An Occasional Memo

A Report to CALC Supportors

About the Occasional Memo

People support Clergy and Laity Concerned in a variety of ways; through their donations, active participation in programs locally and nationally, writing articles for American Report. We want to tell all of you supporters, through this newsletter, where CALC's program is at work and what the energies of our supporters are producing. The staff of CALC welcomes your comments and your questions as we work together toward the future.

CALC Now: An Overview

As a nationwide network within the religious community, our goal in CALC is to understand and confront America's use and misuse of power. To further this goal, we engage in work on Indochina, Amnesty, a B-1 Campaign, a Honeywell Program, the publication of American Report, continuing development of a field program, and strengthening relationships with local groups and programs.

Each of these "projects" is a way to get at the American power systems we seek to transform. Viewed together, our programs connect in a strategy for the religious community that begins to right some of the particular wrongs:

There is, for example, no universal and unconditional amnesty for those who resisted the war in Indochina; U.S. aid continues to the Thieu regime, perpetuating America's "discreet" war-making and military proliferation, and lending support to the imprisonment of several hundred thousand civilian political prisoners in South Vietnam; corporations, the military and the government continue to connect in a foreign policy that conflicts with the teachings of our Jewish and Christian heritage.

CALC's programs empower people to change these realities. They educate toward finding new ways to work and live. They work toward the broader and deeper changes we seek but do not yet have a blueprint for.

Indochina Program: Honor the Peace Agreement

CALC recently took major responsibility for organizing a "Saigon Inquiry Committee" (see middle spread). This delegation of Americans has returned home to join in a united campaign effort with other major religious and secular peace groups. The campaign has two focuses: U.S. aid to the Thieu regime and the continuing imprisonment of South Vietnamese civilians, in violation of the January, 1973 Peace Agreements.

Members of the team that travelled to Saigon are now travelling around the U.S.
meeting with people and organizations, the media and our elected officials, reporting on their first-hand experience of the still-ongoing war and the effects of U.S. aid on South Vietnam's military and civilians.

Another way CALC is focusing on the Peace Agreements is by using the "1974 Indochina Peace Pledge/Resolution." This pledge asks individuals and the Congress to work for legislation that would: 1) preclude direct U.S. military involvement, 2) encourage a political settlement based on the Peace Agreement signed by the U.S., and 3) end U.S. police aid. CALC, along with 19 others cooperating in the united campaign, has been working steadily to circulate the pledge/resolution to maximize the goal.

A week of special focus on political prisoners took place late last fall, all across the country, through local religious observances, public forums, a variety of media outlet efforts and work on Congress in Washington.

Financial support for the Saigon Inquiry trip came from just a half-dozen CALC supporters, while other donations make possible extending the impact across the country.

Amnesty

CALC continues, in 1974, to expand the opportunities to mobilize the religious constituency to work toward a universal and unconditional amnesty for those who refused to fight in the Indochina war, or who were given other than honorable discharges because of their opposition to the war or particular modes of warfare.

Amnesty Week, held this past fall, was a major effort to speak out on CALC's position. Almost 100,000 Amnesty packets were distributed, and well over 300,000 copies of the American Report amnesty supplement were distributed. In over 1,500 churches and synagogues there were sermons supporting amnesty.

Through CALC alone, over 30,000 new names have been added to those who support amnesty--through a petition drive.

As this newsletter is being written, CALC has been asked to testify before the Congressional amnesty hearings being conducted in Washington. The efforts of CALC and the ACLU helped convince the Congress to hold these hearings now.

Honeywell Program

The Boston chapter of Clergy and Laity Concerned, working on behalf of all of us, is coordinating this program--continuing to put the Honeywell Corporation on notice that its production and development of antipersonnel weapons is morally and humanly intolerable. New resolutions for the annual stockholder meeting have been filed, continuing a voice of protest.

Boston, too, has set up an eating/talking center where Honeywell employees and interested citizens can come together to talk about Honeywell's military role and how that affects workers and the community.

