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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE

To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 113 MARCH 2018

A COUNTRY STAYS ALIVE WHEN ITS CULTURE IS ALIVE. HOPE NEVER DIES IN THE INDOMITABLE VIETNAMESE MIND

- **SACEI Newsletter updates you on the latest news about Vietnamese-America.**
- **It serves as a LINK between SACEI members and those who are interested in the Vietnamese or Vietnamese-American culture.**

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The Year of the Dog: Mau Tuat 2018

2018 is the Lunar Year of the Dog.

The Dog is a true companion, associated with loyalty, honesty, intelligence, and a strong sense of right and wrong, as opposed to the Rooster, which has a tendency to be demanding and a tad persnickety. "Dogs are known to be swift and passionate believers in their own personal philosophy. The Dog does his best to protect high-integrity people and support their cause.

https://www.ocregister.com/2018/02/17/lion-dances-and-beating-drums-tet-parade-gets-underway-in-little-saigon/

Over 60 floats took part in celebrating the lunar year during the annual Tet Parade in the heart of Little Saigon Saturday, Feb. 17, 2018 in Westminster, CA.

Revelers in Orange County's Little Saigon kicked off the Year of the Dog with a parade featuring colorfully costumed dancers, uniformed military veterans and of course, dogs.

Troupes of children beat drums and clashed cymbals as others in fringed outfits performed the traditional lion dance, ending in a cacophony of firecrackers.

Please listen to the 2018 Asia TET Program in Westminster, CA:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NWg26Wq4cjM

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The Kindergarten Marines: Bing West

NY Times, Dec 15, 2017

Members of a Marine combined action platoon and a Popular Forces unit in South Vietnam, 1967.

In early December 1967, I returned from a patrol in the paddies south of Danang, South Vietnam, to see a squad clustered around a radio, glad to hear that Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara had resigned. At that time, Marines were fighting two vastly different wars on two fronts. Up north along the Demilitarized Zone, they defended against never-ending artillery bombardments and ground assaults launched from North Vietnam, four miles to the north.

Every grunt knew that the DMZ was a hornet's nest. A year earlier, my five-man reconnaissance team had been on patrol in the DMZ when we came under intense fire; we escaped only because a bold F-8 pilot, Capt. Orson Swindle, diverted from his assigned mission to drop two 2,000-pound bombs on our pursuers.

But McNamara had ordered Marines to hold the line, a temporizing strategy that cost thousands of American lives. The only way to secure the top of South Vietnam was to maneuver through Laos and hit the North Vietnamese from their rear. But Washington wouldn't allow it. Instead, American soldiers and Marines were stuck defending along the DMZ, a battle of attrition in miserable places like Khe Sanh that went on until we pulled out of the country in 1972.

Farther to the south, in the higher-populated lowlands, the Marines were fighting a different war. The concept was to drive out the Viet Cong guerrillas by sending small groups of volunteers into the villages to train bands of farmers, called Popular Forces. My regimental commander sent me (a grunt captain) to a remote village 70 miles south of Danang to report on the progress. There, a combined action platoon, or CAP, of 15 Marines and 30 P.F.s was trying to control five hamlets containing 5,000 Vietnamese. Their adversaries were a company of about 100 guerrillas who hid during the day and moved at night. Like the farmers and guerrillas, we fought with rifles and grenades, which we could throw farther than most Vietnamese.

We had no night-vision devices and, to keep down the noise when we moved at night, never wore helmets or flak jackets. In the dark inside the hamlets, we couldn't see five yards. Firefights erupted at close range and the P.F.s often ran away. But they couldn't go far. We Marines and the P.F.s (including the village chief) all slept on cots in a one-room schoolhouse. Due to constant patrolling, the P.F.s improved. But the guerrillas did not back off. Of the 17 Marines and P.F. farmers in the photo above, four were wounded and nine killed.

We never called for artillery or air support inside the village, because we lived there. Seeing that we weren't rich or better armed and yet took higher risks than other troopers, the villagers gradually welcomed us into their thatched homes. We had been issued ham and lima beans in C-ration cans that had been sealed in 1955. Instead, we ate duck eggs and rice, peanuts and coconuts.

