



SACEI
www.sacei07.org

**A COUNTRY
STAYS ALIVE
WHEN ITS
CULTURE IS
ALIVE.**

**HOPE NEVER DIES
IN THE
INDOMITABLE VI-
ETNAMESE MIND.**

- **SACEI Newsletter up-
dates you on the latest
news about Vietnam-
ese-America.**
- **It serves as a link be-
tween SACEI mem-
bers and those who are
interested in the Viet-
namese or Vietnam-
ese-American culture.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

19 June: ARVN Day Celebration	1
Battle of Flags in Maryland	2
North Vietnam had an Antiwar Movement, Too	4
"Killed" in Vietnam	5
Don't Blame Nixon for Scuttled Peace Overture	8
Vietnam's Communist Revolu- Hue 1968	12
Repeat Offender: Vietnam's Trade in Illegal Timber	13
Minh Hoang: Viet Blogger De- ported to France	14
Testimony of Ms. Vu Minh Khan, Wife of Attorney Nguyen Van Dai	15
Thien An Monastery Dispute	17

SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 107

SEPTEMBER 2017

19 June: ARVN Day Celebration

<https://www.nguoi-viet.com/tin-chinh/khanh-thanh-bia-tuong-niem-chien-si-vnch/>



Although June 19 is the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) DAY, it was celebrated on Sunday 18 June, 2017 at the Vietnam War Memorial in Westminster, CA. This was followed by the unveiling of the Heroes Monument.

The Heroes Monument is a 10-foot high by 8-foot wide granite panel on concrete, according to city documents. The centerpiece will be photos of the six officers with descriptions of each mounted on black granite or marble, Nguyen said.

The officers: Gens. Nguyen Khoa Nam, Tran Van Hai, Le Nguyen Vy, Le Van Hung and Pham Van Phu, and Lt. Col. Nguyen Van Long.

"They are the most famous," Nguyen said.

At the bottom of the monument, are the names of 40 other South Vietnamese servicemen who killed themselves. Many more committed suicide, Nguyen said, but these are the names the veterans organization has.

"There are thousands of others who committed suicide whose names are unknown," said Paul Le, the president of the Coalition of the Republic of Vietnam Veteran Associations in Southern California, which is covering the monument's \$60,000 cost. "We want to remember the unknown soldiers too." The addition is the second one to Freedom Park, at 14180 All American Way, in the last year. Over the summer, Nguyen added \$75,000 in educational, internet-based kiosks to the War Memorial, which was completed in 2003 and has at its center a sculpture of American and South Vietnamese soldiers standing shoulder-to-shoulder.

Continue on next page

Disclaimer: The listing in this newsletter of a book title or a film does not mean endorsement or approval by SACEI.

Vietnam: Historians at War...

<http://www.ocregister.com/2017/04/19/heroes-monument-to-honor-south-vietnamese-officers-soldiers-who-killed-themselves-during-fall-of-saigon/>



Vietnam War Memorial, Westminster, CA



Battle of Flags in Maryland: *Bill Turque*

https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/in-trying-to-celebrate-diversity-suburban-maryland-city-creates-a-flag-flap/2017/06/25/e7d51abc-5771-11e7-b38e-35fd8e0c288f_story.html?utm_term=.5662c0f2dd77

After a spike in hate crimes over the winter, Rockville officials came up with what they thought would be the ideal way to affirm the city's commitment to diversity and inclusion: fly the flags of all 193 member countries of the United Nations from downtown light poles.

"Did you know that more than a third of Rockville's residents were born outside of the United States? It's true!" enthused the YouTube video posted by the suburban Maryland city to promote the flags when they went up — each one next to an American flag — in time for Memorial Day. Residents were encouraged to find their country of origin's flag, take a selfie and send it to the city's Twitter feed.

Within weeks, officials of this diligently progressive Montgomery County seat discovered that celebrating diversity is not a simple business and that good intentions can be derailed by unintended consequences.

Some U.S. military veterans protested the presence of the Iraqi flag at Hometown Holidays, the city's annual three-day street festival celebrating Memorial Day, where Gold Star mothers and the wounded would be in attendance. "If it was 10 years after World War II, would we fly the Japanese flag or the German flag in downtown Rockville?" asked Darrin Jones, an Army veteran of the 1991 Gulf War.

At least a couple of flags were stolen. An Ethiopian resident complained that his country's flag was upside down. It turned out he was looking at the Bolivian flag, which has the same stripes of red, yellow and green but ordered in reverse.

The loudest protest came from Montgomery's large Vietnamese community. Trinh Nguyen was furious when he learned that the flag of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam — the communist regime that defeated his homeland of South Vietnam in 1975 — was flying outside Rockville Memorial Library.

"That red flag is painted by the blood of 3 million Vietnamese plus more than 58 thousand American GIs," the 75-year-old former captain in the South Vietnamese army wrote in a June 8 email to Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett (D). Now a retired pharmacist, he said the flag should be flying is the one that belonged to his vanquished country, South Vietnam, with

Continue on next page

Battle of Flags in Maryland...

three red stripes against a field of yellow.

Leggett, whose office had nothing to do with the flag program, forwarded the message — and scores like it — to Rockville city officials.

A day later, the city removed the Vietnamese flag from its site in Rockville Town Center. But instead of retiring the banner, officials placed it in a less conspicuous location along West Montgomery Avenue. A Vietnamese resident spotted it, triggering a new round of protests and a second removal.

Diane Vu, Montgomery's liaison for Asian communities, said that for many Vietnamese Americans, the communist flag evokes memories of the war's brutal aftermath, when as many as 2.5 million South Vietnamese were sent to re-education camps and tens of thousands perished.

Others, like Vu's mother, fled by sea with other "boat people," who drowned by the thousands. She was nine months pregnant with Vu when the inhabitants of her boat were rescued after 10 days in open water.

"For them seeing the flag incites a lot of anger and sadness and brings back horrible, terrible memories," Vu said.

Hoan Dang is a member of the board of the Association of Vietnamese Americans, a Silver Spring nonprofit group that advocates and provides direct services for Maryland's 24,000 Vietnamese, about 9,000 of whom live in Montgomery.

"I think the city of Rockville had good intentions, but there is a lack of understanding," he said. In a letter sent Friday to Mayor Bridget Donnell Newton, the group recommended that Rockville display the South Vietnamese flag.

Newton said the city initially took down the Vietnam communist regime's flag — a yellow star against a field of red — but only to verify that it was actually recognized by the United Nations. Once that was confirmed, it went up again.

The flag program, which originated during a discussion at a "diversity town hall" in February, was not intended to endorse any specific government or political system, Newton said, but to show respect for the city's diverse population. She acknowledged that the effort may need a few tweaks.

"Suffice it to say, we are reevaluating whether we will show both [Vietnamese] flags or only the flag that is recognized by the community," she said.



Vietnamese Parade in Westminster, CA

Other U.S. cities and counties have worked through the same issue, sometimes through the leadership of Vietnamese American elected officials. Earlier this year, San Jose City Council member Tam Nguyen, who escaped Vietnam as a teenager, led passage of a bill to ban the communist flag from city flagpoles and to recognize the old South Vietnamese banner. Seattle did the same in 2015. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors voted in 2004 to recognize the South Vietnamese flag.

