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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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SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

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Editorial Note: Crimes Against Humanity

The history of the Vietnam War is the history of the willfully planned usurpation of power by the communists who benefited from the lack of coordination and bumbling attitude of the non communist nationalists. The latter operated in a "vacuum" trying to promote their own agendas without regard to other parties' goals. They did not know how to cooperate together (which was normal in a country ruled by the French for 80 years) thus became easy prey for communist liquidation. They were untested compared to the communists who followed a regimented international blueprint to eliminate their adversaries.

This point should be carefully stressed since the history of Vietnam has been revisited many times, especially by its winners, the communists and leftist "historians" in western countries, especially the US.

I. The First Vietnam War

Le Duan aka Le Van Nhuan, born in Quang Tri, Annam (Central Vietnam) in 1907 joined the revolution in the late 1920s and became a founder of the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) in 1931. After being jailed by the French from 1931 to 1937, he was named secretary of the Party committee in Annam. He transferred to Saigon in 1939 and was jailed again at Con Son Island in 1940. When the Japanese deposed the French on 9 March 1945, Vietnam suddenly found itself free from French domination. Bao Dai used the occasion to proclaim Vietnam independent on 11 March after eighty years of French domination. "The Government of Vietnam publicly proclaims that from today

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Luke Nguyen: Vietnamese Australian Chef Cook

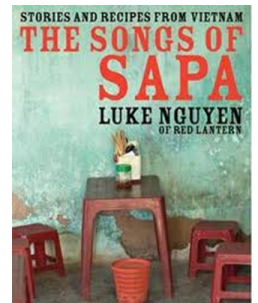
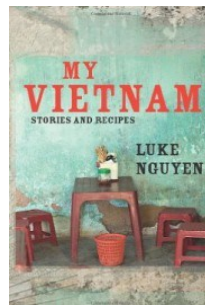
Luke Nguyen born in 1978 is a Vietnamese-Australian Chef, best known as host of the Australian television series *Luke Nguyen's Vietnam*. The series is a food documentary in which he travels through many large cities of the country cooking ad hoc in the manner of street vendors. He is also the owner of the *Red Lantern Restaurant* in Surry Hills, Sidney, Australia and the author of many cookbooks.

With a huge extended family scattered throughout Vietnam, Luke is inspired to learn that they all have one thing in common – a love for food. On one journey of Vietnam's southern region, he travels from Saigon, through the Mekong Delta, and north along the coast to the World Heritage-listed city of Hoi An. Along the way, he introduces us to many of his relatives, who share with him the secrets of Vietnamese cuisine, and help him discover the tiny cottage industries that have been creating vital ingredients for many centuries.

Available on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/My-Vietnam-Stories-Luke-Nguyen/dp/0762773944/>

<http://www.amazon.com/Songs-Sapa-Luke-Nguyen/dp/1741964652/>



Mai Pham: Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table

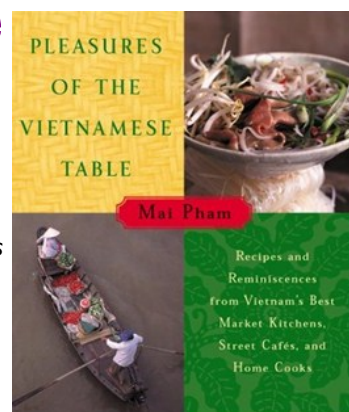


When Mai Pham--chef and owner of the renowned Lemon Grass Restaurant in Sacramento, California--left her home and her grandmother in Saigon in 1975, just days before the city fell to communist rule, she never thought she'd see either again. Happily for her, she returned 20 years later to rediscover her roots and reconnect with her 100-year-old grandmother. Happily for us, she's written *Pleasures of the Vietnamese Table*, in which she shares that journey--and the vibrant cuisine of her homeland. She weaves a stirring tale of rediscovery; of visiting with cooks in market stalls and street cafés and home kitchens; and, perhaps most importantly, of rediscovering her "favorite food on earth," *pho*, the noodle soup often referred to as the national dish of Vietnam.

Featured throughout the book are black-and-white photographs of the country and its people, stories of Pham's childhood, and enchanting tales of the history and people of Vietnam that, taken together, highlight a rich and vibrant picture of the ancient cuisine of this complex country. Helpful guides to the Vietnamese pantry and cooking techniques, along with a glossary, menu suggestions, and a list of resources for the more exotic ingredients make the book extremely useful to even the uninitiated.

