

The Hoa Problem in Vietnam

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DEEPAK SINGH

DIVISION OF SOUTH-EAST ASIA AND SOUTH-WEST PACIFIC STUDIES

**CENTRE FOR SOUTH, CENTRAL AND SOUTHEAST
ASIAN AND SOUTHWEST PACIFIC STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY.**

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जवाहरलाल नेहरु विश्वविद्यालय
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI - 110067


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SOUTH EAST ASIAN & SOUTH WEST
PACIFIC STUDIES,
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES


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C E R T I F I C A T E

Certified that the Dissertation entitled
"THE HOA PROBLEM IN VIETNAM", submitted by
Mr. Deepak Singh in partial fulfilment for the
award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.)
has not been previously submitted for any other
degree of this or any other university to the best
of our knowledge this is a bonafide work.

We recommend that this dissertation be
placed before the examiner for evaluation.


PROF. I.N. MUKHERJI
CHAIRPERSON


PROF. PARIMAL KUMAR DAS
SUPERVISOR

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P R E F A C E

Following the exodus of the Hoas or the Vietnamese of the Chinese Origins, lot of writings have appeared in newspapers and journals. This topic has been chosen as it was an event which caught the eyes of the people world over and makes one inquisitive to know why such a thing happened, especially when China was also a communist country. After the liberation of South Vietnam, the Hoas were sought to be brought within the fold of socialism, which the Hoas, and the Chinese Government of Beijing resented. It appears contradictory.

In the first chapter, Historical origin of the Hoa problem has been dealt with. This problem had its roots in history. China had conquered Vietnam in the first century B.C. and since then the Hoas kept coming in waves and dominating the natives and their economy.

In the second chapter genesis of the Hoa problem has been discussed. In this chapter the gradual development of the problem has been traced

and it was found that the relationship between China and Vietnam had been the most important factor determining the status of the Hoas.

In the third Chapter, National-Dimension of the Hoa problem (i.e. its effects on the economy, the lives and the development of Vietnam) has been discussed.

In the fourth Chapter, international dimension has been covered. (i.e.) the way the Hoa people were treated by the Western countries and the burden it passed on the other South-East Asian countries and the U.N.H.C.R.

In the fifth Chapter its current position and the attitude of Vietnamese governments towards them has been discussed.

Methodology adapted is mainly historical-analytical for this research work.

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I dedicate this work to my Parents and special gratitude to Mr. M.P. Singh and Dr. Madan Mohan Singh and his family for their care and encouragement as also to Dr. R.N.Singh and Mr. Rajender Sharma.

I would also like to thank my friends Ramana, Rana, Renu and others.

C H A P T E R - I

THE HOA PROBLEM IN VIETNAM

Historical Background

Hoas are the overseas Chinese in Vietnam and China considers all the Hoas wherever they are in the world as their friends and comrades. For Vietnamese Hoas are the people of Chinese origin settled in Vietnam for several generations.¹

Their problem in Vietnam arose after the liberation of South Vietnam in April 1975 from the American clutches and its socialist transformation. Legislations were passed in 1978 nationalizing all big industries and banking system for every-one, Chinese as well as native Vietnamese. But it affected the Overseas Chinese most as they were dominating the economy.²

The Hoas felt that these legislations were passed to harm them and to make their life miserable by sending them to New economic Zones.

1. Communist Party Publication; Chinese Aggression Against Vietnam. (HANOI), April 1979, p.26.

2. Hemen Roy, China's Vietnam War (New Delhi, 1983), p.79.

Hence they started leaving Vietnam in large numbers. Initially Vietnamese tried to stop them, but later on they allowed illegal exodus.³

This Hoa problem in Vietnam had wide repercussion and it led to refugee problem drawing the attention of the world. China gave it as one of the reasons for its attack on Vietnam.

About the origin of the problem one has to go into the history of the two countries that is Vietnam and China and their geographical setting.

Vietnam lies along the eastern edge of the Peninsula of mainland South-East Asia. It has an S shape, the country extends from the border of China in the north to the tip of the Ca Mau Peninsula, a total distance of slightly more than 1,000 Miles. In the east is the south-China sea,

3. Nguyen Manh Hung, "The Sino-Vietnamese Conflict: Power Play among Communist Neighbours", Asian Survey, Vol.XIX (1979) p.1043.

It is separated from its neighbours on the West by mountains extending from the Chinese border.⁴ Thus Vietnam was open to invasion by China.

Originally Vietnamese were the inhabitant of Nán Yueh. Yueh is the pronunciation of Viet in Chinese language. From here they spread to the Red river delta that is the province of Tongking displacing the original inhabitant, the Champe people and became agriculturists. Hence original home of the Viet people was in Souther China. Chinese were more developed and as expected in the first century B.C. emperor Wu of the Han dynasty conquered them and so began the coming and settling of the Chinese in Vietnam.⁵

But the Vietnamese were freedom loving people and whenever they got an opportunity they recovered their independence though they nominally

4. William J. Duiker, VIETNAM, Nation in Revolution: (Colorado, 1983), p.1.

5. C.P. Fitz Gerald, The Southern Expansion of the Chinese People (Delhi, 1972) p.

accepted the suzerainty as it happened after the fall of the Han dynasty in the third century A.D. (3rd A.D.). In the Seventh Century A.D. (7th C.A.D.) China was reunited by the Tong dynasty which again conquered Vietnam and called it Annam meaning pacified south, which was not liked by the Vietnamese. In the 10th century (10th C) Tong dynasty came to an end and henceforth Vietnam remained independent till the coming of the French, excepting from 1407 to 1427 when China had conquered it.⁶

That is that Vietnam was under the Chinese tutelage for about 1000 years from III B.C. to 939 A.D. Chinese culture was accepted by the Vietnamese, so also their script and institutions, but the ethnic character of Vietnam remained intact and they always had cherished the idea of different nationhood.⁷ Just as India where

6. C.P.Fitzgerald, China and South-East Asia 1945
(London, 1973), p.7.

7. Fitzgerald, n.5, p.22.

sanskrit was considered the language of elite, so also in Vietnam in coming centuries Chinese culture and script was the script of the elite, a mark of status. Similarly, as the advanced civilization of Aryans was expanding towards the South, Viet people were also subduing the Champs people and at the same time Chinese were migrating into Vietnam.

Initially Chinese were the rulers and they did not settle down in large numbers. They freely intermarried with the Vietnamese elite. Their offspring had higher social status than Vietnamese and one of the first great heroes of Vietnam was Ly Pang, a half Chinese who had led the revolt against the Chinese emperor in 542 A.D.⁸

Another group of Chinese who migrated into Vietnam were the criminals to escape from punishment and some were deported by the rulers.

8. Gath Alexander, The Invisible China (New York, 1973), p.124.

Third group of immigrants were the supporters of the various fallen dynasties who never went back. Fourth group came in 877 A.D. When pirates under Hoang-Chao attacked the capital of Kwangtung province. Fifth group of immigrants came in large number in 1680 A.D. when Chinese officers and several thousand men and supporters of the overthrown Ming dynasty arrived in Indo-China and settled in Cochin China. Chinese infiltration into the sparsely populated lands of Indo-China was by sea, as well as land.