Tim Chestnutt, director of the city's Recreation and Parks Department, which oversaw the flag placement, said the whole episode has been a crash course in a subject he never realized was so complex.

North Vietnam had an Antiwar Movement, Too: *Lien Hang Nguyen*

NYT, August 25, 2017.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/opinion/north-vietnam-had-an-antiwar-movement-too.html?action=click&pgtype=Homepage&version=Moth-Visible&moduleDetail=inside-nyt-region-1&module=inside-nyt-region®ion=inside-nyt-region&WT.nav=inside-nyt-region>

When we think back to the signal events of the antiwar movement in 1967, we recall the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s powerful April 4 speech denouncing the war, the thousands of returned registration cards during the "Stop the Draft" week, and the March on the Pentagon that brought record numbers of demonstrators to the nation's capital.

That year also witnessed global protests condemning the war, as demonstrations in European capitals and the International War Crimes Tribunal issued powerful rebukes against American intervention in Southeast Asia. News coverage of the war also shifted that year, including the first call by The New York Times for a halt to the bombing and the initiation of peace talks.

Less well known, but just as significant, was the antiwar "movement" in North Vietnam. Less a movement than a heterogeneous array of voices, it included a wide swath of North Vietnamese society, within the government and among the general public.

Some had never wanted to go to war to liberate the South in the first place, and had sought instead to build the North and reunify the country through political means. Educated in the Soviet Union, some of these individuals even occupied prominent positions in the Vietnamese Communist Party. By 1967, these officials were calling on their government to begin negotiations to put an end to the devastating war. When one such party member, Hoang Minh Chinh, disseminated his political views in an essay he called "Dogmatism in Vietnam," he became the ruling clique's No. 1 enemy.

Party members were not the only people who expressed criticism of the war. Artists and writers had long used their talents to make political statements, placing them directly in the cross hairs of the ideological police. The doctrines of socialist realism, as strong in North Vietnam as it was in Communist Europe, demanded that all art glorify the party's policies. When film directors, writers and poets portrayed the horrors of wars or presented nuanced depictions of battle, their art became subversive as the anti-American struggle for liberation and national salvation raged on. When Vu Thu Hien, a screenwriter and the son of Ho Chi Minh's personal secretary, wrote an ambiguous scene of camaraderie between Vietnamese cadre and French colonial troops in his script for "Last Night and First Day," he blurred the line between "friend and foe."

While some artists stridently bucked socialist realism dictates, others merely denied having a political agenda when they refused to toe the ideological line. In Hanoi's music scene, the only acceptable form of song or ballad was government-sanctioned revolutionary or martial music; playing anything else was illegal in times of war. So-called yellow music (as opposed to revolutionary red) was banned for being retrograde, sentimental or foreign-inspired. When the musicians Nguyen Van Loc, Phan Thang Toan (who went by the name Hairy Toan) and Tran Van Thanh formed a band and began playing prewar love songs and other romantic music at weddings and parties, they knew they were breaking the law. But in their view, they were not "doing politics"; they were simply playing music they liked.

Just like the Johnson administration, the party under General Secretary Le Duan did not tolerate overt manifestation of dissent. While Washington unleashed Operation Chaos, a secret campaign to undermine antiwar activism in the United States, Hanoi carried out its own repressive effort to stamp out domestic dissension. Starting in the summer of 1967, Le Duc Tho, the party's organizational chief, and Tran Quoc Hoan, the minister of public security, carried out mass arrests of supposed "traitors" and "treasonous elements," whom they labeled "revisionists."

The dreaded security police rounded up hundreds of North Vietnamese citizens, including party officials, senior military officers, journalists, lawyers, writers and artists. Once they were detained, Tho and Hoan found them guilty of trying "to sabotage the foreign policies of our Party and our Party's policy of fighting the Americans to save our nation," and "instead supported a policy of rightist compromise and conciliation." The "Revisionist Anti-Party Affair," as the 1967 campaign came to be known, would also be known as the "Hoang Minh Chinh Affair," named after its first arrestee.

Artists and "yellow musicians" were deemed no less dangerous. The filming of Hien's "Last Night and First Day" never began; the screenwriter was accused of "shamelessly propagating the idea of general humanism [and] of a general human character beyond class affiliation." Hien was arrested in late December 1967.

The yellow musicians were likewise found guilty of "poisoning the young generation with pessimistic and reactionary songs, promoting a retrogressive and sex-oriented lifestyle." Nguyen Van Loc and his self-professed apolitical band members were arrested in 1968.

The silencing of these North Vietnamese "antiwar" voices was intimately connected to the strategy deliberation for the up-

Continue on next page

North VN had an Antiwar...

coming 1968 military campaign. In an attempt to break the stalemate and win the war, Le Duan called for Communist forces to launch coordinated surprise attacks across the cities and towns in South Vietnam, powerful enough to incite a mass insurrection to topple the Saigon government. President Ho Chi Minh and Minister of Defense Vo Nguyen Giap opposed Le Duan's ambitious Tet Offensive, stating that Communist forces lacked the requisite strength to incite a nation-wide general insurrection. They paid dearly for their dissent.

While Ho and Giap were exiled to Beijing and Hungary, respectively, security forces rounded up and imprisoned their personal assistants and deputies, all under the guise of cracking down on antiwar dissenters. In total, 30 party and senior military officers aligned with Ho and Giap were arrested, even those who were actively involved in the planning for the Tet Offensive. When Senior Col. Le Trong Nghia, who was part of the planning for the Tet attacks but loyal to Giap, was detained in early 1968, he worried what his absence would mean for the success of the upcoming offensive. His captors, on the other hand, were consumed with another matter: finding the link between Ho, Giap and the other "treasonous elements" on the Revisionist Anti-Party Affair that threatened Le Duan's war.

The antiwar movements in the United States and North Vietnam were not identical, but there were commonalities. Both antiwar scenes possessed a diverse array of actors. While historians are beginning to appreciate the heterogeneity of and understand the intersections between the various groups and organizations on the American side, we have not begun to unearth the multiplicity of voices and their interconnections on the Vietnamese sides.

The other striking comparison is the governments' response to the antiwar scenes in their countries. Both Hanoi and Washington resorted to extralegal measures to undermine and silence dissent.

While Johnson expanded the powers of the C.I.A. to carry out a domestic espionage campaign, Le Duan strengthened the "counter counterrevolutionary" campaign under the Party Organizational Committee and the Ministry of Public Security. In the eyes of both governments, there was no such thing as healthy dissent in times of war.

Lien-Hang Nguyen is a professor of history at Columbia and the author of the forthcoming "Tet 1968: The Battles That Changed the Vietnam War and the Global Cold War."

"Killed" in Vietnam: Ronald Ridgeway

Michael Ruane. The WASHINGTON Post 7-8-2017

<http://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/%E2%80%98killed%E2%80%99-in-vietnam-and-buried-with-comrades-one-marine-returned-from-the-dead/ar-BBDZUTN?li=BBmkt5R&ocid=spartandhp>

HALLETTSVILLE, Tex. — Ronald L. Ridgeway was "killed" in Vietnam on Feb. 25, 1968.

