

AJC would probably be quite happy about it. Fortunately, President Carter does not seem to be of such mind.

Joseph D. McCarty
Milwaukee, Wis.

Mennonite & Quaker Visits to Vietnam

To the Editors: The May, 1977, issue of *Worldview* has a short, one-paragraph item on page 34 that is factually incorrect. It states that the group sponsored by the Mennonites and the American Friends Service Committee returned in mid-March from Vietnam. There was a

joint MCC-AFSC visit to Vietnam in November, 1975, but that is the only joint visit that has occurred. Mennonite Central Committee had another visit in June, 1976, and then again in January, 1977.

Every time a Mennonite delegation has gone to Vietnam human rights issues were very high on the agenda. We asked frank, penetrating questions and expressed concerns. The statement you make in the May issue of *Worldview* does not apply to Mennonite visitors to Vietnam.

Vern Preheim

Secretary for Asia
Mennonite Central Committee
Akron, Pa.

The Editors Respond:

Our apologies. The quotation from an AFSC (not Mennonite) leader appeared in a March news report that gave the impression that an AFSC-Mennonite group had just recently visited Vietnam. Perhaps the leader who was quoted to the effect that Americans have no right to ask about human rights in Vietnam was speaking on the basis of the earlier visit mentioned by Mr. Preheim. Perhaps he had not been to Vietnam at all. On this one we just know what we read in the papers. In any case, we are pleased to learn that the Mennonites have pressed the question of human rights when visiting Vietnam. We hope they will continue in that good work.

Appeal to the Government of Vietnam

Portions Omitted From the Text Published in the April issue of Worldview. We the undersigned were actively engaged in opposition to the war suffered at America's hands by the Vietnamese people. Some of our efforts are well known to you. We fought for the end of America's intervention in Vietnam and lived in grief for the horrors suffered beneath America's bombers. We realize, of course, that our resistance to that war can bring none of the dead back to life nor restore maimed bodies, nor purge America of its immense burden of responsibility. Thus we are now involved in encouraging the U.S. government to welcome Vietnam into the United Nations, to provide massive reparations for the destruction it wrought in your homeland. At the same time we are involved in private efforts to relieve sufferings caused by the war and to contribute to the process of reconciliation between American and Vietnamese people.

In fidelity to the same values that led us to these commitments, however, we find ourselves obliged in conscience to speak on behalf of those Vietnamese who reportedly are being denied fundamental human rights.

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...We could not in conscience keep silent when General Thieu filled the American-funded prisons with thousands upon thousands of innocent people. We cannot be silent now, even though America's intervention is ended. We voice our protest in the hope that your government can avoid repetition of the tragic historical pattern in which liberators gain power only to impose a new oppression.

.....

...We recall with immense gratitude

the sacrifices made by Buddhists and Christians to end the war, to assist its victims, and to reunite the country—a witness which helped build world support for peace in Vietnam. We appeal to you to reassess your policies regarding religious bodies, not to limit the definition of religious freedom merely to cultic practice, and to welcome and encourage the social contributions of Buddhist, Christian and humanitarian agencies of the Vietnamese people.

In addition, we express a concern motivated by caring for families living in endless uncertainty about the fate of lost relatives who were among the forces that invaded your country. We ask you to make public any unreleased information you may possess regarding Americans who died or were imprisoned in Vietnam. While we have no knowledge that you possess unreleased information, we are concerned at the cynical way in which the United States government has exploited this issue and used it as an excuse for withholding economic assistance and to veto Vietnam's admission into the United Nations. At the same time, we express our grief for those Vietnamese families who lost children, parents and grandparents in the war and who, in many thousands of cases, know nothing of the fate of those victims of America's war and for whom no compassion has been expressed by the United States government.

We continue to feel a deep friendship toward the people of Vietnam and to nourish the hope that you who are entrusted with the government will do everything in your power to encourage the conditions of a better life in peace, justice and tolerance. We pledge our continuing readiness to do all we can to be of help.

In our criticisms, which cannot be separated from our friendship, we do not wish to single out your government unfairly. We are familiar with the double-standard of various states, including our own, in the human rights area. There are client states of the U.S. government (Chile, Brazil and Iran among them) in which reliance on imprisonment and torture is routine. We are also aware of the many socialist states in which suppression of human rights has been widely accepted.

We are also painfully aware of the violence and injustice of the United States in its domestic and foreign policies, the abyss that separates American profession from American practice. Many of us have viewed this society from within court rooms, prison walls and slum neighborhoods.

Nonetheless, the history of the last two decades has made Vietnam a place of special concern and hope for millions of people throughout the world—in its crises and hopes our own lives have been bound up.

To you who are Vietnam's leaders, we say: Invasion, imperialism and civil war for years made your country's name synonymous with the worst horrors of violence and brutal repression. With the end of the war and of the Saigon regime, many hoped that the name of Vietnam might be transfigured into a symbol of that liberation from fear and terror which we desire for ourselves and for all people. As you repair the physical devastation of your land, we appeal to you to create a society of tolerance and compassion worthy of the hopes and sacrifices of all those Vietnamese who died, and which inspired the sympathy and support of millions throughout the world.