The B-1 Campaign

At a conference held in Germantown, Ohio, the end of last October, staff and committee members of CALC and the AFSC agreed to work together on a joint Stop the B-1 Bomber: National Peace Conversion Campaign. Work on the campaign will be carried on by the local, regional, and national offices of both organizations. An effort will be made to enlist the support of scores of other groups and individuals as the campaign builds.
Saigon Inquiry Committee

January, 1974

One year after the signing of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Viet Nam, five Americans travelled for two weeks throughout the Saigon-controlled areas of South Viet Nam to investigate the current situation.

The participants were: John Boone, 51, a former Corrections Commissioner of Massachusetts and presently the director of the National Coalition for Correctional Change; Ying Lee Kelley, 41, teacher and member of the Berkeley (California) City Council; Robert Ransom, 54, a lawyer and member of the Clergy and Lay Concerned (CALC) steering committee; George W. Webber, 53, President of the New York Theological Seminary and chairman of the CALC steering committee; and Debrah Wiley, 26, an associate editor of American Report.

We are responsible for ignoring the Paris agreements which would have demanded the implementation of a joint government in South Viet Nam, required us to clean up the incredible garbage mess which have strewn across the landscape, not only in the form of undetonated ammamnt which week by week maims innocent civilians, but which also takes the form of orphaned children, prostitutes unable to return to Vietnamese cultural life, and a massive decimation of an entire society.

1. The war has continued steadily and escalated in violence in recent months. Figures are not accurate but suggest over 70,000 casualties among the Saigon-controlled South Vietnamese people alone. I have to report, on the basis of the wide range of conversations with people deeply concerned about the responsibilities for continued conflict, that the initiation of aggression and responsibility for the continuing fighting lies primarily in the hands of the Thieu regime. President Thieu and his government have everything to lose by fulfilling the agreement of the Paris Accords and thus to maintain and enhance their position they have continually taken the initiative in pushing into territory that at the time of the accords was in the hands of the Provisional Revolutionary Government. The United States, of course, makes this military struggle possible by providing the military equipment and hardware upon which the army is solely dependent. Thus there is no honor for the United States.

2. In the second place, many people reminded us once again that it is a gross mistake to look upon the struggle in Viet Nam as a conflict between a worldwide Communist plot and the forces of freedom, or to see it as a struggle between a Communist government in the North and a democracy in the South.

From the viewpoint of many Vietnamese, the country has been involved in a long, continuing struggle against colonialist forces and economic imperialism, represented first by the French, then by the Japanese, then by the French again and now by the Americans. They see the crucial thread as one of nationalism, as the Vietnamese people seek to establish their own independence and take responsibility for their own lives.

Even for those who publicly are deeply opposed to Communism as such, the Hanoi regime is seen as an impressive dimension of traditional Vietnamese life with an ideology that provides it with the necessary sticking power against the continuing struggle of Western nations. There is a remarkable faith that if the United States would simply go away, that Viet Nam would be able to work out its own destiny in a way that would be creative.

One young writer, a student of history, reminded us rather pointedly that in 1945, Vietnamese nationalists were fighting desperately to prevent the renewal of French domination. Nguyen Van Thieu fought with the French, Ho Chi Minh fought with the Vietnamese people. Said the young writer, "Who is the authentic nationalist?"

3. The official position of the United States government as expressed in South Viet Nam maintains that we support a struggling government on the way to ever greater democracy. As the American Ambassador, Mr. Graham Martin, reminded our group, it is not possible for Americans to impose their democratic traditions on the people of Viet Nam, the whole of Western developments, upon a little country on South Asia. At the same time, it is his firm conviction that the Thieu government is making the best possible defense against the enemy and provides real hope of an effective and increasingly democratic government.

In response I can only report the elements of repression that reflect a cruel military dictatorship and the clear evidence that this dictatorship allows no dissent and is rapidly abandoning even the lip service to democracy that it once pretended. It is a military dictatorship where nearly 2 million out of 5 million adult men in this small nation either have been drafted into the army or are members of the police. We saw soldiers on every corner and a military presence everywhere. Our attempt to attend a private meeting on our first evening in Saigon was prevented by 30 plain-clothes police who had surrounded the building where the meeting had been scheduled.