The 18-year-old Marine Corps private first class fell with a bullet to the shoulder during a savage firefight with the enemy outside Khe Sanh.

Dozens of Marines, from what came to be called "the ghost patrol," perished there.

At first, Ridgeway was listed as missing in action. Back home in Texas, his old school, Sam Houston High, made an announcement over the intercom.

But his mother, Mildred, had a letter from his commanding officer saying there was little hope. And that August, she received a "deeply regret" telegram from the Marines saying he was dead.

On Sept. 10, he was buried in a national cemetery in St. Louis. A tombstone bearing his name and the names of eight others missing from the battle was erected over the grave. His mother went home with a folded American flag.

But as his comrades and family mourned, Ron Ridgeway sat in harsh North Vietnamese prisons for five years, often in solitary confinement, mentally at war with his captors and fighting for a life that was technically over.

Last month, almost 50 years after his supposed demise, Ridgeway, 68, a retired supervisor with Veterans Affairs, sat in his home here and recounted for the first time in detail one of the most remarkable stories of the Vietnam War.

As the United States marks a half-century since the height of the war in 1967 and '68, his "back-from-the-dead" saga is that of a young man's perseverance through combat, imprisonment and abuse.

He was 17 when he signed up with the Marines in 1967. He was 18 when he was captured, 19 when his funeral was held and 23 when he was released from prison in 1973.

Continue on next page

"Killed" in VN...

"You have to be willing to take it a day at a time," he said. "You have to set in your mind that you're going to survive. You have to believe that they are not going to defeat you, that you're going to win."

'Everybody's dead'

About 9:30 on the morning of Feb. 25, Pfc. Ridgeway's four-man fireteam charged an enemy trench line.

The curving trench seemed empty when they got there. But as Ridgeway and the others made their way along it, suddenly an enemy grenade dropped in.

"We back around the curve," he recalled. "It blows up."

"We throw a couple grenades," he said. "We backed off. . . . Then we realized the firing [from Marines] behind us had almost died down to nothing."

When they stood up to look around, they saw North Vietnamese soldiers walking through the underbrush toward them. "I guess they thought we were all dead," he said.

"We cut loose on them," he recalled. "They were easy targets."

Ridgeway had been part of a platoon of about 45 men sent out from the besieged Khe Sanh combat base, in what was then northern South Vietnam, to find enemy positions, and perhaps capture a prisoner.

The enemy's noose around the Marine base had been tightening, with heavy mortar and artillery fire, and the patrol was hazardous. Six thousand Americans were surrounded by 20,000 to 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers. On that foggy morning, the patrol's leader, 2nd Lt. Donald Jacques, 20, strayed off course and was drawn into a deadly ambush, Jacques's company commander, Capt. Kenneth W. Pipes, said.

More than two dozen Marines, including Jacques, were killed.

One of the Marines in the trench with Ridgeway, James R. Bruder, 18, of Allentown, Pa., was cut down as the enemy returned fire, according to author Ray Stubbe's book about Khe Sanh, "Battalion of Kings."

"Stitched him across the chest and killed him," Ridgeway remembered.

The fire team leader, Charles G. Geller, 20, of East St. Louis, Ill., took a peek, and a bullet creased his forehead, knocking him down.

"Everybody's dead," Geller said, according to Stubbe's book. "Everybody behind us is dead. . . . What are we going to do?"

They had to retreat. Geller left first, running back across the field where they had charged, followed by Ridgeway.

The son of a Southern Pacific railroad worker, Ridgeway came from a working-class neighborhood of Houston. He had a younger brother.

His parents were divorced. He had left high school and joined the Marines because "I wanted to get away," he recalled.

As he and Geller ran to the rear, they came upon Willie J. Ruff, 20, of Columbia, S.C., who was lying on his back with a broken arm.

"We were in a hurry," Ridgeway said. "But we stopped. He was wounded."

As Geller knelt beside Ruff, a bullet hit Geller in the face, leaving a terrible wound. Then Ridgeway was struck by a round that went through his shoulder. All three men were now down.

"All we could do was lay there and play dead," he said. "We were in the wide open."

Ridgeway said he drifted in and out of consciousness. When Geller, who was delirious, got to his knees, the enemy threw a grenade, killing him.



Matthew Busch for The Washington Post Retired Marine Ronald L. Ridgeway was 18 years old in 1968 when his patrol was attacked in Vietnam. He was captured and held prisoner for five years before being released, a time during which he was...

Continue on next page

"Killed" in VN...

Ridgeway said the North Vietnamese then began shooting at Marines who had fallen in front of their trenches. "They're popping the bodies to make sure they're dead," he said.

One bullet hit the dirt near him. A second glanced off his helmet and struck him the buttock, he said.

"When that hit, it jarred the body," he said. "They figured they got me. Left me for dead and kept working their way down past me."

Ridgeway passed out again. When he woke up, it was dark and American artillery was pounding the area.

Ruff said he had been hit again and begged Ridgeway not to leave him. Ridgeway said he wouldn't. At some point that night, Ruff died.

Ridgeway was awakened the following morning by someone pulling on his arm. He thought at first it was fellow Marines.

But when he looked up, he realized it was a young North Vietnamese soldier trying to pull off his wristwatch.

Agony and identification

After the firefight, the shattered survivors of the patrol made it back to the combat base, and the dead were left on the battlefield.

A rescue mission was deemed unwise by higher-ups, who feared losing even more men and depleting the base's defenses, according to Pipes, who is now retired and lives in California.

In a telephone interview, he said that with binoculars, he could see Marines' bodies strewn on the battlefield. "It was worse than agony," he said. No further patrols outside the combat base were immediately permitted.

"We couldn't go get them," he said. "They laid out there for six weeks."

On March 17, he wrote to Ridgeway's mother: "I am sorry that I can offer no tangible basis for hope concerning Ronald's welfare."

Finally, on April 6, the Marines were able to return to the battlefield, Pipes said.

What was left of the dead was brought back to Khe Sanh's temporary morgue, where Pipes and others went about the grisly

task of identifying the dead. "There wasn't much there but bones and shoes and boots . . . [and] dog tags," he said.

In the end, of the 26 missing and presumed killed in action on Feb. 25, remains of all but nine were positively identified, according to Pipes and Stubbe.

Fred Waters/Associated Press After his disappearance, Ridgeway's name was etched onto a tombstone in a St. Louis cemetery, along with those of eight fellow Marines who went missing in the 1968 ambush.

The unassociated body parts were sent home and placed in two caskets that would be buried beneath a large tombstone bearing the nine names of those unaccounted for, Stubbe said.

The day of the funeral at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery was sunny and cool. Ridgeway's mother attended, and there were flags and solemn honors. A newspaper photographer took pictures.

Far away, in North Vietnam, the rainy season was on, and Ridgeway was in his seventh month as a POW.