Available on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/Pleasures-Vietnamese-Table-Reminiscences-Vietnams/dp/0060192585/>



Little Saigon Exit in San Jose, CA

On February 28, 2013, Caltrans contractor erected the Little Saigon sign near Story Road Exit Sign on Freeway 101 Northbounds leading to the Vietnamese community of the city of San Jose, CA. The event has been five years in the making after a long fight with the city council of San Jose that had seen a recall vote against councilman Madison Nguyen who opposed the Little Saigon designation.

On March 2009, voters rejected the recall attempt by a 55-45% vote, although San Jose got its Little Saigon name. Madison Nguyen is presently the vice-mayor of San Jose.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I7Rb8CWkxPc>

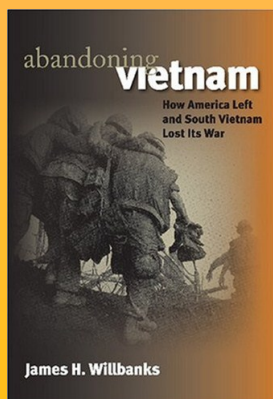
Abandoning Vietnam: James Willbanks

Did America's departure from Vietnam produce the "peace with honor" promised by President Richard Nixon or was that simply an empty wish meant to distract war-weary Americans from a tragic "defeat with shame"? While James Willbanks doesn't offer any easy answers to that question, his book convincingly shows why America's strategy for exiting the Vietnam War failed miserably and left South Vietnam to a dismal fate.

That strategy, "Vietnamization," was designed to transfer full responsibility for the defense of South Vietnam to the South Vietnamese, but in a way that would buy the United States enough time to get out without appearing to run away. To achieve this goal, America poured millions of dollars into training and equipping the South Vietnamese military while attempting to pacify the countryside. Precisely how this strategy was implemented and why it failed so completely are the subjects of this eye-opening study.

Available on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/Abandoning-Vietnam-America-Modern-Studies/dp/0700616233/>

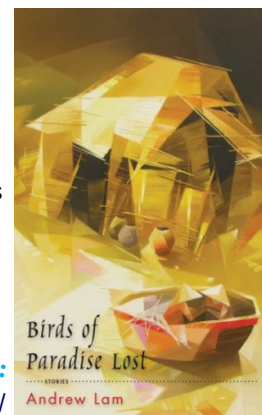


Birds of Paradise Lost: Andrew Lam

The thirteen stories in *Birds of Paradise Lost* shimmer with humor and pathos as they chronicle the anguish and joy and bravery of America's newest Americans, the troubled lives of those who fled Vietnam and remade themselves in the San Francisco Bay Area. The past—memories of war and its aftermath, of murder, arrest, re-education camps and new economic zones, of escape and shipwreck and atrocity—is ever present in these wise and compassionate stories. It plays itself out in surprising ways in the lives of people who thought they had moved beyond the nightmares of war and exodus.

Available on Amazon:

<http://www.amazon.com/Birds-Paradise-Lost-Andrew-Lam/dp/1597092681/>



In Memoriam: Pham Duy

Pham Duy (October 5, 1921 – January 27, 2013) born in Hanoi was a prolific Vietnamese songwriter. With a musical career spanning more than seven decades through some of the most turbulent periods of Vietnamese history and with more than one thousand songs to his credit, he is widely considered one of the most outstanding and influential figures of modern Vietnamese music.

A colorful and politically polarizing figure, he first wrote songs for the revolution before abandoning it in 1955 when he moved to South Vietnam where he remained until 1975. He emigrated to the US in 1975 and remained there until 2005. He appeared regularly all over the world to sing his new refugees' songs (*tj nan ca*) and prisoners' songs (*nguc ca*). In 2005, he decided to return to Vietnam where his music has been banned since 1955. He passed away in 2013 trying to get the Hanoi government to allow all his work to circulate freely in Vietnam. To this day, it has not, except for some songs. No representative of the Vietnam Musicians Association attended his funeral because of his "sinful past" and the overseas Vietnamese community remembered him as a traitor. His private life was as complicated as his political life.



He is considered one of the most prolific and varied musicians of modern Vietnamese music, as well as one of those who molded it from its infancy.