Another symbol of the failure of democracy is the pattern of promiscuous arrests, the complete suppression of any dissent whatsoever from the regime.

Most revolting of all is the torture that is routine upon arrest and the horrible maltreatment which is endemic. In a private conversation over another matter a police official said quite simply, "We torture the guilty and they confess, we torture the innocent until they become guilty."

I had read the horror stories about torture before, but it is almost devastating to hear them from the lips of the victims: a 14-year-old girl beaten in prison, a man old at an early age after 12 years in Con Son prison, a young mother whose baby is permanently damaged by her birth in a prison and the fact that the mother had no milk to feed it.

4. Finally, I took as axiomatic the dependence of this country upon U.S. aid — military aid for the maintenance of the Thieu government, relief and welfare aid for the support and development of the nation.

What is manifest is that U.S. funds — our tax money, bordering on $2 billion dollars a year — are used to support a corrupt military regime that has support only from those who depend directly upon it for their livelihood. Worse, it is almost impossible for funds designated solely for relief and redevelopment to serve the purposes for which they are intended.

Typical is the story of the Vietnamese company offered $100,000 to clear land for a resettlement camp for 500 families. The company promptly sublet the contract for $80,000 to another, the second company in turn sublet it to a third for a total of $45,000. Thus over half of the money intended for clearance was skimmed off the top before the project was even begun.

In many conversations with writers, journalists, students of Vietnamese history,
members of the Parliament and knowledgeable Americans I would ask the question, "How could this country survive if all aid from the United States were withdrawn? Would there not be a serious bloodbath, and would not many people starve?" I was shocked that in every case, the answer came back clear and unambiguous: "Please, when you return, ask the American people through their Congress, to withdraw all aid of every kind now coming to our country. Take your garbage and go home. Whatever the violence that would ensue by your withdrawal of military support for the Thieu regime, whatever the hunger that would be created by the withdrawal of relief funds would be insignificant compared to the violence and suffering we presently endure."

The people of Viet Nam believe, in short, that without our paternalistic and overwhelming presence, they can work out their own destiny and find a future in which the wounds of war can be healed. They plead with us and me to convince our Congress that they have the right to take this risk.

'We Went to Witness...'

by Ying Lee Kelley

We went to witness—to see with the help of friends in the United States and South Viet Nam just what is happening in Thieu's Viet Nam one year after the cease-fire. We came—the five of us—frightened and concerned. Concerned about the American presence, the American responsibility for the implementation of the peace agreement, concerned about the Vietnamese people, the political prisoners, the resettlement camps and the political regime.

That we Americans are responsible is beyond doubt, one need only glance at the United States budget to know how deeply we are involved. But beyond budget considerations, went to to see what we American people are doing in this part of Asia. Are we showing by our actions the American democratic ideal that "all men are created equal," that "each is endowed by the Creator with certain inalienable rights"?

We—the five of us—left Saigon not frightened, but absolutely terrified. We had talked with the help of other concerned people to more than 119 prisoners, ex-prisoners, politicians, farmers and students. We are deeply afraid because each of our informants risked prison or death just to speak with us. And we are weighed down with this responsibility.

Four days before we left, we presented letters of introduction from Congresspersons Dellums, Abzug and Nix to U.S. Ambassador Graham Martin. After that contact with the American Embassy, we avoided those who had helped us earlier, for fear of endangering them. It was not an idle fear. The home of the Vietnamese Third Force leader whom we visited was surrounded by police after our visit. We were stopped by the police—uniformed and plainclothes—and only after a great deal of argument and checking and recording of our passport numbers were we able to bluff our way out of showing our private notes.