In early 1967, the CAP commander, Sgt. Jim White, rotated home. The village chief, Trao, wrote to White's parents in broken but legible English: "Sgt. White and his Sq. (squad) evry days evry night go to empust with P.F. … They work very hard and never look tired … My people are very poor and when to see a marine they are very happy … P.F. and marine to fight V.C. Maybe die … Jod bless you all."

Sgt. Vinnie McGowan took over. Like Jim White, Vinnie had fought against the North Vietnamese regulars and was tactically

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sharp. From the West Side of New York City, he had an outsize personality and within a few months knew hundreds of the villagers. The guerrillas, about 100 in the area, had been losing men night after night. Vinnie encouraged the villagers to point out where the remaining guerrillas were hiding. By the end of 1967, the guerrillas had pulled out and the firefights ended. After 485 days of combat and camaraderie, the Marines moved to another village, leaving behind a competent group of about 30 P.F.s.

This was happening throughout the Marine area, about 160 miles long. The CAP had begun as an experiment in one hamlet in 1966. By 1970, 114 of these platoons had secured more than 800 hamlets, protecting more than half a million Vietnamese. Not one village was ever retaken by the Viet Cong. It was the most successful counterinsurgency program in Vietnam. Five years later, North Vietnamese divisions armed with artillery and tanks conquered South Vietnam, whose top levels of government were in disarray. But at the village level in the Marine sector, the Viet Cong guerrillas had lost much of the support of the farmers. When I returned to the village in 2002, I was welcomed back with genuine affection. Because we had lived in the schoolhouse, the villagers referred to us as "the kindergarten Marines."

Here in the United States, the Vietnam War remains divisive. As a culture, however, we share decent values that our soldiers carry into every war. A full 90 percent of Vietnam veterans are proud they served our country. As Gerald Ford's secretary of defense, James Schlesinger, wrote to our troops after Saigon fell, "Your cause was noble; your dedication was determined." This does not excuse policy blunders, then or now. In Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, I have been on hundreds of patrols and operations with our grunts. In all three wars, our top leadership failed. In Vietnam, we lacked commitment. The same was true of Iraq and Afghanistan, with the additional insurmountable hurdle of religious culture. But there's one difference: Twenty years from now, it's doubtful our grunts will be welcomed back the way I was in Vietnam.

Lest we become cynical about our own belief in freedom or the appreciation many harbor for our sacrifices, we should remember the words that Ho Chi, a village schoolteacher, wrote in 1967 when Jim White was rotating home: "To Sgt. White Family … I hope in my heart that Sgt. White does come back when my country is at peace. Many of my American friends have died. I'm very sorry at has happened to your people. I hope someday we will all have peace and Charity. Your friend always, Ho Chi."

The Return to War: North Vietnamese Decision Making, 1973-1975

Edited and Annotated by George J. Veith; Translations by Merle L. Pribbenow

In support of the Cold War International History Project's efforts to facilitate the release of historical materials from governments on all sides of the Cold War, we have compiled 80 primary source documents dealing with North Vietnam's decision-making from the signing of the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973 until the end of the war, April 1975. The documents are appended to this Working Paper and accessible on DigitalArchive.org. (1)

Much of this declassified information formed the basis for the book, Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975. (2) This array of cables, memoranda, and directives provides a fascinating glimpse inside Hanoi's choice in 1973 to return to war—despite having just signed the Paris Peace Accords. The files deliver insights into how the Politburo of the Vietnamese Workers' Party, and its major command in the southern half of South Vietnam known as COSVN, viewed the situation after the accords. These documents clarify, to some extent, Hanoi's decision to resume armed conflict in the south. They further outline Hanoi's preparations in 1974 for launching a new offensive and the goals the Politburo wished to achieve, as well as the detailed military planning aimed at defeating South Vietnam. In the 1975 time-frame, the documents provide unique insights into how Hanoi's military commanders managed the campaign that led to the rapid collapse of South Vietnam.