The work of surviving

As he sat alone in his windowless cell beside a wooden bed and the bucket he used for waste, Ridgeway went about creating a "make-believe" life. There was no one to talk to, and he was only allowed out once a day to empty the bucket.

So he imagined that he was somewhere else, that he owned a pickup truck, that he had a wife and children, that he would go fishing.

It was a mental exercise, he said, and he found that spending three days in his make-believe world would take up a whole day in solitary.

Ridgeway said that by then, his captors considered him a "die-hard reac-

Continue on next page



"Killed" in VN...

tionary" and all Marines "animals."

He hadn't cooperated with his guards. He had lied to interrogators, pretended he was green kid who had never fired his rifle and gave them bogus military information.

The startled North Vietnamese soldier had locked and loaded his rifle when he realized Ridgeway was alive that morning. Ridgeway expected to be killed. "You didn't hear about prisoners being taken," he said. But he was bandaged, fed and marched away, through Laos and into North Vietnam.

He spent time in several jungle camps, held in wooden leg stocks, and he eventually wound up in enemy prisons.

He got lice, malaria and dysentery and lost 50 pounds. He wore pink-and-gray-striped POW pajamas and rubber sandals, all of which he brought home with him when he was freed.

He was beaten with bamboo canes and tied up during interrogations.

One interrogator the Americans named "Cheese" — because he seemed to be the big cheese — was especially cruel.

He spoke English and sat up on a high chair as he questioned POWs tied on the floor. When he nodded his head, a guard would strike the prisoner with the bamboo cane.

He had a face like a rat, Ridgeway recalled, and was a "mean . . . sadistical son of a b----."

Ridgeway said he didn't dwell on the notion that people back home might think he was dead. They would be fine. His job was to survive.

In January 1973, he was in North Vietnam's notorious Hanoi Hilton prison when his captors abruptly announced that the POWs were to be freed as part of a peace agreement before the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam.

When the list of POWs being released became public, Ridgeway's name was on it.

Back in Houston, his mother banged on a neighbor's door and said, "Ronnie's alive!"

Memory etched in stone

Ron Ridgeway was released on March 16, 1973. He came home, got married and went to college.

"I came back in basically one piece," he said. "I came back able to live my life. . . . We went over with a job to do. We did it to the best of our ability. We were lucky enough to come back."

Several months after his return, he and his wife, Marie, went to Jefferson Barracks to see his tombstone, which was later replaced.

"It brought back memories," he said. "The loss of life of those that I knew. It was a solemn experience."

Carved in the surface were the words "Ambushed Patrol Died in Vietnam Feb. 25, 1968."

Eight names from the top: Ronald L. Ridgeway.

Don't Blame Nixon for Scuttled Peace Overture

By [Jack Torry](#)

August 09, 2015

https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2015/08/09/dont_blame_nixon_for_scuttled_peace_overture_127667.html

STORY STREAM

RECENT ARTICLES

These are intriguing days for Richard M. Nixon and his legion of critics. Four decades after he resigned the presidency in disgrace because of his involvement in the Watergate affair, Nixon is being ritually denounced as a scoundrel who sacrificed the lives of thousands of Americans in his obsessive quest to win the presidency in 1968.

The story, told and retold since the end of that campaign, goes this way: During the final days of the agonizingly close race between Nixon and Democratic Vice President Hubert Humphrey, President Lyndon B. Johnson offered to end U.S. bombing of North Vietnam in return for Hanoi's pledge to engage in serious peace talks, which could lead to a rapid settlement of the war.

Continue on next page

Don't Blame Nixon ...

But the crafty and treacherous Nixon secretly enlisted the help of Anna Chennault, a longtime Republican and widow of U.S. Gen. Claire Chennault. She passed on secret messages from Nixon to South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu, urging him to resist Johnson's last-minute peace plan and promising Nixon would provide him with a better deal after the election. When Thieu refused to attend the talks, "Nixon had scuttled the chance for peace in Vietnam in order to win," Tim Weiner writes in his new book, "One Man Against the World: The Tragedy of Richard Nixon."

In a review last month in the Washington Post of new Nixon biographies by Evan Thomas and Weiner, Carl Bernstein writes that "in his landmark 2014 book, 'Chasing Shadows,' Ken Hughes reconstructs Nixon's spectacularly devious role in scuttling the Paris peace talks of 1968."

It makes an epic story worthy of Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr – the villainous Nixon willing to sacrifice anything to win the presidency. Nixon critics have called it treason. The problem is that the argument is nonsense.

Nixon did not sabotage a peace agreement in 1968 for one simple reason: There was no chance for peace in 1968 on any terms that would have been acceptable to any American president, be it Johnson, Nixon, or Humphrey.

Nor was there even a remote possibility Le Duan, the general secretary of the Communist Party in North Vietnam and the real power in Hanoi, would have accepted anything less in 1968 than a unilateral American withdrawal from Vietnam and a promise to topple the Saigon regime. The whole purpose behind the commitment to South Vietnam by Presidents Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Johnson was to preserve a non-communist government in Saigon.

University of Kentucky historian Lien-Hang T. Nguyen, author of the book "Hanoi's War," and who examined Hanoi's foreign ministry records, told me in an interview this year that Le Duan "wasn't ready to negotiate seriously until the summer of 1972" when American airpower and South Vietnamese ground forces smashed Hanoi's Easter offensive. Professor Nguyen, who is not a Nixon admirer, pointed out Le Duan always believed negotiations at Geneva in 1954 were a mistake that led to the partition of Vietnam, and he did not want to repeat that error.

The irony is Le Duan clearly emerged at the end of 1968 as the winner in this game of high-level political intrigue that involved Washington, Saigon, Hanoi and Moscow. Le Duan outmaneuvered Johnson, gaining a badly needed bombing halt in return for talks that had no chance of success. When Nixon took office in January 1969, he was saddled with a bombing halt he did not want and peace talks in Paris that could not succeed except on Le Duan's intractable terms.

"In the weeks preceding Election Day," writes Nguyen, "intrigue permeated the corridors of power not only in the United States, but also in the two Vietnams as leaders in Saigon and Hanoi both tried to manipulate American electoral politics to further their own objectives in the war."

The late William Bundy, who served as assistant secretary of state in 1968 for Johnson, complained in page after page about Nixon's perfidy in his book "A Tangled Web," before lamely admitting "no great chance for peace was lost."

Here is what actually happened: Johnson and his top advisers, including Defense Secretary Clark Clifford and Averill Harriman, head of the U.S. delegation to the Paris peace talks, wanted to establish a framework for those talks.

In his memoirs, Clifford acknowledges that by October 1968 "it was clear that it was too late for Johnson to negotiate an end to the long war in Vietnam -- but it was not too late to get negotiations started and it was clear that if such talks began before [Election Day], they would help Humphrey."

In an oral history for the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, the late Philip Habib, who served as an adviser to Harriman, acknowledged "Harriman was very anxious to get this done before the elections to avert, as he put it, the greatest disaster: Richard Nixon. That was the way he felt. So he was doing everything to get Humphrey elected."

Continue on next page

Don't Blame Nixon ...