There is no question that South Viet Nam is a police state. Political speech is dangerous to the speaker and to anyone related or associated with him. Members of our group traveled from the outskirts of Quang Tri to Can Tho in the Delta. All that we found fits together into one terrible pattern of repression, terror and genocidal war. American napalm is still killing Vietnamese children. I know that many will find my charge of genocidal war an affront, but I am an Asian and I ask in all good conscience: can you imagine American citizens tolerating a Vietnamese campaign in Europe, even in South America? It is a brutal racist war and it is not over.

American staff in South Viet Nam are insular, isolated from the Vietnamese people by their ignorance of the Vietnamese language, their lack of sympathy and lack of contact. They live in a style which they could not possibly afford in this country, and they disdain Vietnamese people.

There are now new "refugee" camps. These are the local descendants of the "fortified hamlets" of unpleasant memory, and the South Vietnamese army is still moving villagers to the camps. They are in fact concentration camps, but concentration camps that are expected to be self-supporting. The families are supposed to have rations for six months, but their rations are uncertain. There are no tools, no medical care and no local resources. There is some indication that the camps are being located near projected industrial parks to provide a source of cheap labor.

One refugee I was interviewing told me about his capture (many whom I interviewed used "captured," not "arrested"), his imprisonment, then his trial a year and a half later. He had no defense attorney, but he denied the charge that he was "working with the NLF." He was told that he would be released if he promised: 1) to stop being active in the peace movement and 2) not to oppose American policy in Viet Nam. He said "no," and was thrown back into prison for another 14 months.

At the end of the interview, I had to express my wonderment over his telling the "courts" the truth even with the past brutality and potential brutality in mind. I told him I would not have told the truth—that knowing the possibility of more torture, I would have lied. He looked at me with some surprise: "I don't think so. I hope not. You will not under the same circumstances," I wonder.

The police state is everywhere evident. Outside the cities, every family has a 3" x 6" identity card with the family's pictures. If one member of the family leaves the village, his picture is "X"-ed out by a local official. The traveler's papers are forwarded to the police at the proposed address, and the entire family remaining is hostage for his appearance. In the city, everyone must also carry a personal identity card.

We were informed, and believed, that some Americans are flying helicopters for Thieu's regime, in violation of the peace agreement. U.S.A.I.D. administrator E. C. Ruoff admitted that Food for Peace is entirely given for the support of the South Vietnamese armed forces.

I could go on and I shall later report more fully, but today I am back in Berkeley and I feel very discouraged about informing the American people about what is actually happening in Thieu's Viet Nam.

Yesterday, I had a press conference to speak of some of our group's findings. Some 20 or 30 South Vietnamese professing themselves to be students (though none would identify a school, and I recognized a number of employees of the South Viet Nam consulate here) tried to break up the conference. They carried a sign saying, "Kelly is a big fat liar" and "Kelly is a communist" though I had not yet spoken a word.

I am distressed, not because a few hirings of Thieu made a demonstration, but because I think the demonstration had U.S. government assistance. I remember that our difficulties with the Saigon secret police began only after we visited the American Ambassador. I think that our government and our government's employees are direct agents in the suppression of the South Vietnamese and the poisoning of American sources of information.

We the American people are a party to genocide, we pay for it, and for those who hide information about it. Let us return to the America which to me, as a child in China, was a dream of democratic freedom. Let us end this nightmare of American complicity in torture, killing and duplicity. Let us leave, let us all of us leave South Viet Nam.

Law and Injustice

by Robert Ransom

My four travelling companions and I represented a variety of backgrounds, occupations and special interests. As the only attorney in the group, I will focus my own brief observations on what I saw and heard that offended me most as a lawyer. Two specific areas stand out.

First, it was obvious that in Thieu's overpowering police state there are very few surviving remnants of due process, or of even the most basic human rights and individual freedoms we take for granted. In our many conversations with former political prisoners, and with
relatives of such prisoners still under detention, the stories they told of the treatment they have received were almost unbelievable. In fact I would have been quite skeptical had we not heard similar reports from so many persons, from such a variety of backgrounds and political persuasions, and from all different parts of the country. The pattern varied little; some minor differences reflected local practices and procedures.