While this collection is voluminous, the author of and translator for this Working Paper did not include every document released by the editors of the volumes cited in the bibliography. We reviewed each document in various Vietnamese Communist publications, but only chose to translate those directly related to the fall of South Vietnam or those which provided information of broader and significant historical interest. Thus, many documents from the volumes of the Van Kien Dang series (a massive collection of nearly 40,000 pages of mostly internal Vietnamese Communist Party documents) were not translated and included in this Working Paper simply because they dealt with mundane party or economic affairs. (3)

Although this set of documents cannot be considered definitive, it does provide one of the most detailed views of Vietnamese Communist decision-making ever unveiled for a specific period. However, the materials included in this study are almost exclusively documentary, as we chose not to incorporate information from the numerous memoirs, battle studies, or unit histories. We did, though, feature some secondary materials from the 1973 time-frame solely to help illuminate the thin documentary record on the Politburo's decision to resume armed conflict in the South. While these other sources do generally agree on the Politburo's review and approval process to resume the war, we suspect that the decision was not as smooth or unanimous as

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Return to War...

the Party portrays, especially after achieving a spectacular military victory in 1975.

Scholars looking to supplement the materials included should also examine five significant translated memoirs by senior Communist military leaders that provide varying levels of insight into Hanoi's decision-making during this period. The two volumes that provide the best overview of the 1973-1975 period are Chief of the PAVN General Staff Hoang Van Thai's The Decisive Years (translated by the now defunct Joint Publications Research Service [JPRS]), and later published in English by The Gioi Publishers in Hanoi), and Vo Nguyen Giap's The General Headquarters. These two books cover the entire period, and are relatively straight forward in describing the internal developments in Hanoi. (4)

Perhaps the most well-known is Van Tien Dung's Our Great Spring Victory (translated by John Spragens, Jr.), but Dung's account begins in the February 1975 time-frame, skipping the crucial lead up to the main offensive. (5) Also well-known but focused mainly on the B-2 Front is Tran Van Tra's History of the Bulwark B2 Theatre (also translated by JPRS).6 (6) Lastly, Hoang Minh Thao's The Victorious Tay Nguyen Campaign concentrated mainly on the preparations and subsequent attack on Ban Me Thuot in March 1975.7 (7) Thao had served for years as Commander of the B-3 Front, the Central Highlands, but was only an advisor to the campaign staff during the attack on Ban Me Thuot.

Several superb memoirs in Vietnamese also offer rich details on the final battles. Le Duc Anh's Dại Tuong Le Duc Anh (Senior General Le Duc Anh) provides the clearest picture of the dispute within the leadership over how to implement the Paris agreement during the first several months after the signing of the accords.8 (8) Hoang Cam's Chang Duong Muoi Nghin Ngay (The Ten-Thousand Day Journey) extensively covers the debates within COSVN over strategy, particularly his discussions with Lieutenant General Tran Van Tra.9 (9) Lastly, Nguyen Huu An's Chien Truong Moi (New Battlefield) details the extensive planning to attack I Corps, the fierce fighting that took place before the collapse of Danang, and the subsequent movement down the coast. (10) An, probably North Vietnam's best battlefield commander, delivers a remarkably candid assessment.

For scholars wishing to access secondary material, there are numerous volumes on the preparations, achievements, and culminations of the various battles. Two excellent samples of military decision-making (among many) are Mien Trung Toan Thang: Dai Thang Mua Xuan 1975 (Qua Nhung Trang Hoi Uc) (Central Vietnam Wins Total Victory: The 1975 Great Spring Victory [Through the Memoirs of Participants]), and Chien Dich Hue-Danang (Xuan 1975) (The Hue-Danang Offensive Campaign, Spring 1975).11 (11) Unit histories, such as Lich Su Quan Doan 2 (History of the 2nd Corps), also provide forthright details of the military action. (12) Moreover, Vo Van Sung's Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh Giua Long Paris (The Ho Chi Minh Campaign in the Heart of Paris) offers a unique glimpse into the often overlooked diplomatic front. (13)

A note of caution for scholars using this material. Naturally, the Vietnamese Communists are proud of their victory, but what is included here is what the Party has chosen to release. As such, it is a selection of documents designed to justify the Politburo's decisions while enhancing its reputation as a wise collective body. Moreover, the analysis within many documents provides a view of the world not just as the Politburo saw it, but more importantly, how it wanted the lower levels of the party and government to see it.