Cochin China though smallest in area in comparison to Tongking and Annam received maximum over-seas Chinese. It was between Gulf of Siam and China sea on the route of International maritime Communications. The economic conditions herewith rich alluvial soil and convenient river communications together with developed domestic and foreign commerce favoured the Hoa people's choice. They were mostly Urban dwellers and their numbers in the larger cities in 1931 are as

in the next page.⁹ (given below)

City	Total Population	Chinese
Cholan	134,000	66,000
Sargon	122,000	34,000
Haiphong	124,000	19,000
Hanoi	128,000	5,000

In South Vietnam the Hoa people dominated trade and commerce especially foreign trade and as middle-men in rice trade. In North Vietnam they were concentrated in Hanoi and Haiphong. No concession were given to the Chinese in farming. Only one group called Haha established themselves in agriculture. They also controlled the fishing especially deep sea fishing. In 1929, 21 Chinese fishing villages were counted. Their annual produce was about 5,800 tons of fish.¹⁰

9. Victor Purcell, The Chinese in South East Asia. (London, 1966), p.176.

10. ibid., p.195.

Their maximum population was in Cholan the China town of Vietnam. It is the sister town of Saigon. The Ly dynasty which was ruling at Hanoi in the sixteenth century declined and in its place two families Trinh and Nguyen became powerful. Nguyen were appointed as Viceroy of the South with headquarters at Hue. They invited the Hoa people to come down and settle. Thus the Hoas founded the city of Cholan which meant Big market.¹¹

The Hoa people were well established as successful businessmen and were inseparable from the economy. There were several reasons for their success. They worked very hard and made their workers work the same way. Overseas Chinese were spread all over the world and this helped them to establish business contact in other countries also. They were shrewd businessmen and preferred small gains over a long time rather than to make quick fortune. In the bargain they made their customers happy and established themselves.

11. FitzGerald , n.5, p.30.

When a Chinese businessman is asked for the secret of his success, he gives maximum importance to the characteristic of Sun-Yung which means interpersonal trust and their success was directly proportional to the amount of Sun-Yung they possessed. The words of the Hoa people was like a bond. People who could not be trusted had no Sun-Yung. Even firms also had Sun-Yung.

The Hoa people generally looked very simple and their shops were very ordinary but the business which they conducted was big. They hid their wealth and the size of their business. The economic and political power which they had, led to the growing tension between them and the native Vietnamese. This exploded in the massacre in 1782 of more than 10,000 Chinese in Cholan during the thirty-year Tayson uprising against the Vietnamese emperor.

12. . Linda Y.C. Lim & L.. Peter Garling, The Chinese in South East Asia Vol.1, (Singapore, 1983) p.49.

"Subsequent policies of the court at Hue and of the French colonial country in the second half of the nineteenth century, drove a permanent rift between them by encouraging the Chinese, first through bangs and then through congregations, to rule themselves and to avoid social contact with Vietnamese. Hoas were exempted from military service in Lieu of paying *ment of* taxes. ¹³

hence the traditional assimilation came to an end. The policy of divide and rule was practised and the French themselves acted as the peace maker. ¹⁴

In 1906 French grouped the Hoa people into five categories for better administration.

¹³Alexander, n.8, p.25,

¹⁴ King C. Chen, Vietnam and China, 1938-1954
(Princeton, 1969) p.10.

1. Canton group: These were mostly traders.
2. Fukien: ^{From} ~~From~~ Southern districts and were less than the Cantonege, also involved in commerce.
3. Hainon Group: From island of ~~Hainan~~ ^{Hainan}. These were mostly pepper planters and domestic servants in Indo-China.
4. Teochin Group: Generally agriculturists, boatmen and coolies. They were also called Hoklas (men of Fukien).
5. Hakka Group: Emigrated from North China to North-East of Kwangtung and were mostly cultivators and artisans. There was increase in the immigration of the Hoa people from 1921 to 1931 due to several reasons, like the expansion in trade and commerce under the French, construction of railways and roads. During great depression of trade in 1929 there number decreased which again increased after 1931.

Overseas Chinese in Vietnam were rich, they sent remittances to China. In the twentieth century both the Vietnamese Communist Party and the Chinese Communist Party ~~divallid~~ for their support, but VCP relegated their rights to CCP and allowed them to organize the Hoa people to help them in the fight for liberation against the French.

Hoa people had their own schools in which Chinese system of education was practised, teachers were trained in China. Good students for higher studies went to China but they returned to Vietnam after their education. Hence educated Hoas were for all purpose Chinese.

During 1956 to 1963 the relations between China and Vietnam was good, China had then little interest in the Hoa people. Chow Enlai visited Vietnam and urged the Hoa's to treat Vietnam as ^{their} ~~its~~ home. 16
^

16. Stephen Fitzgerald, China and the Overseas Chinese (Cambridge, 1972), p.102.

"One teacher was unhappy that Chou En-Lai was promoting Hua-qiao attachment to Vietnam even though Vietnam had begun using the theme of "ancient Chinese invasions" in its propaganda against American influence in the South as early as 1956. The strongest reaction to Chou's speech came from the Chinese Community of Quang Ninh province which had the largest number of Chinese residents in the north but local cadres calmed them. This showed that Hoas were still deeply attached to China. 17

From 1970 the Democratic Republic of Vietnam began to encourage the Hoas to take up the citizenship of Vietnam but they were reluctant to do so as they feared that they would lose their privilege of returning to China to visit their relatives and would be forced

17. Chu Thai Son, and Lun Hung, The Ethnic Minorities in Vietnam (Hanoi, 1984), pp. 264-70.

for draft labour. But after 1976 Chinese schools in Vietnam were given Vietnamese names and teaching of the Chinese language was stopped in provincial schools and it became more difficult for Chinese students to gain entering into China. ¹⁸

But in South-Vietnam President Ngo Dinh Diem had forced in 1956 to take up the citizenship of Vietnam for all the Hoas, hence the North Vietnamese authorities claimed that after 1956 the Chinese in South Vietnam were no longer Chinese residents, but vietnamese of Chinese origins, and that this was a reality left by history. But the Chinese Government had never accepted the Diem government and hence did not accept the Hoas as Vietnamese citizens. ¹⁹

¹⁸. E.S. Ungar, "the Struggle over the Chinese Community in Vietnam, 1946-1986" . Pacific Affairs Vol.60, No.1, (1987) p. 605.

¹⁹ Hung, n.3, p.1042.

Vietnamese authorities think that though *me* Hoas live in Vietnam their hearts are in China and they are encouraged to oppose the leadership of the Vietnamese Communist party and propagate Mao's ideas. While the Vietnamese were trying to expel the Americans, China was sending agents to sabotage the Vietnamese mission and organise the Hoa people against Vietnamese leadership as Vietnam had refused to accept the Chinese guidance. ^{20,}

China had also not liked the Soviet Plan in which Soviet Union had requested for a united action to help the Vietnamese *me* to fight the American imperialists in 1965. Later Vietnam had resented when China played *me* host to Kissinger and Nixon in 1971-72 and joined hands for pursuing the big nation interests.

Hoas were affected by the relations between China and Vietnam and after the liberation of South-Vietnam seeing the hard life ahead they left Vietnam in mass exodus.