Editorial...continued

the protectorate treaty with France is abrogated and that the country resumes its right to independence." (Dommen. *The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans*, p. 84)

Bao Dai then charged Tran Trong Kim to form a new government that was unveiled on 16 April. History could be different had Bao Dai chosen Ngo Dinh Diem as Premier. The Japanese apparently had prevented Diem from being interviewed by Bao Dai for the position. The intellectual and political novice Tran Trong Kim's gravest mistake was to order on 2 May the release of all political prisoners jailed by the French, including Ton Duc Thang, Nguyen Van Linh, Le Duan, Pham Hung, who sneaked back to Cochinchina (South Vietnam) to continue their struggle. (Dommen, p 126) Vietnam's history would have been different had Le Duan and other communists been kept in jail.

Despite overwhelming odds, Kim however managed to ease the famine of 1944-1945 in North Vietnam, which nonetheless killed more than a million northerners. Although the Japanese and the French were the main culprits, the communists by preventing distribution of rice to needed areas and stealing it from government stores had contributed to the deepening of the famine. By August 1945, Kim had managed to wrestle the power back from the Japanese and succeeded in reuniting Tonkin (North Vietnam) and Cochinchina for the first time in a century. (Dommen, p 89)

The communists lay down a systematic plan to liquidate non communist nationalists: "areas of mass graves [were found] in each village where the Viet Minh had rounded up suspected collaborators and summarily shot them." Among the executed were Pham Quynh, Bao Dai's interior minister; Ngo Dinh Khoi, President Diem's brother; Ta Thu Thau, Bui Quang Chieu... (Dommen, 120-121) Following all these purges, South Vietnam had no more non communist nationalist leaders left to fight

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Editorial...continued

against the communists.

The First Vietnam War had cost the French 59,745 dead and missing in action. The Vietnamese National Army (South) lost 58,877 dead and missing in action. About 400,000 civilians had died of which 100,000 to 150,000 had been assassinated by the communists. (Dommen, p 252)

2. The Second Vietnam War

While Truong Chinh in the North spearheaded a wave of terror through the Land Reform between 1953 and 1956, (Courtois 566-567) Le Duan in the South (Cochinchina) attempted to control the various communist factions (Nguyen Binh) that wanted immediate insurrection. The "rectification of errors" campaign brought down Truong Chinh, and in the process curbed the power of Ho Chi Minh, Vo Nguyen Giap, and Pham van Dong. Recalled to Hanoi in 1957, Le Duan became the Party Secretary thanks to Le Duc Tho, Le Duan's former protégé in the South.

For the next two years, the "North-firsters" (Ho, Giap, Dong, Chinh) who wanted to build the North first and compete with the South later battled for power with the "South-firsters" (Duan, Tho, Pham Hung, Nguyen Chi Thanh, To Huu). By January 1959, Duan-Tho stole the power away from Ho-Giap and committed the Party to overthrow the Diem government through military means, thus spearheading a total war for the destruction of South Vietnam. (Lien Hang. *Hanoi's War*, pp. 43-47) By May 1959, the Group 559 was founded to build and maintain the so called Ho Chi Minh Trail to infiltrate troops and armament into South Vietnam.

That crucial decision, which made the communists the initiators of the war also violated the 1954 Geneva Accords, which forbid troop movement to the opposite side of the country and waging war.

The voting in the South on 23 October, 1955, ushered in a Republic, which was proclaimed according to constitutional and legal procedures, in contrast with the illegal and illegitimate takeover in Hanoi by the communists. (Dommen p. 298)

Le Duan took over control of the southern war by co-opting southern leaders into a unified front, the National Liberation Front (NLF) and by strengthening COSVN (Central Office for South Vietnam). In 1961, he sent 5,000 PAVN soldiers—southern regroupes—through the trail to join 25,000 troops of the People's Liberation Army Forces (PLAF) alongside 80,000 communal guerillas and self-defense fighters. (Lien Hang, 59)

The communists accelerated their guerilla campaign in the South. School teachers, village officials, and militiamen were assassinated. This warfare was brutal and blurred the line of military and civilian personnel. Their slogan was, "Chasing external enemies and crushing internal enemies to liberate the nation and the working class." Their intention was to crush/kill any potential or perceived enemy. Until today, despite having killed millions of people, the working class remained the poor working class with a national GDP of \$US 1,200, which placed Vietnam in the bottom tier of the world. Do we really need a revolution that killed millions of people only to end up with a poor country without freedom and beholden to the Chinese?