The deal pushed by Clifford, Harriman, former Undersecretary of State George Ball and other LBJ advisers was the United States would cease all bombing of North Vietnam and in return, Hanoi would offer vague assurances not to violate the 17th Parallel dividing the two Vietnams, cease "indiscriminate" attacks on South Vietnam's cities, and permit Saigon to take part in negotiations in Paris with the U.S., Hanoi and the National Liberation Front, which represented the South Vietnamese communists.

In late October, leaders in the Kremlin, alarmed at the thought of a Nixon presidency, successfully pressed Hanoi to include Saigon in the talks. That seemed to break the deadlock.

In a nationally televised address on October 31, 1968, Johnson announced a cessation of the three-year U.S. bombing campaign. With Americans relieved at the possibility of peace from the bloody and divisive war, polls showed Humphrey moving into a tie with Nixon. But over the weekend, Thieu announced he would not attend the talks, peace hopes vanished, and Nixon narrowly won.

When Johnson announced the bombing halt, he said Hanoi and the NLF would take part and that Saigon was "free" to join the talks -- a not too-subtle hint Saigon had no intention of attending.

In reality, there never was any chance Thieu would participate in the talks in November of 1968 -- no matter what Nixon did or did not tell him. The declassified transcripts of Thieu's meetings with his top advisers throughout October make clear that he would not agree to four-way talks in Paris with the NLF as "a separate entity." That was not just some procedural objection on Saigon's part. By recognizing the NLF as a legitimate government, Thieu was acknowledging it as a potential coalition partner, a stance Saigon consistently rejected throughout the war.

It is true Nixon's people urged Thieu to stand firm and resist Johnson's pressure to join the proposed talks in Paris. But that is because they saw Johnson's bombing halt not as a serious peace plan but as a cynical 11th-hour move to tip the election to Humphrey.

Writing for Politico last year, John Farrell, one of the more scrupulous reporters in Washington and who is working on a Nixon biography, cited a newly released oral history of onetime Nixon adviser Tom Charles Huston, who said "clearly" Nixon campaign manager John Mitchell "was directly involved."

Those contacts, while improper, were hardly treason and not much different than George McGovern secretly sending Pierre Salinger to Paris in 1972 to meet with Hanoi's negotiators at a time when Nixon and White House National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger were trying to negotiate an end to the war with Hanoi.

But even a cursory examination of the now declassified cables from U.S. Ambassador Ellsworth Bunker in Saigon throughout the middle of October and early November 1968 make clear Thieu and his advisers harbored deep reservations about Johnson's plant. As early as October 18, Bunker warned the State Department that Saigon's foreign minister made clear his government would not take part in the talks if they included the NLF "as a separate entity."

In a prescient cable sent to the State Department on October 12, 1968, Bunker made clear his belief that Hanoi "assumes that if it can get the bombing stopped and keep it stopped until January 20, the next president will find it very difficult to resume the bombing. Meanwhile it will have time to rest and resupply and prepare for a renewed struggle in the spring."

That is precisely what happened. The Americans stopped the bombing. Paris talks were launched in January when the Soviets offered a compromise: Hanoi, Saigon, the U.S., and the NLF would sit at a round table. That would allow Saigon to maintain its key point that the NLF was a creation of Hanoi, not some separate governmental entity. The talks Nixon was supposed to have sabotaged two months earlier were underway.

As for Le Duan, he pocketed the American concessions and responded with peace terms aimed to produce an American

Continue on next page

Don't Blame Nixon ...

rejection. During the transition after the 1968 election, Nixon told Hanoi he was ready for serious talks. On December 31, 1968, Hanoi privately replied that peace would require the unilateral removal of all U.S. troops and replacing what it called the "Thieu-Ky-Huong clique" in Saigon.

Within a month of Nixon's inauguration and the commencement of the Paris talks, Le Duan launched a major offensive in South Vietnam in violation of the whole purpose of the bombing halt. Le Duan's message could not have been clearer: He was not interested in a negotiated settlement unless it left him in control of all Vietnam.

Nixon had good reason for suspecting the bombing halt was in part designed to help Humphrey. Nixon campaign adviser Bryce Harlow told Nixon in mid-October that Johnson, encouraged by Clifford and Ball, would announce a bombing halt on the eve of the election.

In his oral interview with the Miller Center at the University of Virginia, Harlow said he "had a double agent working in the White House. I knew about every meeting they held. I knew who attended the meetings. I knew what their next move was going to be." Harlow said he told Nixon, "Boss, he's [Johnson] going to dump on you," to which Nixon replied, "He promised me he would not. He has sworn he would not."

"They're having a hell of a time with the Joint Chiefs," Harlow said he told Nixon. "Lyndon is bringing them around. He's twisting and turning it so that they'll go with it. He's forcing them to go with it. He can't have them repudiate it. That's where it is right now, the chiefs. As soon as he gets them over, and the time is right, he's going to dump. That's the plan."

Harlow tried to preempt Johnson by leaking the president's plan to Merriman Smith, the White House correspondent for United Press International. Smith discounted Harlow, saying Johnson had personally assured him he would keep foreign policy out of the election.

After Johnson announced the bombing halt on October 31, Smith telephoned Harlow at 2 in the morning "drunk as a hoot owl. He had that problem. He said, 'I just want to apologize. The son of a bitch lied to me; he lied to you; he lied to Nixon. He did exactly what you said, and I apologize from the bottom of my heart.' "

As for Anna Chennault, her role has been grossly exaggerated. Nixon denied ever telling her to contact Thieu to boycott the proposed peace talks, but any Nixon denial needs to be treated with deep skepticism. Yet Nguyen Phu Duc, who served as special assistant to foreign affairs to Thieu, later wrote he never received any message from Chennault and never heard either Thieu or the South Vietnamese foreign minister mention "any message from Mrs. Chennault via Bui Diem."

When Johnson learned of Chennault's contacts with Saigon's Washington embassy, he was furious. But what could he do? To reveal anything would mean he had ordered the FBI to monitor an American citizen (Chennault) connected to the Republicans.

But the sequence of events suggests that Thieu and his advisers did not need any secret messages from Nixon to fear a Humphrey victory. All they had to do was read the newspapers.

In a highly publicized speech on September 30 in Salt Lake City, Humphrey broke with Johnson on the war. Humphrey pledged "as president, I would stop the bombing as an acceptable risk for peace," although he pointedly added that Hanoi had to respect the 17th parallel.

Even more alarming for Saigon, McGeorge Bundy, just two years removed from White House national security adviser, proposed on October 12 an unconditional halt to the bombing campaign and the withdrawal of substantial numbers of U.S. forces beginning in 1969.

Saigon was horrified at the two speeches. William Bundy, who was McGeorge's older brother, called Bui Diem, the South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States, "to tell him in light-hearted key that my brother's remarks reflected no prior discussion with me whatever, had not been known to me in any way before delivery, and did not reflect in any way the point of view

Continue on next page

Don't Blame Nixon ...

of the Administration, or for what it might be worth my own personal point of view."