CHAPTER II

GENESIS OF THE HOA PROBLEM

Vietnam was under the Chinese rule for about 1000 years and under its suzerainty for another 800 years till the French came and conquered Vietnam. When China was strong Vietnam paid tribute and was culturally influenced but when China was aggressive it resisted. ¹

For centuries Chinese kept coming to and settling down in Vietnam. As they ^ewere the rulers they got special privileges and gradually dominated the economy. This can be compared with the White Man's burden of the Europeans. Chinese worked hard and trusted and co-operated with each other and tried to keep the native Vietnamese out of big business. So Vietnamese were mainly agriculturists. ²

1. King C. Chen, Vietnam and China (1938-1950) (Princeton, 1969), p.1.

2. Victor Purcell, The Chinese in South-East Asia (London, 1966), p. 191.

Overseas Chinese had relatives in China and were still emotionally ^{attached} ~~connected~~ with them. They had always looked at the Chinese Government for Protection and inspiration, they sent remittances to their relatives back at home, send their children for higher education in China. But they had settled in Vietnam permanently. Hence drain of wealth took place continuously even after the liberation of South Vietnam from American clutches in 1975. The Vietnamese government and people were aware of it. In Cholan the concentration of Hoas was maximum and as a result of French manoeuvres aimed at dividing them politically and exploiting them economically, the Hoa Community was separated from the Vietnamese population as early as 1859 into congregations according to the region from where they came. This made them feel something superior and better race ^{than} ~~from~~ Vietnamese. 3

3. Communist Party Publication, Chinese Aggression against Vietnam (Hanoi, 1979), p.21.

The Hoa people were hard working and used all tactics to establish themselves in business. They bought corruption and followed the principle that all's fair in love, war and business. Hoas immediately gave bribes if it suited their interest or if they could escape from harsh legislation. In these businesses which could be practiced only by the Vietnamese they married the natives and used them as a front only. In the market they asked whatever price they felt was right from the natives, there was no such thing as a fixed price.⁴

They were known as "Rice Kings", Cholan was the centre of banking with over thirty banks and banking services involving the U.S., British, French and Hongkong capital but always with participation of Hoa in them. Bank directors were the native Vietnam-ese in name only those

4. Groth Alexander, The invisible China (New York 1973).

~~share~~ that were influential holding high post in the administration or in armed forces, they had no capitals of theirs.⁵

The number of Hoas had increased during the French Colonial rule due to better opportunities for trade. But they were not welcomed by either ~~the~~ French rulers or the people of Vietnam. Indo-China phrases such as 'the Chinese stranglehold on Indo-China, the Chinese cyst,' etc. were heard on every side. Regulations were imposed upon the Chinese, ^{which} accounted for the comparatively small numbers of immigrants. At one time the Chinese merchants complained of the Government restrictions prohibiting the export of any commodity other than rice. They protested against the harsh treatment to which importers of goods had to submit. Taxes were above seven times for a Chinese coolie as for an Anamite. Thus it was impossible for the poor Chinese to get into the country. Most of the Chinese

5. Wilfred Burchett, The China-Cambodia Vietnam Triangle (London, 1981). p.181.

entering Indo-China in the 1920s were sent for by their families or by Chinese firms who preferred Chinese employees.⁶

This shows that Chinese were not liked in Vietnam. They had no other loyalties other than to their congregation. Hoas visit their relatives in China, they bring with them sackfuls of gifts. They ^psent as much as U.S. \$ 2,000 on their relatives during ^{one}a two or three week stay.⁷

The Hoa people were not a ^{b-}problem for the Chinese government excepting that some-times they stopped getting the remittances. The Chinese government had always kept the Hoas in mind while making it's foreign policy.

6. Demmey, Asia's Teeming Millions, (London, 1931) ,p.30.

7. Elena S.17, Yu, "Overseas Remittances in South Eastern China", China Quarterly, No.78, (1979) p.341.

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In 1949, an overseas Chinese Commission was set up. Its function was to promote the welfare of the Overseas Chinese, develop relationship with them so that more remittances could come, to encourage the children of Hoas to come for higher education as it was essential for moulding them in favour of the Chinese Government and people and to make them feel that they were Chinese and that their heart was in China. This attitude of the Hoas was not liked by the Vietnamese.⁸



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National consequence of such an attitude on the part of China was, that the governments of South East Asia developed a fear and suspicion towards the overseas Chinese or the Hoas. When the C.C.P. came to power the idea of the overseas Chinese acting as the fifth column was there.⁹

8. Russell H. Fifield, The Diplomacy of South-East Asia, (New York, 1958), p.290.

9. G. William Skimmer, "Overseas Chinese in South-East Asia", Annals of The American Academy of Political and Social Science.

Vol.321, 1954, p. 106.

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Ngo Dinh Diem in 1950-57 tried to control the economy and even compelled, the Hoas to take up Vietnamese citizenship. They were able to earn their livelihood in a much more restricted manner. After the overthrow of Diem the fortunes of the Chinese business improved. Before 1968 there were four local banks in Saigon by 1972 there were 32 banks of which twenty-eight were Chinese owned. Big industries like textiles and Cement were established by Chinese Companies. Hoas were ~~known~~ as petrol kings, Rice kings, the scrap metals kings etc.¹⁰

Chinese also got contract for construction of military bases, they also controlled the import and export businesses. They were affluent businessmen. After the liberation of South Vietnam, Vietnamese had expected their co-operation but were surprised. Chinese newspaper Hoa Lien from Cholan contained anti-Soviet

10. E.S. Ungar, "The struggle over the Chinese Communities, 1946-1986," pacific Affairs, vol.60, No.1. (1987), p. 606.

attacks for three days. Hoas influenced by Peking supporting some progressive Chinese set up a "Chinese Residents' Peace Association", for peaceful co-existence and asking the Hoa capitalists and intellectuals to gather money and expertise to help the land of their Ancestors" that is China.^{11.}

China took it as a challenge to protect the Hoas in Vietnam and to put pressure on Vietnam it stopped its aid, this made Vietnam go closer to U.S.S.R. and in November 1978 a Friendship treaty was signed between Vietnam and U.S.S.R.¹²

Chinese wanted the Vietnamese and U.S.A. to stay apart. This was not a difficult task since Americans were not enthusiastic for friendship with Hanoi especially at the period when

11. *ibid.*, p.607.

12. Sheldon W. Simon, "China, Vietnam and ASEAN: The Politics of Polarization," Asian Survey, Vol.19, (1979), p.176.

Vietnam wanted to control all Indo-China in alliance to the Soviet Union. To avoid such a situation China started supporting the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia as it was the only regime opposing Vietnamese- Soviet ~~intente~~. These development had an adverse affect on the Hoa people, they were looked up with suspicion by the Vietnamese and the Hoas felt insecure and moved away from Vietnamese.¹³

At present in China there are about 11 million overseas Chinese, called the domestic Chinese. They include those Hoa people who have returned to China their relatives and students. These are given a privileged position in China, due to the reason that if they are not treated well, ~~result~~ances would be reduced and relations with the Hoa people would be tense. Chinese used them for communicating with the Hoas. Experience of the past had shown that

13. ibid., p.1174

the mishandling of the domestic Chinese had an immediate effect on the overseas Chinese. But the Hoa people were not wholly a single follower of the Chinese Government they first took care of their interest. ¹⁴

One example of this is seen in South Vietnam when Ngo Din Diem had made a law prohibiting the foreigners to take part in the economic activities, the Hoas immediately took the citizenship of South-Vietnam.