In November 1963, Le Duan escalated the struggle in the South by appointing Nguyen Chi Thanh as commander of COSVN and elevating the Vietnam civil war to an international Cold War conflict in December 1963. (Lien Hang, 63-65)

He formulated the General Offensive General uprising concept in 1964 (Tong Cong Kich Tong Khoi Nghia: TCK-TKN) and quadrupled the infiltration of weapons and supplies down the trail and by sea in 1964. He shamed the aged Ho into submission for having capitulated to the French in 1945 and incorrectly accepting the terms of the Geneva Accords.

In 1968, the communists launched their General Offensive attacks against more than 70 South Vietnamese cities, towns, and military installations during the Tet truce. All these attacks were repulsed, except for Hue which remained under their control for more than three weeks. Citizens were required to report and register with the revolutionary committee.

Many were asked to report again and were never heard from again. Later mass graves were discovered in and around Hue with the help of Viet Cong defectors; skeletons revealed cracked skulls; mouths stuffed with rags and hands tied together behind their backs. Some of the victims were buried alive. More than 5,000 civilian, soldiers, including French religious workers, German doctors, Vietnamese priests were massacred in Hue or reported missing. This was an unequaled act of savagery never seen before during the war. Once again, the communists had violated the Geneva Accords and the truce they had requested for the 1968 Tet festival.

In 1972, the communists again violated the Accords by sending troops across the demilitarized zone to attack Quang Tri that fell on May 1972. As civilians ran out of Quang Tri, they were indiscriminately shelled upon causing thousands of deaths. Highway One was so littered with charred trucks, cars, bikes, human debris and corpses that it had been labeled as the "Highway of Horror." The communists did not distinguish between soldiers and civilians. Besides Quang Tri, they also attacked Kontum in the II Corps and An Loc in the III Corps and again indiscriminately shelled on civilians and hospitals.

In 1975, 25,000 communist troops attacked the 1,200 ARVN troops defending Ban Me Thuot. The outcome was never in

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doubt. President Thieu ordered a withdrawal from the highlands, which turned out to be a rout as civilians mingling with soldiers disrupted the retreat. The communists shelled the convoy, which became an easy target as it descended the hills of the highlands to the plain region. There were so many deaths that the convoy was labeled as "The Convoy of Tears." Of the 400,000 civilian who tried to escape the highlands, only an estimated 100,000 got through. (Dommen, p 903) The fear of the communists was so overwhelming that civilians decided to run away as soon as they heard the communists were coming.

3. Comrades Ho and Duan

Why are you and your followers
so evil as to impose
on the people of Vietnam
a rootless foreign ideology?

On your hands, the blood
of millions of people
who just aspired to live in freedom
instead of under the shackles of the party.

On your hands, the blood
of millions of northerners
who were sent to war to kill
another million of southerners and innocent civilians.

On your hands the blood
of millions of people who were
stripped of their properties and belongings,
and sent to rot in inhospitable economic zones.

On your hands the blood
of tens of thousands of soldiers and officials
who struggled to survive on meager rations
in your deadly reeducation camps.

On your hands the blood
of hundreds of thousands
who braved seas and pirates on rickety boats
to search for freedom elsewhere in the world.

The Vietnam War was just a war of conquest and usurpation of power. Since it does not have any other meaning, there is nothing glorious about this so called "revolution." There is nothing glorious about killing people to take over their properties and belongings. The communists should instead be ashamed of having participated in this conquest and should focus on the criminality issue of their acts.

Overall, besides war deaths, the North Vietnamese communists had killed more than one million innocent citizens (Courtois. *Black Book of Communism*, p 4) through their Land Reforms, Literary Reform, imprisonments, executions... They caused more than one million of troop deaths, 300,000 ARVN KIA and another million civilian deaths. This does not include the post-war killing through reeducation camps, executions... and the drowning at seas of hundreds of thousands of boat people.

The monstrosity of the killings was staggering. To this day, many Vietnamese inside or outside the country still have not recovered from these mass killings and executions and continuing oppression against southerners. They are crying for justice and waiting for the rehabilitation of these victims.