In a briefing in March of 1969 for Defense Secretary Melvin Laird and Gen. Earle Wheeler, chairman of the joint chiefs, Bunker said, "There's no question that they were playing our elections, but also there was the fact that we tried to push them faster than they would go."

Treason is a brutal word in American politics. As one Republican consultant told me, once you use that word, there is no taking it back. Whatever else Richard Nixon was guilty of, treason was not one of them.

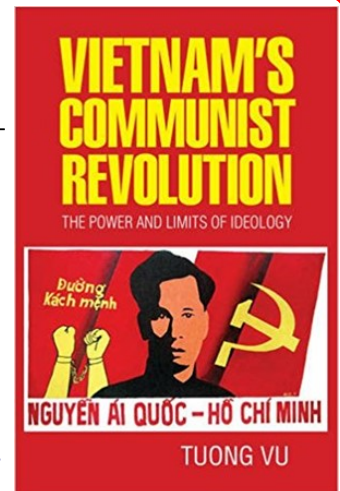
Vietnam's Communist Revolution: *Tuong Vu*

By tracing the evolving worldview of Vietnamese communists over 80 years as they led Vietnam through wars, social revolution, and peaceful development, this book shows the depth and resilience of their commitment to the communist utopia in their foreign policy. Unearthing new material from Vietnamese archives and publications, this book challenges the conventional scholarship and the popular image of the Vietnamese revolution and the Vietnam War as being driven solely by patriotic inspirations. The revolution not only saw successes in defeating foreign intervention, but also failures in bringing peace and development to Vietnam. This was, and is, the real tragedy of Vietnam. Spanning the entire history of the Vietnamese revolution and its aftermath, this book examines its leaders' early rise to power, the tumult of three decades of war with France, the US, and China, and the stubborn legacies left behind which remain in Vietnam today.

Review

Advance praise: 'Vietnam's Communist Revolution is a path-breaking book in several respects. It is the first study in over a generation to cover the entire century-long history of the Vietnamese communist party from its inception after World War I until the present. Its use of vernacular-language primary documents to tell this important tale is unrivaled. Moreover, it deploys this rich source base to undermine an ossified, politicized conventional wisdom about Vietnamese communism that has endured since the War era. And it suggests a persuasive alternative. This book is a game changer in multiple fields.' Peter Zinoman, University of California, Berkeley

Available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Vietnams-Communist-Revolution-Cambridge-Relations/dp/1316607909/>



Hue 1968: *Mark Bowden*

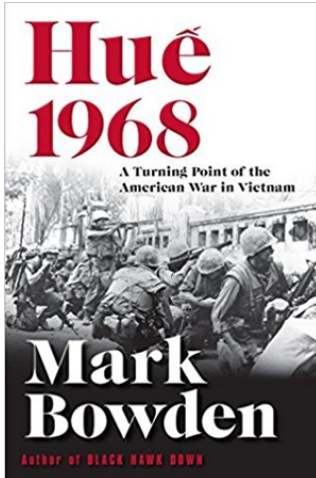
In the early hours of January 31, 1968, the North Vietnamese launched over one hundred attacks across South Vietnam in what would become known as the Tet Offensive. The lynchpin of Tet was the capture of Hue, Vietnam's intellectual and cultural capital, by 10,000 National Liberation Front troops who descended from hidden camps and surged across the city of 140,000. Within hours the entire city was in their hands save for two small military outposts. American commanders refused to believe the size and scope of the Front's presence, ordering small companies of marines against thousands of entrenched enemy troops. After several futile and deadly days, Lieutenant Colonel Ernie Cheatham would finally come up with a strategy to retake the city, block by block and building by building, in some of the most intense urban combat since World War II. With unprecedented access to war archives in the U.S. and Vietnam and interviews with participants from both sides, Bowden narrates each stage of this crucial battle through multiple viewpoints. Played out over 24 days and ultimately costing 10,000 lives, the Battle of Hue was by far the bloodiest of the entire war. When it ended, the American debate was never again about winning, only about how to leave. *Hue 1968* is a gripping and moving account of this pivotal moment. (Amazon)

Review by Nicholas Warr: <http://nicholaswarr.com/>

Continue on next page

Hue 1968 ...

However, it is now apparent to me, after reading every word in the book, that Mr. Bowden has joined those historians and authors who, over the past five decades, have contributed to "The Narrative," a line of reasoning and accumulation of opinions about the American War in Vietnam that are very disturbing to many of us who served in it, and especially those of us who have also studied the war and written about it.



Amongst other claims, "The Narrative" states that the war in Vietnam was "unwinnable;" that the United States was wrong to have gone there in the first place; and that the North Vietnamese and the Viet Cong were simply "nationalists," sympathetic characters who were fighting to kick the foreign invaders out of their country. I'm just puzzled that his work on this book, his studies of this single battle, have resulted in these sweeping and negative conclusions about the war. I'm especially puzzled that Bowden spends significant time and text relating stories from the VC and NVA that we fought, yet gives short shrift to the soldiers who were *truly* fighting for *their* country, South Vietnam, our ally, those who served in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).

For the same reasons that Mark Bowden needed 600 pages to cover the topic, a thorough justification of my reaction is beyond the scope and acceptable length of this review. If you would like to learn more about the errors and omissions I've discovered in this book, or identify other books and writings that contain the truth about the war, please get in touch with me.

For those of you who are hoping that *Hue, 1968* would be the "definitive" accounting of this historic battle, I believe you will be very disappointed. I know I was.

Semper Fidelis!

Nicholas Warr, U. S. Marine
Infantry Officer, 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, Vietnam War
Author, *Phase Line Green*; *The Battle for Hue, 1968*
and *Charlie One Five; A Marine Company's Vietnam War*

Available on Amazon: <https://www.amazon.com/Hue-1968-Turning-American-Vietnam/dp/0802127002/>

Repeat Offender: Vietnam's Trade in Illegal Timber

EIA (Environmental Investigation Agency) investigators reveal a massive illegal timber grab by Vietnamese companies is ongoing in two national parks and a wildlife sanctuary in Cambodia's Ratanakiri Province. The logging and timber smuggling is being protected by corrupt Cambodian state and security force officials, while wood is laundered on import by the Vietnamese state through dedicated legal provisions instituting a formal quota system specifically for the illegal flow.



All commercial species are being targeted and logs are being smuggled out of Cambodia in blatant violation of a long-standing log export ban, and despite the proclamations of the country's so-called Committee for Forest Crime Prevention on its successful closure of the border with Vietnam to timber during 2016.

From December 2016 until February 2017, around 300,000m³ of timber has been stolen and smuggled –nearly all as logs – out of Cambodia into Vietnam under this model, and processed by Vietnamese Customs, in a trade worth at least \$75 million.²⁸

While this has been going on, Vietnam has been in the final stages of negotiating a timber trade agreement with the EU. In a fundamental failing, the proposed VPA does not oblige Vietnam to issue legislation explicitly prohibiting the import and trade of timber illegally harvested, traded, transported or exported from the country of harvest or intermediary countries.