On this issue the Chinese government kept mum for nine months and then issued a short protest saying that free choice should have been given. ¹⁵

It was the relationship with China which

14. People's Daily, 12 October 1954.

15. Wang Gugun, "Attitudes of Overseas Chinese," China Quarterly, No.3, (1978), p.105.

had more importance on the lives of the Hoas. When the relationship was good the Hoas lived peacefully. In 1954 it was decided that the overseas Chinese would be gradually assimilated in Vietnam. Chou in Lai when he visited Vietnam in 1956 he requested the Hoas to love the mountains and rivers, the grass and the trees of Vietnam as their own, this signifies that the Hoas were still aliens in Vietnam. But the Chinese government had still controlled their education as it helped them to mould their attitudes in favour of China.¹⁶

Geographical, Economic and demographic factors affected the status of the ethnic Chinese north and South in different ways. First the Chinese in the north came to be perceived as a strategic concern whenever Sino-Vietnamese relations were at issue. while the Chinese in

16. Foreign Languages Publishing House, Dossier, Hoa in Vietnam (hanoi, 1978), p.2.

the South were viewed as an internal matter. Second Chinese in the north played a far smaller role in the economy than those in the south. Thirdly the Chinese population in the north was small (0.5%) compared to that in the South 5.5 .¹⁷

Ignoring the Chinese advice for a protracted people's war involving only small guerrilla units and not regulars, Vietnam went for a full fledged war and its victories undermined the prestige of China. To prove itself to be right and for creating hurdles in Vietnam's way the Chinese began to mobilize the Hoa people against Vietnam.

A propaganda machinery was set up against the Vietnamese leadership and their policies. Various types of slogans were made in use for this e.g. "Although the Hoas live in Vietnam

¹⁷. Ungar, n.10, p.598.

their hearts are with China and they were encouraged to propagate Mao's thought. China infiltrated agents to manipulate bad Hoas and to group the Hoas into secret organisation which could be used later for sabotage.¹⁸

Vietnamese proclaimed that they had no intention of quarreling with China as Vietnam had to divert its energy and resources for building up their nation. The Chinese on their part reduced their relations with Vietnam to a minimum. They stopped giving aid, expelled the Vietnamese citizens studying in China, closed down the Vietnamese consulate in Southern China and themselves sealed those points on the frontiers from where Hoas were allowed to enter China and refused having a conference.¹⁹

18. Communist Party Publications, n.3, p.12;

19. Hemen Roy, China's Vietnam War (New Delhi, 1983), p.81.

Vietnam broke its diplomatic relations with Cambodia and China openly sided with Cambodia then ~~the~~ Vietnamese authorities decided in March 1978 to clamp down on private business, to shift bourgeois tradesmen to production centre and accelerate the socialist transformation of private capitalist industries and commerce in the South.²⁰

Tough measures like seizure of private properties, currency exchange and sending people to the new economic zones were taken. This was preceded by a reshuffle of top level personnel in Saigon and large number of cadres were sent to deal with southern problem. Cholan was also surrounded by police and military force as it was considered to be a capitalist heart within the socialist body of Vietnam. These raids resulted in confiscation of large amounts of goods, money and gold bars unlike the currency change of September

²⁰ Vietnam's Foreign Ministry Note of Mar 27, 1978 p.

not noted down.

1975 which was badly organised and had given enough time to the Hoa businessmen to hid their wealth. This move had taken them by surprise. ²¹

Now the Hoa people felt deprived. They had gathered this wealth through hard work and various tactics. (e.g.) They brought corruption. They believed that all was fair in love, war and business. Hoas immediately gave bribes if it suited their interest, or if they could escape from harsh legislation. In those businesses which could be practiced only by the Vietnamese, for this they married the natives and used them as a front only. In the market they asked whatever price they felt was right from the natives, there was no such thing as a fix price ²². This had made the native vietnamese angry after liberation of South Vietnam.

21. Nayan Chandra, Far Eastern Economic Review, Vol.100, No.15, (April,17), p.11.

22. . Garth, n. 4, p.53.

Caught in the politics of China and Vietnam and fear of revenge by the Vietnamese, in 1978 a number of Hoa people who had been leading a normal life in factories, co-operatives and schools in Vietnam suddenly joined one another in selling their property and buying valuables and without permission from authorities, started leaving for China and other South-East Asian countries in mass exodus without the proper channel. ²³

This happened because the Chinese refused to believe that they were being treated on an equal footing with the Vietnamese in trade and they were furious at

²³. Vietnam vol XII No.2, (1978)

Socialist Republic of Vietnam, p.10,

having what they considered an inferior national status thrust upon them without option. The Vietnamese businessmen on the other hand, ~~grumbled~~²⁴ that the Chinese ~~stranglenoldwas~~²⁴ being confirmed instead of exercised.

Vietnamese remembered that a section of the Hoas had worked hand in gloves with the imperialists and colonialists to exploit them and also poor Hoas. They sold the goods of the imperialists and bought raw materials for them. In this way, they had become a handy tool for the colonial administration and in return had got economic privileges and grew into essential

24. Saigon correspondent of The Times, 28 September 1956.

political and economic force of the puppet regime which controlled almost the vital parts of the economy of South Vietnam. Cholan had become a separate world , based on "Kinship ties" - a kingdom of its own. ²⁵

They are 65 percent of the population of the fifth district which has Cholan the twin city of saigon. Unlike other countries of South-East Asia where ethnic or economic rivalries had decided the fate of the overseas Chinese, in Vietnam it had lesser effect the major cause for the fate of Hoa communities. was the geopolitical and relations between Vietnam and China. The deterioration in vietnam-China relations unleashed inordinate pressures on the ethnic Chinese and culminated in the mass exodus of refugees.

CHAPTER III

NATIONAL DIMENSION OF THE HOA PROBLEM

Following the liberation of South Vietnam in 1975 the two parts of Vietnam got united in 1976. Unification of the two Vietnams was essential as North Vietnam had all the mineral resources and industries but it was not self-sufficient in food. South Vietnam was a bowl of rice growing in the fertile delta of Makong river.

Economic system of the two Vietnams was also different. North had a socialist system while south had a capitalist system mostly dominated by the Hoas or the overseas Chinese. There were about 1.5 millions Hoas in Vietnam. Seven hundred thousands lived in Cholan which meant a Big Market. Next to Cholan Hoas lived

in large numbers in Quang Ninh province¹ bordering on China.

Co-operation, dedication, hardwork and sacrifices were needed to develop the war torn economy. The unification of the two systems of economy had problems and the authorities in the North had also expected some troubles but not of the magnitude which resulted.

Hoas did not labour much on states as they did in Malaysia and Indonesia., but they played an important part in banking, money-lending, wholesale marketing of rice, retailing of non-perishable goods and ofcourse, they played on important part in foreign trade. Some small groups

1. William J. Duiker, Vietnam, nation in Revolution. (Colorado, 1983),p .5.

were engaged in agriculture.²

While the population was migrating from North-Vietnam to South after the formation of the democratic Republic of Vietnam, a new dimension was added with the unification of the two Vietnams . About 160,000 escaped to china by boat and this had led to serious economic dislocation. As the private trade was abolished thousands of merchants were removed from Ho-Chin-Minh city and settled into New Economic Zones. The Population of the Ho-Chi-Minh city was now reduced from 4 million in 1975 to 3 million. The anti-capitalist drive and currency reform which were among the main reasons behind the ethnic Chinese exodus did lead to the aggravation of unemployment problem.