Many documents, therefore, especially in 1973, harp on South Vietnamese violations of the ceasefire while concurrently ignoring or rationalizing North Vietnamese violations. Rarely does one find admissions detailing Communist violations other than as justifications for their actions. For example, shortly before the beginning of the ceasefire, the South Vietnamese military sent a task force along the coast in Quang Tri province and recaptured the small town of Cua Viet. Senior General Vo Nguyen Giap immediately ordered a counterattack after the official ceasefire date to retake Cua Viet. His justification was simple: "Dong Ha was directly threatened. The Truong Son strategic line of transport was in a position to be menaced. The outcome of the 1972 Quang Tri Campaign was seriously compromised." (14) The PAVN launched a major counterattack and drove the South Vietnamese out of Cua Viet. This assault, while a serious ceasefire violation, was defensible in Giap's view because Saigon's seizure of Cua Viet would significantly impede future PAVN resupply efforts to the South. Yet when South Vietnamese forces continued to clear roadblocks on major roads that PAVN forces had cut shortly before the ceasefire (Saigon also could not allow these roadblocks to remain in place, as it would have severely impacted economic activity and freedom of movement), Hanoi protested vehemently. In truth, both sides violated the ceasefire when it suited them, but an individual reading these documents without the underlying historical context might conclude otherwise.

Lastly, the author and translator have made a few slight modifications in formatting to assist the reader, and on occasion, have not translated certain sections of a few documents that were not germane to overall decision-making (excised areas are marked with ellipses). The author has added editorial notes to provide context, chiefly for the 1973 period. Occasional translator's notes are in brackets. Otherwise, cable numbering, paragraph markings, etc., are precisely as found in the volumes.

1 The documents can be found on DigitalArchive.org in the collection "North Vietnamese Decision-Making, 19731975."
2 George J. Veith, Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975 (New York: Encounter Books, 2012).
3 Dang Cong san Viet Nam, Van Kien Dang Toan tap [Party Documents Complete Series], 54 vols. (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia,

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1998-2008).
4 Hoang Van Thai, The Decisive Years: Memoirs of Vietnamese Senior General Hoang Van Thai (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1987); Hoang Van Thai, How South Vietnam was Liberated: Memoirs (Hanoi: The Gioi, 1992); Vo Nguyen Giap, The General Headquarters in the Spring of Brilliant Victory (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2011).
5 Van Tien Dung, Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam, trans. John Spragens, Jr. (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2005).
6 Tran Van Tra, Vietnam: History of the Bulwark B2 Theatre, Vol. 5, Concluding the 30-Years War (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1983).
7 Hoang Minh Thao, The Victorious Tay Nguyen Campaign (Hanoi: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1979).
8 Khuat Bien Hoa, Dại Tuong Le Duc Anh (Senior General Le Duc Anh) (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Quan doi nhan dan, 2005).
9 Hoang Cam, Chang Duong Muoi Nghin Ngay: Hoi Uc (Hanoi: Quan doi nhan dan, 2001).
10 Nguyen Huu An, Chien Truong Moi: Hoi Uc (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Quan doi nhan dan, 2002).
11 Mien Trung Toan Thang: Dai Thang Mua Xuan 1975 (Qua Nhung Trang Hoi Uc) (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005); Chien Dich Hue-Danang (Xuan 1975) (Hanoi: Vien luch su quan su Viet Nam, 1991).
12 Lich Su Quan Doan 2, 1974-1994 (Hanoi: Quan doi nhan dan, 1994).
13 Vo Van Sung, Chien Dich Ho Chi Minh Giua Long Paris (Hanoi: Nha xuat ban Chinh tri quoc gia, 2005).
14 Vo Nguyen Giap, The General Headquarters in the Spring of Brilliant Victory (Hanoi: The Gioi, 2002), 30.

George J. Veith is the author of three books on the Vietnam War, including Code Name Bright Light: The Untold Story of U.S. POW Rescue Efforts during the Vietnam War (1998) and Black April: The Fall of South Vietnam, 1973-1975 (2013).
Merle Pribbenow is a former CIA officer who served in Vietnam from April 1970 to April 1975, and is the translator of Volume 2 of the history of the People's Army of Vietnam, which was published by the University of Kansas Press as Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975 (2002).

