connex» boxes. People are used as human mine detectors, clearing live mine fields with their hands and feet. For many, life is hell and death is prayed for.

Many victims are men, women and children who supported and fought for the causes of reunification and selfdetermination; those who as pacifists, members of religious groups, or on moral and philosophic grounds opposed the authoritarian policies of Thieu and Ky; artists and intellectuals whose commitment to creative expression is anathema to the totalitarian policies of your government.

Requests by Amnesty International and others for impartial investigations of prison conditions remain unanswered. Families who inquire about husbands, wives, daughters or sons are ignored. It was an abiding commitment to fundamental principles of human dignity, freedom and selfdetermination that motivated so many Americans to oppose the government of South Vietnam and our country's participation in the war.

It is that same commitment that compels us to speak out against your brutal disregard of human rights. As in the 60s, we raise our voices now so that your people may live. raise our voices now so that your people may live. We appeal to you to end the imprisonment and torture-to allow an international team of neutral observers to inspect your prisons and re-education centers. We urge you to follow the tenets of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights which, as a member of the United Nations, your country is pledged to uphold. We urge you to reaffirm your stated commitment to the basic principles of freedom and human dignity... to establish real peace in Vietnam.

Joan Baez President,

Humanitas/International Human Rights Committee

Photo Below: Jane Fonda acting stupid on a North Vietnamese Anti-Aircraft gun in Hanoi. Wreckage of a B-52 was placed around the gun for the photo opportunity.



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