2. Demis . J. Duncanson, Government and Revolution in Vietnam (London, 1968), p.25.

Natives working in their enterprises lost their jobs. Industrial sector which was not in a healthy state was further worsened by the massive departure of the ethnic Chinese. Vietnam's modest shipping fleet was enhanced by the purchase of four fighters, and work had started for the expansion of Haiphong port, but it was very slow as Chinese crane operators had left the country.³

It was natural for the Hoas to leave Vietnam as they were the targets of attack by the native people. The Hoas were seen as the real exploiters and not the French as it were the Hoas who were creditors, money lenders and entrepreneurs

3. Pham Van Dong, "Vietnam, Social Affairs," Far Easten Economic Review, Asia year Book (1979), p.318.

while the native people were the debtors, borrowers, and labourers, some Hoas were also poor and worked as labourers.⁴

For three years after the liberation of South Vietnam, the Capitalist system had remained untouched. On March 24th 1979 in a surprise move government clamped down the bourgeois trade some 30,000 business operations in Ho-Chi Minh city alone was closed; their goods and assets were frozen.

The government announced that exploitative capitalist system would be replaced by socialist system. Several thousand state shops were opened but they were inadequate and the move resulted in shortages and galloping inflation.

4. C.P. Fitzgerald, China and South-East Asia 1945
(London, 1973) p.91.

The dismal picture in the Industrial sector was further worsened by the exodus of the Hoas. China also stopped giving aids to Vietnam. Vietnam lost its skilled personnels in them, most of them were workers, technicians, fisherman etc. Vietnam found it difficult to re-build its war torn economy. Vietnam was forced to join Soviet bloc Comecon. It took up eighty different projects abandoned by China. But USSR aid could not undo the loss of thousands of skilled workers of Chinese origin which led to a sharp fall in industrial production especially coal. ⁵

Vietnam had exported coal to Japan but now its export declined to about 50% of what it did in 1977. But Vietnam still managed to get multilateral and

5. Dong, K.3, p.320

government's credit. It got Kr.40 million from Denmark and US \$ 6.3 million from Asian development bank.⁶

With the exodus of the Hoas, the various occupation in which they were engaged suffered. They are as follows in the next page.

Firstly in Agriculture; Vietnam has been an agricultural society. It was dominated by the natives and in this Hoas did not have much control, hence it did not suffer much still one group called the Hakkas had established themselves in agriculture. They lived in small villages bordering China.

In fishing the Hoa people had considerable hold and preferred deep sea fishing. The natives had engaged themselves only in the coastal areas and that

6. ibid., p.322

too only half heartedly. In 1929 the production of their fishing was about 5,800 tonnes. French used to auction this right of fishing. There was a keen competition among them and they always kept the natives away from the local and export trade in dried fish. Even the manufacture of Nuoc Mann, the popular Vietnamese fermented fish souce was monopoliced by the Chinese. Hence this industry suffered after their exodus.⁷

The Chinese in trade and Industries:

Hoa had boats which was used for transportations of goods on the streams and rivers. It was also used as rest houses. The census held in 1921 showed that about 156,000 Hoas were engaged in this occupation.

7. Duiker, n.l, p.97.

Hence river transport suffered. Hoas were also skilled artisans and handicraft workmen hence handicraft must have suffered. They had also created job opportunities for natives and had employed them as workers and apprentices. They also worked as tailors, shoemakers etc.⁸

In Cholan they manufactured many articles such as food pastes, basketing, books, paper, brushes, candles etc. Therefore, at least temporarily there was shortage of these articles. Cholan looked like a ghost town and completely deserted. In animal husbandry they practised duck raising, kept the eggs into incubators and when hatched they sold them. They also made bowls, bottles, lamps, manufactured

8. Victor Purcell, The Chinese in South-East Asia (London, 1966), p.194

cloth, ceramic etc. Machines and ships construction, owned most of the saw -mills and mills preparing rice for export. Hence labourers and export of rice suffered. They had also owned sugar refineries on the plains of Cohin China. The Chinese rice merchants had rice mills or husking mills where the paddy was processed - husked, blended, packed - on behalf of exporters. They quite often combined both functions, in which case they were known as miller-exporters of rice. Miller exporters were concentrated at Cholan.⁹

In mining the law did not permit the Hoa to participate. In trade unlike industries the Hoa found themselves in true colour. They got the support of the guilds and cooperatives. They could very

(9 ibid., p.195.)

well adjust with the native Vietnamese and did not need the same standards of hygiene and comfort which the Europeans needed and Vietnamese did not have the same perseverance and qualities which was needed in trade in which the Chinese were engaged such as cotton, sugar, condiments, silk and tea.

10

Hoas also got molasses that were processed at their refineries only. Hence the credit system and sugar plantation that had flourished now suffered. Condiment, cinnamon bark and cardamon trade were all in the Hoas hands and they exported it. Hence their export suffered. At Saigon and Hanoi silk and textiles were manufactured. Hence trade in so many commodities suffered. This led to unemployment of natives. Chinese were very hard working

10. ibid., p.197

and had entrepreneurship hence they enriched themselves and strengthened the economy. Not only the entire import and export trade but also internal trade was managed by them. There must have suffered a lot.

An e.g. of how the capital was transferred from Vietnam is that 'A Certain Tran Thanh, a Taiwan Chinese who had financed a very lucrative sodium glutamate factory in saigon with 48% Taiwan capital, and the rest by himself, Shortly before the Liberation of saigon Tran Thanh transferred his capital to Peking and returned to his native district in Kwantung province. Such factories were closed and the capital transferred, while such factories and more investment was needed for the regeneration

and development of the war torn economy.¹²

The prices rose sharply, industrial recession was there. Inflation rate increased to around 80% as only 30% of the trade was carried out by the state agencies. Initially government, was unable to control the market or bring order to the chaotic economy. Unemployment problem increased with the exodus of the Hoas due to the anti-capitalist drive and currency reform. "A Nahan Dan"¹¹ editorial in July admitted that though in the past two years some 1.4 million people had been given jobs in the south hundreds of thousands of people remain jobless; and there still are too many private traders; and the number of

12. Wilfred Burchett, The China, Cambodia and Vietnam Triangle (London, 1982), p.181.

people refusing to work or engaging in illegal business is still large. ¹³

This is still so even after closing down of about 30,000 private business. Informations gathered from the refugees say that Cholan has become like a ghost town. ¹⁴

How did this happen. The indigenous population had abundant supplies of land, but had little access to capital and to growing urban and international markets, therefore they remained in agricultural production leaving the Urban based Chinese immigrants to fill the vacuum in trade, marketing, commerce and services occupation.