The Vietcong Committed Atrocities, Too

https://www.nytimes.com/2017/12/19/opinion/vietcong-generals-atrocities.html

HATHER STUR
DEC. 19, 2017

Under the cover of night on Dec. 5, 1967, a coalition of Viet Cong guerrillas and North Vietnamese troops set the village of Dak Son on fire as its inhabitants slept. The assailants used flamethrowers and grenades, and they had their rifles ready for anyone who tried to escape. Villagers who awoke to find the roofs of their thatched huts aflame tried to run, and many of those who managed to scurry into earthen tunnels and caves before bullets mowed them down were washed in the fire blasts of the flamethrowers or asphyxiated in their bunkers. When morning arrived, the survivors stumbled out to survey the damage, and they found more than 200 dead bodies, most of which were corpses of women and children. Other villagers were missing, presumed kidnapped by the attackers.

Dak Son was a government-controlled hamlet in Phuoc Long Province, about 75 miles northeast of Saigon near the Cambodian border. Its 2,000 residents were Montagnards, an ethnic minority tribe that had long resisted Viet Cong incursions in the Central Highlands. Some 800 additional Montagnard refugees had fled to Dak Son from villages that the Viet Cong had taken, and so the guerrillas decided to make an example of Dak Son to try and prevent subsequent escapes from Viet Cong-controlled territories. Montagnards also served in local militias known as Regional and Popular Forces, or "ruff-puffs," providing security and defending their villages against Viet Cong incursions. American and South Vietnamese military troops trained the local security forces, which made the Viet Cong despise them even more. According to a Time magazine reporter who wrote about the Dak Son massacre, Viet Cong guerrillas shouted "Sons of Americans!" as they launched their assault on the village.

Seldom included in general histories of the Vietnam War, the Dak Son massacre represents the no-win situation ordinary Vietnamese villagers were in during the conflict. Vietnamese civilians were besieged on all sides by violence and the threat of violence. Allan Lavelle, a retired American Navy and Air Force pilot, worked for U.S.A.I.D. in Vietnam as director of refugees and war victims in the area where Dak Son was located. He wrote in an unpublished memoir that Montagnards spent much of their days in trenches to avoid getting caught up in Viet Cong and South Vietnamese military operations. At night, North Vietnamese troops and Viet Cong cadres harassed and intimidated them. Lavelle, who passed away in 2008, compared the Montagnards' standing in Vietnam to that of African-Americans in Mississippi in the 1920s. When I lived in Vietnam as a Fulbright fellow in 2013 and 2014, rural Vietnamese friends and acquaintances of mine confirmed that peasants faced harassment and violence during the day from South Vietnamese troops and then again at night from the Viet Cong.

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Vietcong Committed Atrocities...

Lavelle was in an Air America helicopter on his way to Dak Son to check on refugees the morning after the massacre, and he was one of the first outsiders to survey the aftermath. He then spent several weeks in the village helping survivors recover bodies and bury the dead. Decomposition began quickly in the thick, wet, tropical heat, and Lavelle described wearing a handkerchief over his nose and mouth to diminish the stench and keep from inhaling flies. Several weeks later, he traveled to other Montagnard villages in the area, and he learned that villagers had not heard of the Dak Son massacre. If the goal of the attack was to scare Montagnards into remaining in Viet Cong territory, it was not wholly successful. The massacre had not even sapped the will of Dak Son's survivors. They began rebuilding almost immediately.

Terrorism was a central component of Viet Cong strategy. The historian Douglas Pike made this argument in his studies of the Viet Cong, which were grounded in more than a decade's living in South Vietnam as an employee of the United States Information Agency. Pike, a World War II veteran of the Pacific Theater, documented Viet Cong uses of terrorism, including the massacre of several thousand civilians at Hue during the Tet offensive. The seeming randomness of a car bomb here and an explosion in a market there belied the calculated, rational nature of the Viet Cong's terrorism as a primary tactic in its war strategy.

Terrorists carried out assassinations, planted explosives and launched grenades into crowded spaces. Skilled technicians from provincial and zone headquarters built and detonated explosives and provided leadership to the cells. The Viet Cong mainly targeted villages, especially hamlets it considered to be pro-Saigon, and the goal of an attack was typically to cause confusion and fear rather than to kill a large number of civilians. When targeting individuals in rural areas, guerrillas focused on village and hamlet chiefs, government employees, teachers and suspected "informants" and other "traitors," as well as foreigners including priests and other missionaries, humanitarian aid workers and American government employees.