As this report shows, Vietnam has a history of taking stolen timber from the neighbouring countries of Laos and Cambodia. It is vital that the opportunity afforded by the VPA to fundamentally reform Vietnam's wood import procedures to exclude illegal timber is not squandered and that the VPA does not legitimise the criminal activities of powerful elements of the Vietnamese state and timber trade.

Phan Minh Hoang: Viet Blogger Deported to France

<https://soapboxie.com/world-politics/Who-is-Phm-Minh-Hong-Vietnamese-blogger-deported-separated-from-family>

On June 23, 61-year-old Vietnamese math lecturer Phan Minh Hoang was arrested at his house in Ho Chi Minh City, held overnight, and put onto a plane to Paris, according to reports from the Associated Press. On May 17, the Vietnamese government stripped the dissident of his citizenship. However, the Committee to Protect Journalists reports that the blogger did not learn of his fate until June 1. Phan Minh Hoang previously held dual French-Vietnamese citizenship.

AP describes Hoang as a "pro-democracy" blogger, an activity that he is said to be determined to continue now that he is in France. It appears that, with the deportation, Hoang is now separated from his wife and daughter, who are in Vietnam. AP wrote, "When he refused to consent to his deportation, he said officials reminded him that his wife and daughter were still living in Vietnam."



Thirty-three articles written under the pen name Phan Kien Quoc resulted in Phan Minh Hoang's 2010 arrest for their alleged part in his attempt to "overthrow the government." After serving 17 months in prison, Hoang was released in January 2012 and allowed to serve the remainder of his sentence under house arrest. His writing is said to have "criticized one-party rule, alleged corruption, environmental degradation, and Chinese influence."

Steve Butler with CPJ called the moves by the Vietnamese government "exceptionally cruel responses to dissent," and called on the country to "cease trying to silence voices" of its citizens. A representative of Vietnam's Foreign Ministry was said to justify stripping Hoang of his citizenship and deporting him because the decision was carried out in accordance with "Vietnamese law."

According to the Vietnam Reform Party, before he was arrested in 2010, Phan Minh Hoang lectured in mathematics at Ho Chi Minh City Polytechnic Institute. Educated in France, Hoang was said to hold a belief that Vietnamese youth had been "failed by an education system" that was unable to keep pace with a fast-changing world. This motivated him to return to Vietnam and work as a teacher, as well as organize free classes to help develop leadership skills within Vietnamese students.

<http://www.loa.fm/our-stories/pham-minh-hoang>

Phạm Minh Hoàng: The French embassy, through their diplomatic channels, are very careful with their words, even though they consider me to be a reliable person, someone who fights for Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity- the three values of the French Republic. To some extent, they respect me. However, in their capacities as embassy officials and diplomats, they can only protest up to a certain extent. Even when in conversation with me, they express their respect for my work, but they consider Việt Nam's revoking of my citizenship an internal issue. France can't do anything- because Việt Nam has sovereign rights. They don't have the ability to intervene in Việt Nam's decision to deprive a citizen of their citizenship of their citizenship.

Lilly Nguyễn: When you first heard about this decision, in a heartfelt letter to your friends, the Facebook community, and your supporters about your current situation, you wrote:

"November 1973... I remember the day like yesterday, moving to Paris to study. As the plane flew over Sài Gòn's skies, I looked outside the window and said I would return to build my homeland, in shambles from war."

Professor Hoàng, you left Việt Nam in 1973 and eventually came back to Việt Nam in 2000. During the past 17 years since you came home, have you been able to fulfill your dream (to build your homeland), at least in some measure?

Phạm Minh Hoàng: My dream has definitely not been fulfilled because our country is still facing many problems, from politics to the environment, health, etc. I am under no illusion to solve all of them. My country is in disarray, so I haven't achieved my dreams. For now, I am proud and at peace with myself. During my ten years teaching at Bách Khoa University, I tried my best to be a professor- sharing with my students the knowledge that I gained abroad and during my own studies.

Continue on next page

Minh Hoang ...

I am proud of the fact that compared to my colleagues during that time, I tried hard to teach with conscience. I put the students above everything else, and the student's rights above everything else. I put in a 100 percent effort to impart my knowledge to my students. That is my greatest accomplishment. Even though my career went unfinished, I was arrested and wasn't allowed to teach, I am still proud. I still thought, as a Vietnamese proverb goes, "Man proposes, God disposes." I did my best and Heaven decides the rest.

As a Catholic, I have to find mental strength in God at this time. I told my family and priests who visited me that God has arranged for me to come back to Việt Nam, to be imprisoned, and now for me to leave again. Each time God closes a door that prevents me to do something, He also opens another door. With this belief, I continue to try to live to serve my community and country. And I hold on to this belief to continue to live and work for the days and months to come.

Lilly Nguyễn: Thank you again for spending time and speaking with us on Loa. Do you have any last comments before we close?

Phạm Minh Hoàng: The last thing I want to say is thank you to everyone around the world who has supported me. More than that, some have made efforts to contact diplomats to help me out. Their efforts make me feel like I am not alone in this battle. I won't feel lonely in following days and I wish everyone good health and we will struggle shoulder to shoulder for democracy in our Việt Nam.

Testimony of Ms. Vu Minh Khan, Wife of Attorney Nguyen Van Dai

Committee on Foreign Affairs U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

10 May 2016 Interpreter: Dr. Binh The Nguyen

First and foremost, I want to thank the Congressional Committee on Global Human Rights for giving me this opportunity to present my family dilemma.

My name is Vu Minh Khanh, wife of attorney Nguyen Van Dai. We both are Protestants, myself serving our church in Hanoi. Dai is a human rights defender, now in jail.

My husband was first arrested in 2007, then sentenced to 4 years imprisonment plus 4 years of house arrest, for violating Article 88 of Vietnam's Penal Code, "conducting propaganda against the state." While in prison, my husband was disbarred and his law office was shut down. After being released in 2011, my husband was then placed under house arrest until March 2015. During this period, he was not allowed to leave the locality where we live without police permission and he was also forbidden to meet with visitors from abroad.

After having just completed his house arrest, my husband was arrested again on December 16, 2015 and charged under the same Article 88. I have not been allowed to see him since. My husband has been detained for almost 5 months now, yet I have not received any information about him. He is at present also not allowed to meet with any family members nor with his defense lawyers because the authorities claim that he is under investigation for "violating national security." This ill treatment is a gross violation of many international human rights treaties that Vietnam has ratified. Due to his isolation, I also do not know how he is doing.

Twice a month, I am permitted to bring food to Detention Center B14 in Hanoi for his daily needs, but I do not know if he has received any. In fact, I honestly do not know if he is really held at B14 Detention Center because in Vietnam, the public security force can do whatever they want. If they transfer inmates, they do not inform the family members accordingly (this happened to Blogger Dieu Cay and currently happened with Tran Huynh Duy Thuc). Thus, if in fact my husband has been tortured physically and/or mentally, or even given false information, I would not know.

For 5 months, the public security force has not granted defense certificates to the three lawyers our family has hired. There-

Continue on next page

Testimony of Ms. Vu Minh Khan ...

fore, to date, they still cannot start working on the case. My husband has not even been allowed to receive a copy of the Bible, a gift from the US Ambassador. I am therefore very concerned about his health, now defenseless and completely isolated.