13. Dong, n.3, p.318

14. Peter Weintraub, "The Exodus and the agony" For Eastern Economic Review Hongkong 1978 , p.8.

In examining the patterns of commercial control in south Vietnam it was clear that part of the population for Chinese domination of whole-sale trade and other larger scale business operations derived from their greater degree of credit worthiness. 15

With the unification of two Vietnams and the erodus of the Hoas the economy was shattered. China cancelled its aid. In order to bring the economy in order the government went back from its policy of abolishing private trade. Instead it wants to move private traders out of key areas of the economy. "In April Ho Chi Minh city authorities were said to control 80% of the market in foodstuff and 50% of the vegetales market. The city also claimed that 50% of handicraft workers

15. Chilton A. Barton, The Chinese in South East Asia. Vol.1. ETHnicity and Economic /activity, Edited by India, Y.C. Lim, Singapore, 198. p.63.

jad joined collectives, still government admitted in 1985 that the number of small traders in some areas had actually increased in recent years. In Ho Chi Minh city for example, the number of small traders had grown by 37% since the end of war. ¹⁶

Vietnam introduced currency change and new wages system on 14th /september 1985. But it was of only limited success. Old currency was exchanged for new at the rate of Dong 10 to Dong 1. This was aimed to curb the black marketing, In the new wage system the wage was linked to productivity, quality and efficiency and a preferential treatment would be given to those who worked hard. ¹⁷

16. Author's name not given, "vietnam" Far Eastern Economic Review, Asia Year Book (1986), p.256.

17. ibid., p.257.

But this reform was ill conceived and badly executed and brought inflation, shortages on industrial goods and an economic slow down.¹⁸

Vietnam state was occupied with the country's national security,^{but the} people are worried about their daily life and getting their food was every days headache. Their average wage is from Dong 100 to ^{Dong} 300 a month and the inflation rate is 100%. In Ho-Chi-Minh city visitors tell that black market can supply many goods from beer and calgate tooth paste to Wrangler jeans. Vietnamese leaders have realized that power of persuasion is more important than forced policy.¹⁹

There are three interest involved the interest of the state (ii) the interest of the collective and those of the individuals.

18. Author's name not given, 'Vietnam', For Eastern Economic Review, Asia Year Book, (1987) p.261.

19. Plam Van Dong "Vietnam", Far Estern Economic Review, Asia Year Book (1983) p.272.

Stimulation of production and balance between the three interests are the aims of the new economic measures . Coal production was improved with a new coal mine in Coa Son mines and Mong Duong mine~~es~~ was re-habilitated. The government urged all state-run production enterprises and units to expand. ²⁰

These are some of the measures which the Vietnamese government took to balance the economy and improve the life of people and irradicate corruption which resulted due to the exodus of the Hoas and the socialist transformation of the economy.

The Chinese merchants had already built up a busines ~~empire~~ in Vietnam before the French came. French had realized that the Chinese merchants were indispensable to the

20. ibid., p.275

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Vietnamese economy. Hence after unification their help and co-operation was needed most, but instead of building up the economy they left the country and the whole economic system was paralysed.²¹

Vietnam nevertheless suffered a lot due to this loss of human power and it would take at least one generation to compensate the loss of human capital. Initially Vietnamese authorities wanted to check this mass exodus considering them as their citizens but seeing them determined to leave the country they tacitly allowed them to leave and were ready to cope up with this problem as mentioned in the chapter.

21. King C. Chen; Vietnam and China, 1938-1954, (Princeton. 1969), p.10.

CHAPTER 4

INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF THE HOA PROBLEM

The exodus of the Hoa people from Vietnam not only had national dimension but had wide repercussion the world over.

Initially this exodus was liked and welcomed by the Western countries specially by the Americans as they saw these people to be anti-communist, pro-American and pro-capitalist, that is why they were allowed to enter readily in other South-East Asian countries like Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Hongkong o the assurance that they will ~~be~~ finally resettled in the Western Countries.

"The 1979 U.N. Geneva Conference decided that whatever happened else-where all the Vietnamese who braved stormy seas and pirates would be resettled in the Western world. More than 900,000 found homes in U.S., Cannada, Australlia , France,

Britain and elsewhere. ¹

After the crack down on the private commerce in 1978 thousands of Hoas crossed the border into China, Peking protected that Vietnam was deliberately persecuting them and that Vietnam had hence broken down the 1955 agreement between the VWP and the CCP calling for gradual and voluntary integration of Chinese nationals into Vietnamese society. China sent two ships to pick up those Hoas who wanted to leave Vietnam. But Vietnam refused permission for docking at Vietnamese ports & the Chinese diplomatic officials were accused of stirring up trouble among the Hoas & the Peking's consular office in Ho chi- Minh city was shut down. ²

1. Times (London), 16 June 1990.

2. William J. Dinker, Vietnam, Nations in Revolutions. (Columbia), 1983), pp. 148-9.

China suggested to the other countries in the world that if Vietnam continues this policy then rest of Asia and the world would have to accept about 1.5 million refugees and some more Vietnamese refugees also, which would affect the development plans and economies of other South-East Asian countries. China requested the South-East Asian countries to confiscate the ships bringing these refugees so that this will discourage the refugees traffic and at the same time provide sums to look after the refugees till they are resettled in some other countries by UNHCR.³

The South-East Asian countries have a feeling that Vietnam is causing distailisation in the region may be unknowingly. It is creating military, economic and social problems. Many are already arguing that there is plenty of evidence that the enforced exodus of

3. Derek Davies, "Refugees, Blackmail and a Remedy", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol.103, no.1, (1979), p.9.

mainly ethnic Chinese is to establish the influence of Vietnam in her neighbouring countries under the guidance of Soviet Union. as the inflow of the refugees increased after the treaty of friendship between them.⁴

In January 1979 Malaysian Prime-Minister Datuk Hussein OM ~~own~~ told that if Hanai government will begin sending communist agents with the refugees he would break up the diplomatic relations with Vietnam. The refugee influx has put a strain on the army which at present was involved in a campaign against the Malaysian Communists . Now check post had to be established dotting the sea⁵ cost.

4. K. Das, "Refugees : ROcking ASEAN's boat", Far Eastern Economic Review, vol.104, no.2, (1971), p.21.

5. ibid., p.22.

With the massive inflow of refugees the problem was further aggravated with the flooding caused by the North-East monsoon and the outbreak of the mouth and foot disease among the cattle and swine fever among pigs. This forced the government to kill thousands of cattle reducing the average national monthly consumption of pigs by 50%. The Red Crescent workers who were engaged in helping the refugees had now to prepare for the flood relief. The supplies for the refugees were bought on the east coast to which now the government appealed to the UNHCR to procure its supplies from wealthier west coast cities though this means higher prices and an extra transportation costs. The cattle disease problem is linked to the refugees by the man in the Street as the prices of such goods are increasing.⁶

6. K.Das, "A rising Tide of Troubles". n.3 vol.102, No.50(1978), p.15

As the influx has not stopped and news that some 300 more boats have been cited made the Malaysian government take some steps. The medical department has been asked to be ready with its essential drugs. The National Bureau of investigations was instructed to keep a watch on the illegal immigrants from bribing the officials and getting in and trying to stop the drug trade in which Hoas were involved during the Vietnam war to which they may indulge here also. ⁷

By June 1979 more than 40,000 Hoas were temporarily settled in the island of Pulau Bidang on the eastern coast of Malaysia. There is violence and blackmarketing among them. The petrolmen on the island are very alert and nervous seeing so many refugees. all it takes is one stupid refugee

7. ibid., p.16.

and one scared soldier and we have got a riot.⁸

Every three days Hoas are provided with the food packets by the UNHCR. Hoas keep complaining about water, sanitation, housing, space and lack of recreation. Out of 40,000 of them only some 10,000 were resettled in U.S., Australia etc. There were 358 births. This also raised the problem of citizenship.⁹