The mythology surrounding the image of the Viet Cong as an organic movement masks the planning, training and expertise that shaped and executed its terror strategy. Cadres understood that they walked a thin line between engendering fear in civilians and provoking hate. Viet Cong leaders worked to make it look as though terrorist activity was not connected to the Front's political struggle. Authorities established "clandestine organizations for sabotage in urban areas" so that they appeared to have "no connection with political organizations." Viet Cong leaders knew their movement could lose credibility if its commitment to violent revolution became clear.

Viet Cong sources justified the use of terrorism as being the only choice they had given the "warlike and terrorist policies of the enemy." Not all cadres agreed with the official policy; some believed that the political struggle alone could topple the Saigon government, and terrorism might actually have an opposite effect than what Viet Cong authorities intended. An indoctrination pamphlet explained that violence was an essential ingredient in the recipe of revolution. "The only correct way to organize revolutionary forces and make preparations in all areas to smash the enemy's machinery of violence is to use the appropriate form of armed struggle," the pamphlet explained. "Emergence of this new struggle form not only meets an urgent demand, but is an inevitable result of the revolutionary movement. It does not contradict the political struggle, but supplements it and paves the way for the political struggle to develop." Confidence in the preordained nature of Vietnam's Communist revolution allowed the Viet Cong to justify its commitment to violent struggle.

Through terrorism, the Viet Cong aimed to instill fear in the citizenry and destabilize Saigon's political system, undermining efforts to establish democratic society. The violence compounded the disorder in the capital city and other urban areas where students, intellectuals and journalists protested the government's slow movement in enacting democratic political institutions and allowing citizens to elect a civilian government. Saigon officials responded to terrorist attacks by arresting and imprisoning political dissidents and assuming that anyone who spoke out against the government was a Communist. The stifling of civil liberties in turn validated claims by the Viet Cong and other anti-government groups that Saigon leadership was authoritarian. Terrorism's mission accomplished.

Vietnamese civilians were under attack from all sides. The Saigon regime and its American allies came at them from one direction; from another, Hanoi and the Viet Cong with Chinese and Russian assistance. Yet scholars of the war have not offered a full accounting of incidents like the Dak Son massacre. For too long, the telling of the history of the conflict has been a zero-sum game in which the Vietnam War was a case study amplifying a broader critique of American foreign policy and intervention in the world. This orthodox view of the war emphasizes the actions of American policymakers, military authorities and troops. Vietnamese actors appear fairly one dimensional, as corrupt puppets controlled by the State Department, romanticized revolutionaries or a faceless mass of peasants caught in the crossfire. The orthodoxy pays little attention to Vietnamese agency, strategy or worldview, and it does not account for the diversity of opinions in North and South Vietnam about what an independent Vietnam should look like.

Historians who are working with Vietnamese sources are leading us to a reckoning of the complexity of Vietnamese attitudes about their country's future, the politics involved, the impact of international opinion on how the conflict played out, and the

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nature of the violence perpetrated against Vietnamese civilians. The question of who had the right to determine Vietnam's future was a fundamental part of the broader conflict that involved the governments in Saigon and Hanoi, the Viet Cong and Vietnamese and foreign citizens across the political spectrum.

The United States, South Vietnam, North Vietnam and the Viet Cong were all complicit in the imprisoning, torturing and killing of Vietnamese civilians. Scrutinizing North Vietnamese and Viet Cong violence and terrorism need not overshadow the bloodshed and destruction Americans caused in Vietnam. Acknowledging Vietnamese decision-making and actions, including violence against fellow Vietnamese, recognizes Vietnamese humanity and magnifies the desperation that motivated brothers to fight brothers in the struggle for freedom after more than a century of colonial subjugation.

South Vietnamese Flag and Anthem

http://www.youtube.com/watch_p opup?v=ahEblKNhUVw

Producer: Prof. Nguyễn Ngọc Bích

Script writer: Colonel (retired) Phạm Bá Hoa

Narrator: Ngọc Hà

This informative you tube production by former Professor Nguyễn Ngọc Bích explains the convoluted origin and history of the South Vietnamese flag and how this yellow flag with three red stripes became the official flag or "Vietnamese Heritage and Freedom Flag" of the overseas Vietnamese community.