Their crimes? Some had demonstrated against one-man ‘elections’; others had advocated peace; in most cases they had overtly opposed some position or policy of the Thieu government, for which they were branded as subversive or communist.

We heard repeatedly of homes being violated by the police and military personnel at all hours of day and night, and of warrantless searches and seizures under most brutal conditions. Families of prisoners or of those being sought are often terrorized, or at least harassed, and relatives are often held hostage for suspected wrong-doers, and for those prisoners fortunate enough eventually to be released.

There is apparently no longer any such procedure as an arraignment in South Viet Nam, and we heard frequently of persons being held prisoner, sometimes for years, with no specific knowledge of the offenses with which they are charged or for which they are held, other than what they can deduce from their interrogations.

Families of prisoners similarly are kept in the dark. We met some relatives who had no idea how long a sentence their son or husband was to serve. Often it is impossible for families to learn where the prisoner is being detained. In some instances when prisoners have “died” in custody, their bodies are not even returned to their families which, especially in the Vietnamese culture, is an abomination.

We have all read too much about the torture and inhuman treatment that Saigon’s prisoners receive, particularly during the early stages of incarceration when the jailors believe that the prisoner may still possess some information that would be useful to them. These atrocious details were all too well confirmed in our conversations.

We were told that if a prisoner does ultimately receive a “trial,” it normally occurs some months or even years after his initial imprisonment. Many such trials are before military tribunals, which dispense the sort of “justice” one might expect. The entire procedure can last only a few minutes. In many cases only the prosecutor, the judge, and the jury are present, and often all of these officials are military officers. Rarely are defense counsel involved, and, when they are, they may at most be permitted to enter a plea for leniency.

Indeed, under some of Thieu’s executive proclamations, no trial at all is required. National and local security councils have the power to imprison persons administratively, and to extend their sentences after they have served their time.

Finally, I should at least mention our obligations under the Paris Agreement, ostensibly a legally binding treaty, signed a year ago for the United States by then Secretary of State William Rogers.

From the outset, the violations of that Agreement have been so continuous and flagrant by all four parties that a valid case can be made for the position that we are no longer bound by its terms and conditions. For our own part, we have done little to fulfill our various obligations beyond the withdrawal of our uniformed combat troops. We continue our involvement and our open support of Thieu in many other ways in open breach of the treaty.

It should be recalled, however, that the real impetus for the signing of that Agreement came from us; Washington felt so obliged to fulfill its long-standing promise of a peace with honor that it finally used the disgraceful Christmas bombings to force the other side back to the bargaining table in earnest.

In my opinion the United States now is under a compelling obligation that it can no longer avoid. As the only major power involved, we must not submit to the temptation to forget the Viet Nam nightmare. We can not in good conscience continue to maintain that the war is now exclusively theirs. Our responsibility for the present plight of Viet Nam runs so deep that we can not simply turn our backs and walk away from it.

If, perhaps, we are not legally bound to reinvolv e ourselves in new efforts to gain a genuine peace in Southeast Asia, let us then do so through the reassertion of the moral leadership for which the world once respected us.

Seeing Is Believing
by Debrah Wiley

I had been in Saigon only a few hours when I realized what the “one policeman to every 140 citizens” figure I had heard about meant—control and fear. We had come to South Viet Nam to talk with Vietnamese, but our very first meeting was prevented when we arrived at our destination to find the building surrounded by police—mostly plain-clothesmen, a few in uniform. Three Vietnamese coming to meet in the building were arrested, questioned and later released.

In other cities, arrangements were made for us to meet with relatives of political prisoners. Several hundred miles north of Saigon, a 65-year-old man came to tell me about his son, a prisoner in Con Son. The man was nervous and reluctant for me to take notes. Through an interpreter, he apologized. “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. It’s a very difficult situation here, you know.” I was just beginning to know.

The old man, a mechanic by trade, had come to talk to me under the guise of repairing some wiring in the house where we met. We talked, in hushed tones. He said he did not see himself as a political person. He opposes the Thieu government he said, because the imprisonment of his son is unjust. While we were talking a soldier came into the front yard. The father rushed to another room and began talking with the residents of the house about their light fixtures. When the soldier departed, the father returned to finish our conversation about his son, held in jail for five years without trial or sentence.