Deputy Prime Minister Dr. Mohathi cleared

8. Author not given, "Tension in a Refugee ghetto, n.3, Vol.104, no.24, (1979), p.23.

9.No Author, "The Refugees, We are in a Blind Alley", Asia Week, Vol.6, No.26, (Hongkong, 1979) p. 6-7.

its earlier cruel statement that shooting the boat people at sight would be the last resort. But if other measures failed to stop them he would get such a law passed. The ones already in Malaysia were given good treatment. It had about 76,000 Boat people and hence had tightened its security to prevent any more landing of the "illegal immigrants. Maximum number of the Hoas were on the island of Pulan Bidang when Malaysian authorities wanted to evacuate and said, that they would be given sea worthy boats and sufficient supplies of food and water.¹⁰

Similarly in Singapore as the proportion of the Hoas arriving increased it took very hard attitude and put a ceiling on the number

10. Indian Express (New Delhi, July 23-29),
in Asian Recordes, p. 15000

of Haos arriving. "The ceiling of 1,000 was announced by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reason given was that Singapore is a small island state and still 843 refugees are awaiting resettlement. The UNHCR immediately criticised the Singapore's decision, so did western governments including the US and Australia. as also UNHCR officials¹¹.

Thailand also seems to be following Malaysia's example of refusing entry to the boat people. "This is evident from the statements made by the Prime Minister Kriangsak

11. Michael Richardson, "Singapore slams the Door", n.3, Vol.102, No.45, (1978), p.24

Chamanand quoted in the **Bangkok** post that Thailand would receive Vietnamese "boat people" only long enough to repair and re-supply sea-worthy craft **before** returning them to open water. If any boat needs repairs this will be permitted, but it will have to leave with the refugees as soon as repairs are completed", and supplies of provisions and medical treatment given. But Thailand later became liberal when UN officials and Western countries agreed to take them soon and considered the boat people as genuine refugees and not just post-war social adjustment. ¹²

Hongkong Government has introduced a package of tough laws for Hoas coming from Vietnam. It refused entry to Huey fong having

12. Richard Nations, "Pulling up the Welcome mat", n.3, p.14.

a cargo of about 2,700 Vietnamese. The royal Hongkong Auxiliary air force the only search aircraft has been put into operation over the South-China sea to spot ships having refugee cargo. Sir Jack carter the chief secretary delivered to the legislative council his harsh laws. They are as follows in the next page.

- i) More regulations providing for the seizure of ships found carrying illegal immigrants.
- ii) Putting the burden and proof that excess passengers are survivors of a shipwreck on the ships master,
- (iii) A fine of up to U.S.\$ 2,000 and up to four years in jail for disabling, abandoning, or beaching any vessel within Hongkong without reasonable excuse.

The hurried introduction of these laws shows that the government feared that with the fall of Cambodia more refugees would come and it would take a long time to resettle them . In 1975 4,000 refugees arrived in Hongkong it took three years to settle them in U.S. and other countries like Norway (97) Britain (75), Cannada (46), Switzerland (40), Australila (8) and Japan (1). Sir Jack called for immedaite help from world over to alleviate the suffering and hardship of the boat people. ¹³

13. Marry Lee, "Refugees, Putting up the Barriers", n.3, (1979), p.32.

Angello Gasamayagom the representative of the UNHCR in Hongkong agreed with the Hongkong's governments plea that it should not become a dumping ground for Hoa refugees but he criticised the treatment meted out to Huey Fong.

14

Attitudes of the first asylum countries hardened gradually. A case study of three vessels (i) Huey Fong (ii) Tung An and Hai Hong may be cited to study this attitude. The Hongkong, Malaysia and Philippines have refused to allow these ships from entering their waters carrying some 9,000 Hoas. An example of Haihong can be given. Malaysia already had 35,000 refugees. When Hoi Hong encamped twelve miles from Malaysia's West coast harbour of Port Kalang. Malaysian police

14. *ibid.*

entered the ship to decide whether the country would give permission to 2,504 refugees seeking temporary asylum like the ones which came by boats. A council set for it was against giving temporary asylum due to the dubious circumstances in which the refugees were picked. The master of the ship told that as the engine gave some trouble he had to stop in the parcels, where he could not prevent hordes of Vietnamese from piling on board. But it was said that huge sums in money and gold were paid to the Vietnamese officials and the shipping ~~border~~. A total of US\$ 5 million was mentioned. Malaysians saw this as a business.

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15. Gay Sacerdot, "Plight of the ship of Gold", n.3, vol.102, (1978), p.36.

When they try to confirm with the refugee they say "Nobody is stopping us, Vietnamese patrols saw us but they closed their eyes".¹⁶

Its but natural that when refugees start coming to a country they create problems of several types. They have to arrange for their food, cloth and shelter and on top of it they start working at lower wages which upsets the market system. They become a law and order problem for the host country. Natives see them as a burden and the cause of several problems like rise in prices, ~~thieving~~ etc. There are also hidden costs. The drain on police and other security personnel. Moreover it had already become a lucrative business for some of the ship

16. Many Lee, "The cold wind from the North", Vol.102 n.3, Vol.102, (1978), p.27.

owners. These countries began to consider the Hoas no more as the refugees but illegal migrants leaving Vietnam for economic purposes. Refugees told when asked that Hanai government allows the ethnic Chinese or the Hoas access to boats for gold and hard currency US \$2,000 per persons for adults and half the amount for children. They said that five such organisation, quasi legal departure organisation are in operation led by provincial chief of police security operating with sanctions from Communist party secretaries. Wealth Hoas businessmen in good terms with the government have been given authority to act as agents to buy boats, find passengers and collect and distribute kick backs to the officials .

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17. K. Das and Guny Sacerdatic, "Economics on Human Cargo," n.3, Vol.102, (1978), p.10.

After the pressure on Hanoi increased from the ASEAN countries and the U.N., Hanoi not wanting to be isolated in South-East Asia and fall in the eyes of the world, agreed with the U.N. to organise direct migration of the Hoas wanting to settle in the West so that illegal exodus would stop. "Deputy UN High commissioner for the refugees (UNHCR) Dale de Hoan, returning from a Week's visit to Hanoi, said that an understanding had been reached to arrange the orderly departure of family re-union cases and humanitarian cases.

18

18. Richard Nations, "Towards a more orderly

EXODUS no.3 vol.103 No.11 (1979) p.15.

De Maan made it clear that the Vietnamese initiative in inviting the UN delegation was taken as evidence that Hanoi was really interested in solving the Hoa problem which was diplomatically embarrassing for it .¹⁹

In 1980s the exodus has stopped but the migrations from Vietnam continues. Those refugees who have not been re-settled are being repatriated now and Vietnam is accepting them.

Prime Minister of Britain Margaret Thatcher informed U.S. President George Bush of her decision of forced repatriation of Vietnamese. The number is about 60,000. Americans did not like them to return to communist

19. ibid., p.16.

Vietnam. President Bush made it clear to Mrs. Thatcher his unhappiness.²⁰

Mrs. Thatcher considered them as simply illegal immigrants and said that those already returned have been treated well and Britain would keep enquiring about their well being through the United Nations., High Commissioners on refugees. If Mrs. Thatcher sticks to her decision then only one-third of the Hoas would qualify for the refugee status and about 40,000 would have to be deported.²¹

"But Britain takes every care to see their well being. Two British parliamentarians arrived in Vietnam to ask fifty-one Vietnamese

20. . ibid.