The history of the yellow flag, which is recognized by more than 100 states, cities, and counties in the U.S. is linked to the diaspora of the Vietnamese. It is the symbol of the Vietnamese fighting for recognition and acceptance around the world.

Vietnam Must Change

Powerful documentary: 'Vietnam must change' (in both Vietnamese and English)

Independent forum Dan Lam Bao 4 Nov *http://danlambaovn.blogspot.com.au/2017/11/viet-nam-can-thay-oi.html*

The documentary was produced by independent film makers including well-known actress and rights advocate Mrs. Kim Chi - who famously refused to accept then PM Nguyen Tan Dung's award for 'Most talented performer.'

It features well-known blogger Dieu Cay and other rights advocates, rights groups. It presents the stark difference between the rights enjoyed by American citizens and the suppression of all basic human rights in Vietnam.

Vietnamese of younger generations will get to understand the appalling human rights situation in Vietnam today.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2UquRJyEyI

Dr. Doan Van Ba Retiring After 26 Years of Service

06/06/2014

Dr. Ba Van Doan graduated from the University of Saigon Medical School where he completed an initial residency in General Practice and then an Ear, Nose, and Throat residency.

Early in his military career, Dr. Boan served with distinction as battalion surgeon with the highly regarded Vietnamese Airborne Division. Later, he commanded the Airborne Division's hospital and then the 4th Field Military Hospital, the latter a 400 bed facility. In late January of 1968, Dr. Doan traveled to his home in Hue to enjoy a few days of relaxation in celebration of the Vietnamese Lunar New Year. While a truce had been agreed to between the warring parties for that important holiday season, the North Vietnamese launched a surprise and massive attack across the country that has subsequently become known as the "TET Offensive of 1968."

Awakening that morning, Dr. Doan found himself trapped behind enemy lines at a relative's home, so he began weighing his limited options. He knew his fate if captured, so he decided to see whether he could reach a section of the city where he knew U.S. military units had previously been stationed. Carefully avoiding enemy units and patrols, he began working his way from building to building until he reached a bridge where a major battle was raging.

A badly mauled USMC Battalion commanded by LTC Marcus Gravel was attempting to get across the river after suffering heavy losses on the north side. They were trying to fight their way to a Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV) compound located on the south side of the river. As the last of his trucks began crossing the bridge, LTC Marcus Gravel saw a man dressed in the elite uniform of the Vietnamese Airborne Division emerge from the rubble of a nearby building.

The Vietnamese told LTC Gravel he was a doctor, so he was hustled aboard one of the last trucks to get across the river. Upon reaching the MACV compound, the American Senior Advisor, an Army colonel, began strenuously objecting to him being brought there and pointedly asked LTC Gravel, "How do you know he's a doctor and not a Viet Cong infiltrator?" By that time, LTC Gravel was totally exhausted after surviving several hours of constant battle, so he shot back, "Because he says he's a doctor!"

Through LTC Gravel's efforts, Dr. Doan was quickly linked up with Army Captain (Dr.) Steve Bernie, the only other doctor in the area. Dr. Bernie asked Dr. Doan to join him because he was overwhelmed with the increasing number of casualties being brought to his small medical facility. Despite constant incoming small arms and mortar fire, Dr. Doan and Dr. Bernie worked around the clock providing lifesaving care from 31 January until 14 February when they were finally relieved. During that two week period, Dr. Doan risked his life numerous times when he volunteered to accompany seriously wounded casualties that had to be transported along dangerous streets to a landing area where helicopters lifted them out, most of the time under heavy enemy fire.

Because normal re-supply activities had been interrupted due to enemy action, Dr. Bernie found his medical supplies running low. At that point, Dr. Doan said he knew the location of a Vietnamese Military Medical Depot, but it was several miles away and behind enemy lines. With utter disregard for his own safety, Dr. Doan volunteered to accompany a small group to see whether any supplies were still there. Racing through the streets of Hue, their truck reached the depot and pushed down the locked gate. Fortunately, it had not been looted, so Dr. Doan quickly gathered supplies needed to provide emergency medical care. For his actions during the Battle of Hue, Dr. Doan became one of a handful of non-Americans to ever be awarded the highly coveted Bronze Star Medal for Valor which he wears proudly on his medical coat.