A woman in a rural village trembled as she began telling of her son’s imprisonment. “I take these risks,” she said, “because I love my son.”

This woman’s face, like the dozens of other we interviewed, is clear in my memory, but the details of her situation are blurred in the horror of her story. I check my notes:

“Son was H.S. student. Participated in demo against Thieu’s one-man election. Month later, disappeared for three days. Police brought him to house, black and blue, hand broken. Tried by Military Field Court, sentenced after Paris Agreement on criminal charge, four-year sentence.” Pages of details on his movement from prison to prison and the conditions in each. “Her niece died in prison; July. Afraid same will happen to her son. Police warned her to teach other four children not to be involved in politics. Relaxed, talked freely toward end of conversation.”

She was no longer trembling; I was.

A young girl walking home from school told me her family had been poor when they lived in a refugee camp, but that they are poorer now. She lives in an encampment called a “Return to Village” area. It’s several miles from the village where she spent the early years of her life, before her family was forced to leave over two years ago. The houses are only a few feet apart, on sandy soil—not in the spacious area surrounded by foliage and rice paddies where they once lived. Her father is a farmer, but Thieu’s soldiers will not, allow him to farm his land because it is not under their control.

She and her family and the more than 700 other families in this Return to Village camp are, indeed, poor and hungry. They depend on rice rations from the Saigon government but have received only one month’s allotment. I walked into a small thatched house and
found some children eating finely chopped banana stalks. It is non-food, having no nutritional value; but it adds some bulk to their empty stomachs.

One evening I talked with five young people who were arrested during their high school years. Their detailed painful stories will be told another time.

As I listened to stories of their friends who remain in prison, my only relief was that the five I was talking with had made it through their imprisonment and were gaining back their physical strength. But one young man mentioned that the harassment was not finished. They were surprised I didn’t realize they all had to report to the police once a month. Each pulled out his or her small note book that contained a photo, a page of information and blank pages that are stamped each month when they report to the police.

One man said he had gone to another area of Saigon to attend his grandmother’s funeral but his papers, which didn’t allow him to be in that district, were checked by the police and he was sent away. They told of a school teacher friend, out of prison since May, who could no longer get work teaching “with papers like this;” of other friends who are afraid they will be inducted if they report to the police (a common practice) and who now live “underground” in the back alleys of Saigon.

Violations of the Paris Agreement, political prisoners, repression in South Viet Nam—they all have faces and names. And if they hadn’t been so strong, I couldn’t have held back my tears so often. Some have been beaten into silence; others are becoming more angry and desperate every day.

One man said, “The situation here is so brutal and terrible that I am sure the whole world is aware. So I will tell you of my son’s particular case.”

I don’t know that the whole world is aware. I hope I can share some of my understanding.

‘Great White Father’

by John Boone

As black as I am, three women prisoners treated me as a Great White Father in Viet Nam. When I visited them in the prison wing of a hospital, they begged their doctor to ask me to bring pressure to bear upon the government of Viet Nam to let them go free.

One of the women had lost her mind when, after undergoing the usual process of torture without confessing that she had collaborated with the Viet Cong, her interrogators placed a live serpent under her clothes. Prior to that, they had beaten her severely and continuously. When that failed to elicit a confession, they forced water into her nostrils and mouth until her stomach was as tight as a balloon. Next the boots feet of her interrogators smashed into her side and she regurgitated until the blood came. When she still wouldn’t confess, the snake was used, and the psychosis developed.

The young women, after urging their doctor to plead with me for their release, stood in front of me and literally begged for my mercy. At that point, I could just stand there, and I felt like an ugly American.

It is ironic that a black man can feel like an ugly American, when black people have themselves been victimized by a system which has justified subjugation in the name of freedom and democracy. And the situation in Viet Nam has added meaning for a black man, who has seen the other side of the coin, to be identified as a member of a nation that has intervened to sustain a repressive government. I will never forget it.