21. ibid.

boat people about their treatment since they were repatriated against their will from Hongkong last month. Though as expected Britain bore international criticism for sending them back. Hongkong is host to more than 57,000 boat people of these 3,000 are potential illegal immigrants.²²

In Thailand Vietnamese refugees are being persecuted in the north eastern border area. Students protected against illegal citizenship being held by the Vietnames. This hinderce the relationship between the two countries.²³

More than 40,000 Hoa refugees have been living in ~~Thailand~~ since the last thirty years. Thai government wants to send them back to

22. Reuter (UK) 9 January 1990.

23. Bangkok Post 28 August, 1976.

Vietnam. But very few want to go back. Many of the refugees were born in Thailand and had never seen Vietnam. They regard Thailand as their home. These people were not given Thai citizenship officially. They are regarded as stateless. These refugees and their children have industriousness and business temperament and hence have started dominating local retail business and the skilled trades. Their commercial success had aroused the jealousy among the Thais who have retaliated by attacking upon Vietnamese shops and houses and even burning these shops.

Pastors demanding the eviction of the Hoas from Thailand have appeared on the walls

24. Times (London) 29 July 1978.

of Bangkok. . and other provincial capitals. 25

Under these pressures the Deputy Interior Minister Prarak Prayoonphokar has pledged to return to Vietnam about 40,000 of the Hoas. The negotiations on the repatriation of the refugees with delegation from Hanoi and Saigon would begin. 26

Similarly at the second Geneva Conference June 1989 the decision was taken that those not accepted as refugees will have to go back home. 27

25 Statesman (New Delhi) 30 August 1979.

26. New Straits Times (Kualalampur) 4th May 1975.

27. Times (London) 16 January 1990.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Hoa problem in Vietnam as discussed in the previous chapters was not a sudden outburst but had been building up for about two thousand years. In fact, it is as old as the history of Vietnam.

China conquered Vietnam so many times right from the first century B.C. and the Chinese started settling in the Vietnamese mainstream. Gradually, they were assimilated. But new waves of Hoas kept coming through the centuries and it appeared in course of time, that they were keen to retain their separate identity. The Vietnamese being freedom loving people, when ever they get an opportunity they asserted their independence against the Chinese. They were influenced by the Chinese culture. China on its part had always looked upon Vietnam as an area of its influence.

This attitude of China was always resented by the Vietnamese. The Hoas were hard working people and because of their industriousness, dominated the trade and commerce. They were indispensable to the economic and even the French or Americans could not displace them. They were so vital to the economy of Vietnam.

These Hoas also had bought corruption and used all means to gain wealth. They sent remittances to their relatives in China. They had their own schools in which teachers from China came. For all purposes the Hoas were Chinese. In fact they were more Chinese than Vietnamese. Relationship between China and Vietnam guided their attitude. Not all, but some of the Hoas always advocated the Chinese point of view among them. They also had minority psychosis and hence they looked towards China for security.

The Hoas were rich and used to capitalist life in South Vietnam. They did not like the idea of going into the New Economic zones and the hard life after that. They preferred to leave Vietnam and settle in Western countries like the U.S., England, Canada, Australia and Japan.

The Vietnamese Government initially wanted them to stay in Vietnam and work for the regeneration of Vietnam. But the Hoas preferred to leave. Cholan, the china town of Vietnam, which for some days looked like a ghost town, completely deserted. In them Vietnam lost skilled technicians, workers, businessmen and even capital.

Government shops were opened but this was not sufficient and black marketing, hoarding, and inflation made life horrible in Vietnam especially in

Ho-Chi Minh city. China stopped aid, and the U.S. was not giving any help to Vietnam. Vietnam felt isolated. Hence it looked to the U.S.S.R. and ~~Comm~~ countries for aid which, ^{it} started receiving. But still the loss of skilled manpower could not be compensated. The dismal picture in the industrial sector was further worsened. Vietnam in order to overcome this sent its citizens to the U.S.S.R. for training. Its export to Japan, especially coal, had also suffered.

In South Vietnam unemployment was on the increase, people did not like to work in the New Economic Zones and instead, engaged themselves in Black-marketing and illegal business. Schools run by the Hoas were taken under government's control.

Vietnam's image in other South-East Asian countries also suffered a lot.

The American for their own gain had requested other South-East Asian countries to accept the Hoas as they were considered pro-capitalism and pro-Democracy.

But most of the Hoas were pro-China and for this reason the south-East Asian countries feared that Vietnam was expelling its unwanted citizens and may be they were infiltrating communist agents. Hence they did not want the Hoas to be in contact with their citizens. They faced other problems of housing, and supplying them with various necessities. These refugees had also become a cause for the rise in the prices and a law and order problem. The UNHCR found it difficult to find them permanent home and to persuade the South-East Asian countries to keep giving them shelter. Local population

saw them as a burden and the cause of their miseries; black marketeering, shortage of food and other essentials, added to their sufferings. Even when there was a shortage of food the refugees were getting pack food from the UNHCR which annoyed the local people. As a result, there were demonstrations demanding the expulsion of the Hoa people. The Hoas did not want to go back to Vietnam.

Vietnam found itself as a target of attack. Hence it agreed to have direct migration of the Hoas on the basis of family re-union. By 1980's the exodus had stopped. Vietnam was trying to gain the confidence of the Hoas and was trying to assure them, that ~~their~~ well being would be looked after and was also prepared to take back the Hoas from the temporary asylum countries like Hong-Kong and Thailand. The UNHCR representative were looking

after those Hoas who were repatriated and were satisfied that Vietnam was treating them well.

Unlike the other countries of South-East Asia where ethnic or economic rivalries affected the lives of the Hoas, in Vietnam, it was the geopolitical factor and the relations between China and Vietnam, that determined their fate.

In the 1950's and 1960's when the relations were good between the D.R.V. and the P.R.C., the northern Hoas were insulated from the assimilation drive in the South Vietnam conducted by President Ngo-Dinh Diem. The deterioration of the relations in 1978 and 1979 unleashed tremendous pressures on the Hoas and it resulted in the mass exodus.

The Hoa problem is no more an **internationally important** issue. The Hoas have now been accepted as normal citizens of Vietnam. Vietnam in 1984 introduced new

language and cultural policies together with some changes in the economic policy to suit the Hoas, so that they feel secure and comfortable and have a feeling of belonging to Vietnam and develop a commitment for its uplift.

"In the late 1986, Nguyen Van Linh", Secretary General of the Vietnamese Communist Party told a Party Congress in Ho-Chi-Minh city, that the Hoa cadres must be brought through the party ranks with the express purpose of improving communications between the Vietnamese and the Hoas and to re-integrate, them politically. He also said, that "Today the lives of the Hoas are intermingled in ours without distinction in the mass organization and they earn a living with decreasing separations. A newspaper Saigon-Grai Phong is also published in the Chinese language in order to help the process of integration of the Hoa people in the national mainstream. Every care is being taken so that the enemies of Vietnam

are not in a position to exploit the Hoa problem in their own interest. At the same time, those Hoas who still don't feel satisfied, the government's policy is to treat them with sympathy and understanding, and also help them in their rehabilitation.

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