When North Vietnamese forces finally overran his country, Dr. Doan was taken prisoner on May 15, 1975, and confined in several Vietnamese Communist Concentration Camps commonly known as "re-education camps" where South Vietnamese POWs were subjected to brutal treatment. After more than four years of captivity, he was released in December of 1979.

In May of 1980, Dr. Doan decided to opt for freedom and boarded a tiny boat overcrowded with 97 other refugees. After being assaulted and robbed by Thai pirates on two different occasions, the boat finally arrived in Thailand. Dr. Doan was then transferred to the Galang Refugee Camp in Indonesia where he served as a staff physician at a Red Cross Hospital established to support the refugees.

Finally reaching the US on November 19, 1980, Dr. Doan was assisted by several former advisors to the Vietnamese Airborne Division and began an Internal Medicine Residency at the Veteran's Administration Medical Center in Washington, DC. After three years of Internal Medicine training, he spent an additional two years completing a Nephrology Fellowship program at the same institution.

Dr. Doan began working in what has now become known as Fort Belvoir Community Hospital's Family Health Centers on July 1, 1988, and will end his career on June 30, 2014. During his 26 years of loyal service to military personnel and their families,

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Dr. Doan Retires...

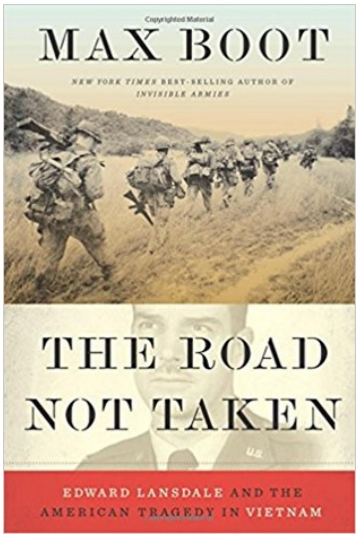
he has made lots of friends and many have kept him as their primary care manager for most of those years.

Asked to speak at a large Veteran's Day ceremony in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1987, Dr. Doan spoke eloquently as to why he volunteered to do what he did during the Battle of Hue and why he has continued to serve the military family now as an American himself. His words are something we all ought to ponder: "Why did I risk my life to save others? Because those American soldiers had been fighting for freedom for my people. They had freedom; they came to help my oppressed people so they could have freedom too. They poured out their blood on the soil of my country. Their blood soaked my uniform and wet my skin; and their efforts inspired me to risk my life for theirs. Despite having lost my country and enduring the oppression and hardship in a Vietnamese Communist Concentration Camp for four years, I still feel strongly grateful to the American soldiers who fought for my people's freedom and sincerely want them to have the honor justly due them."

General Francis J. Roberts (left), Commanding General, II Field Forces Command, Vietnam, being briefed by Major (Dr.) Ba Van Doan (center), Commanding Officer, 4th Field Military Hospital, Saigon, Vietnam, 1971.

The Road Not Taken: Edward Lansdale and the American Tragedy in Vietnam

Max Boot



In this epic biography of Edward Lansdale (1908– 1987), the man said to be the fictional model for Graham Greene's *The Quiet American*, best-selling historian Max Boot demonstrates how Lansdale pioneered a "hearts and mind" diplomacy, first in the Philippines, then in Vietnam. It was a visionary policy that, as Boot reveals, was ultimately crushed by America's giant military bureaucracy, steered by elitist generals and blueblood diplomats who favored troop build-ups and napalm bombs over winning the trust of the people. Through dozens of interviews and access to never before-seen documents—including long-hidden love letters—Boot recasts this cautionary American story, tracing the bold rise and the crashing fall of the roguish "T. E. Lawrence of Asia" from the battle of Dien Bien Phu to the humiliating American evacuation in 1975. Bringing a tragic complexity to this so-called "ugly American," this "engrossing biography" rescues Lansdale from historical ignominy and suggests that Vietnam could have been different had we only listened.

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