While in Viet Nam, we saw the reality of tremendous repression and antagonism between the people and the government. But as far as the U.S. officials there are concerned, there aren’t any problems.

While in Viet Nam, I experienced such frustration over the attitude of my government, particularly in our contact with the American Embassy, that I was at a loss to describe my feelings. When I finally came upon an appropriate description, it was made by no less an authority than a senior American official in Saigon. A reporter tried to pin him down on the approximate number of AWOL American soldiers in Viet Nam, and he answered: “It’s like trying to nail jello to the wall.”

Having made morning reports in the U.S. Army for two years myself, I know that one thing the military process can do well is keep up with the status of American soldiers. This leads me to conclude that the Embassy spokesman was either confused, ignorant or (much more likely) plain dishonest.

Trying to get assistance from the Embassy to arrange conferences with Vietnamese officials and visits to prisons was like trying to nail jello to the wall. Of course, we were well received. Our conferences with the Ambassador were long and involved. But they were full of fruitless dialogue, and we got a huge run-around, as other Americans have, in trying to find our facts.

Yet we did, unofficially, talk to more than 100 Vietnamese people, many Americans and a few Europeans. I have been convinced through these discussions that the criminal justice system exists to support a tyrannical government afraid to extend democratic freedom to its people, just as Southern planters after reconstruction misused the 13th Amendment and relegated many black men to criminal status. It is credibly reported that before the Paris Accords were signed, prisoners were reclassified so that they would not have to be considered political prisoners.

It is clear that there are now 100,000-200,000 political prisoners in South Viet Nam. Yet Ambassador Martin told us there is a total of 35,000 prisoners in Thieu’s Viet Nam now, and that he couldn’t find any that were really political prisoners, although he supposed there might be a few.

But I sat in a military court for half a day, and witnessed the trial of 19 persons, 10 of whom were charged with cooperating and collaborating with the NLF. They had already been in prison for up to two years. They were all convicted in trials of less than five minutes, on Jan. 15, 1974, for actions specifically permitted by the Paris Agreements. These trials take place six times a day, every day.

As a prison administrator, I was more interested in talking to correctional administrators than in just visiting a prison, because I know from experience that well-prepared pamphlets and visits are an often-used means of deceiving inquiries. In fact, we were given a professionally produced pamphlet showing that there were no political prisoners in South Viet Nam and that prison conditions are good.

I would have preferred to ask an administrator: How can you claim to feed a prisoner on 10-15 cents a day? (Saigon prices are quite high). What kind of medical care is provided for prisoners? What about the use of the torture and brutality that we heard corroborated by everyone? What about the mothers whose babies are left with them or who are born in prison but who don’t get enough food to produce milk? What are the rehabilitative values of tiger cages? And I would have asked: “What about the women that had begged me to rescue them—what has Thieu’s government done for them?”

What did the people under Saigon’s rule want us to do? Again and again, they pleaded with us—don’t give us aid, don’t give us money to continue waging war. Just make President Thieu abide by the Peace Agreement, especially Article 11 which provides for freedom of expression, freedom of movement and other basic rights.

They are determined to realize the freedoms granted to them by Article 11, just as black people have been determined to realize the freedoms granted to us by the 13th and 14th Amendments to the American Constitution. And finally, I will not feel clean (in the true sense of the word; I will feel dirty) until their dream of freedom comes true.

reprinted from American Report!
The B-1 bomber has been proposed by the Air Force as a replacement for both the B-52 and the F-111 bombers. It is projected to be a manned, nuclear, supersonic plane—flying, at high altitudes, at twice the speed of sound—but with the capability, through moveable wings, of flying low enough to avoid detection by radar and to drop conventional weapons. It would have the capacity to carry twice the bomb tonnage of the B-52. It will have the most advanced electronics system ever developed—including the capacity to carry weapons, like the "laser death ray," still to be perfected.