Not to mention that 10 days before his arrest, he was attacked and severely injured, following a human rights training session for approximately 60 people in Nghe An Province, 300 kilometers from Hanoi. During the training, public security officers intervened and pressured my husband to stop, but he did not agree and in fact invited the security officers to join in.

In the afternoon of that day, while my husband and his 3 colleagues were heading home in a taxi, they were cornered and brutally attacked by a group of thugs with batons, injuring his face and eyes. After they beat him, they threw my husband into a car and drove him to a location 30 kilometers away. In the car, they continued to beat him; using their arms to choke him and elbowed him and hit his face, his temple and eyes.

At that time, though it was winter, they removed his coat, stole his wallet, and left him at an isolated beach. When my husband was finally able to call his friends for help, the police continued to follow him, which forced him to escape into the jungle and through small alley ways, as their search for him continued. With the help of his friends, he was able to return to Hanoi. Ten days later, with his wounds not yet healed, my husband was arrested and detained until now.

Each time Dai was attacked, it related to his work because the government did not like it and had requested him to stop doing human rights work. However, my husband believes that his activities are within his rights under the Vietnamese Constitution and international law. Because the police constantly follow my husband all day, I believe that the Vietnamese government would know clearly who attacked him. However, the government has claimed that they do not know who the assailants are when my husband filed a complaint. My husband accepted the high risks that come with these activities, and in fact, this is the reality that human rights activists in Vietnam have to face constantly.

My husband also has Hepatitis B, therefore I am very worried about his health condition.

My husband experienced democracy initially in Germany, having witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall. After that he returned to Vietnam and studied to become a lawyer. In 1997, my husband ran for the National Assembly with the hope that he could speak up for the people. In 2000, my husband officially began his activism and fought for freedom of religion and was a human rights lawyer. The first human rights case my husband took was in 2000 when he defended a member of the Protestant Church who was brought to court because she tried to stop the police when they came to disband a prayer service at the local church.

Thereafter, my husband provided free legal services to Christians who were oppressed based on their religion, those who fought for democracy and human rights who are harassed and detained, victims of land grabs or home lost, and to people who were physically attacked and arbitrarily detained. He led training courses about human rights at his law office. My husband always focused on empowering the youth and helped many students who are human rights activists. He started classes on human rights for different people within society and wrote articles on the rule of law.

Since he started his activism from 2000 until now, aside from the 4 years he was imprisoned from 2007 – 2011 and once he was released, my husband immediately continued to raise his voice, continued to protect human rights (even when he was still under house arrest), and he always fervently tried to fight for freedom of religion, freedom of speech, and freedom of assembly through non-violent methods and through providing education on human rights. My husband usually worked with many others and connected organizations with each other within the country, he also advocated with foreign governments as he had a good working relationship with many embassies in Vietnam and government officials from around the world.

Regarding my husband's arrest in 2007, the police arrested him at his law office while he was teaching a class on human rights to his students. The topic of the class was based on a book on "Civil Society" which the American embassy in Vietnam had published.

Continue on next page

Testimony of Ms. Vu Minh Khan ...

As for his arrest this time, it was while my husband was leaving the house to meet with the delegation from the European Union who were in Vietnam for the annual EU – Vietnam Human Rights Dialogue.

Throughout his human rights activism, my husband was constantly followed, threatened, harassed and beaten.

My husband is currently charged under Article 88 of the Penal Code and faces 3 to 20 years imprisonment.

Ms. Le Thu Ha, one of my husband's colleagues, was also arrested on the same day and charged under the same Article 88 for "conducting propaganda against the State". Le Thu Ha's family are, however, afraid to interact with other activists, therefore, I am not sure about Ha's current situation.

The arrest and continued detention of my husband have to be considered as arbitrary under international human rights laws which Vietnam must comply with and especially while Vietnam is a member of the UN Human Rights Council. My husband has worked hard to protect human rights and these activities cannot possibly be seen as criminal. Therefore, I hope that Congress and the U.S. government will help demand for his immediate and unconditional release. I sincerely thank you for spending time to listen to my husband's case.

(This translation was provided by Trinh Mau Nguyen, Hoi Trinh and Amy Nguyen)

Thien An Monastery Dispute

https://www.yahoo.com/news/m/6d1ee4db-4225-3aaf-a971-c07029acc57a/ss_vietnam-plans-talks-with.html

Plainclothes police used sticks, saws and water pipes to beat the priests, monks and nuns and hurt many in the monastery, according to one monk

HANOI, July 11, 2017 (Reuters) - Vietnamese authorities plan to hold talks with a Catholic monastery and church officials to resolve a land dispute that prompted a violent scuffle last month, a provincial government body said.

Land disputes are common in Communist-ruled Vietnam, where conflicts over property between Catholics and regional authorities have posed one of the key obstacles to a normalisation of relations with the Vatican.

The Thua Thien-Hue provincial people's committee said it would meet clerics of the Thien An Saint Benedict Monastery and church officials from Hue, about 700 km (435 miles) southeast of the capital Hanoi, to try to resolve the dispute.

The panel will "consider the legitimate aspirations of Thien An monastery within the framework allowed by the laws," it said in a statement late on Monday, without giving a date for talks.

On June 28, clergy at the monastery said dozens of what they believed to be plainclothes policemen took down a cross and a statue of Jesus on land the church claims in a dispute.

But the provincial committee accused the monastery of illegally cutting down trees and levelling land in a special-use forest to erect a cross, besides destroying a road used for forest fire rescues and obstructing efforts to rebuild it.

Monk Joseph Mary Chu Manh Cuong told Reuters the clerics opposed the unauthorised construction of a road to link a lake to a tourist resort.

In the clash that followed, regional authorities accused the monastery of having threatened people and injured two.

Plainclothes police used sticks, saws and water pipes to beat the priests, monks and nuns and hurt many in the monastery, the monk said.

Reuters could not immediately verify the competing claims.

Continue on next page

Thien An Monastery Dispute ...

In 2008, more than 1,000 Vietnamese Catholics protested in Hanoi as eight Catholics went on trial over their claim to a plot of disputed land in the capital, a rare expression of dissent against the ruling Communist Party.

In that case, the court ruled the land in dispute was public property.

<https://www.yahoo.com/news/vietnam-plans-talks-catholic-officials-over-monastery-dispute-082047310.html>

(Editing by Clarence Fernandez)

<https://www.voanews.com/a/vietnam-plans-talks-catholic-officials-monastery-dispute/3938053.html>

Land disputes are common in Communist-ruled Vietnam, where conflicts over property between Catholics and regional authorities have posed one of the key obstacles to a normalization of relations with the Vatican.

In 2008, more than 1,000 Vietnamese Catholics protested in Hanoi as eight Catholics went on trial over their claim to a plot of disputed land in the capital, a rare expression of dissent against the ruling Communist Party.

In that case, the court ruled the land in dispute was public property.



The monastery of Thien An was attacked, June 28, 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apA3drjTHM4&feature=em-share_video_user