The United States Senate recently authorized the spending of $473 million in advanced research and development funds on the B-1 for the coming year, bringing to nearly $2 billion the amount spent on the plane since 1970. But this is only the beginning. If the full production of 241 planes requested by the Air Force takes place, the total cost of the system may run to over $50 billion—the most expensive weapons system ever built, over half the cost of the entire Vietnam war.

CALC is developing brochures on the campaign and specific related issues—national security, environment, job security; a monthly newsletter; slide show, posters, buttons; planning conferences on military spending and economic conversion; preparing resource persons and speakers; building a counter lobby and letter-writing campaign focused on Washington decisionmakers.

Regional/Local Network: One of CALC's strongest assets is its nationwide network with regional field staff and local groups across the country. Many peace organizations folded after the Peace Agreements were signed...but CALC continues and, hopefully, gains strength because of this network. CALC supporters know that systemic change takes more time and effort to get at the root causes—not just bringing American soldiers home from Vietnam. To help maintain this system and its strength, and to assist groups across the country tie into major programs, CALC is supporting this part of the program for $90,000.

Middle East: While CALC was founded with a concentration on Indochina, its membership now finds that attention must also be given to the current, agonizing situation in the Middle East. Over the last several months the Steering Committee of CALC has been working: 1) on a study/discussion paper to focus the issues in the Middle East, and 2) to formulate plans for a series of forums across the country on the issues.

American Report

AR, the biweekly "Review of Religion and American Power" published under the auspices of CALC, is something different from a program aid, something more than a house organ. It's an independent journal, conceived as a service to the peace and justice movement, focusing on the uses and misuses of American power. Given this purpose, however, the journal inevitably reflects the major concerns of CALC.

Associate editor Debrah Wiley recently journeyed to Vietnam as a member of the Saigon Inquiry Committee, reported its findings and helped other media with their coverage. Special articles, sections and supplements have dealt with such questions as amnesty, political prisoners in South Vietnam, the political coup in Chile, African liberation movements, the issue of impeachment, the treatment of the Attica Brothers, the farm workers, the American Indians, the women's movement. AR has entered boldly into the Middle East tangle, earning praise from the Village Voice for consistently "wide-ranging, excellent" coverage.

A readership survey conducted last fall showed that the paper's audience is literate, influential and extraordinarily activist—and takes AR seriously. So does CALC, as evidence by its decision of last summer to engage the services of a respected, veteran journalist, Robert Hoyt, as editor. Currently AR is launching
a promotion campaign in the interests of survival and growth. Brochures available on request.

New Programs on the Horizon: Amnesty work is not yet reaching many of the poor who resisted the war and now need amnesty. CALC will, therefore, coordinate existing data and undertake research to specify the race and class of those in need of amnesty as well as the legal, psychological, vocational needs resulting from such persons' war resistance. The study will help to clarify the race and class implications of American military policy and the domestic costs of such policy. CALC is also working to organize a conference on American defense policy. To aid in these endeavors, and other aspects of CALC's amnesty work, a grant of $15,000 has been received from the Field Foundation.

Financing the Work

We hope you taste the flavor of what we've tried to report on: dedicated people actively involved in these crucial issues, and supporting CALC's work on the issues. Over $7,000 given by dedicated friends of CALC toward the Saigon Inquiry trip and the follow-up work. A grant of $15,000 from the Field Foundation toward the forthcoming conference on defense spending and CALC's work on universal and unconditional amnesty.

Our late fall appeal said CALC had a goal of $120,000 needed from donors large and small. By the end of January, we were one-third of the way toward the goal! $80,000 is still to be raised from donations—and we shall!

If we are to reach our goal before October 1, more help is needed. Send us names and addresses of persons you know who will also join in a venture of support. And tell them they are going to be asked!

Please return right now:

To: Richard Van Voorhis, Administrative Director of CALC
235 East 49th Street, New York, New York 10017

From: ____________________________

I suggest you contact the following persons about making a donation to the work of Clergy and Laity Concerned:

1.
2.
3.
4.

An envelope is enclosed for your use. Thanks again!