



SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

NEWSLETTER # 77

MARCH 2015

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.

SACEI WISHES YOU A HAPPY
AND PROSPEROUS NEW GOAT YEAR

2
0
1
5



Year
of
the
Goat

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Year of the Goat	1
Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam	2
Forty-two Years Ago	11
Protesters Target River-side	11
CODEPINK—Kissing	11
VN Bloggers Assaulted	11
18 VNese Montagnards	12
Cross into Cambodia	
VN's Concerted Effort to Keep Control of Its Past	12
The Fun Has Ended	13
Cats Buried Alive	13
Tet 2015 in Vietnam	14

The Goat comes 8th in the Chinese-Vietnamese zodiac. The 12 zodiac animals are: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Cat (Vietnamese)-Rabbit (Chinese), Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig.

According to Chinese-Vietnamese astrology, each year is associated with an animal sign, occurring in a 12-year cycle. For example 2015 is a year of the Goat.

Lucky Colors: brown, red, purple
Lucky Flowers: carnation, primrose

Year of Birth: 1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003, 2015, 2027

Goats are said to be elegant, creative, intelligent, well-mannered, sweet, and lovable. But they can also be pessimistic, dissatisfied, capricious, undisciplined, and irresponsible.

Remembering General Nguyen Khoa Nam

Hoàng Như Tùng

Translated by Phong Hà aka Mrs. Hoàng Như Tùng

Distinguished guests,

Dear former fellow combatants in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam,

Dear young people,

Today in this room, we are commemorating the heroes who sacrificed their lives for our country and the 33rd anniversary of the death of General Nguyễn Khoa Nam. With deep emotions, I am feeling that their spirits are here with us now as has said the French poet Victor Hugo “Les morts sont des invisibles, mais non des absents” (The dead are invisible, but they are not absent). Nearer to us, across from Bellaire Boulevard the statues of two soldiers, a Vietnamese and an American as well as those of civilians who have died during the war, are watching what we are doing today.

First of all, I would like to thank the organizers of the ceremony to have given me the opportunity to talk about the contemporary history of Vietnam and the suicide of General Nguyễn Khoa Nam, commander of the 4th Army Corps. To the young, I will give a brief summary of the historical period from 1945 to 1975. And I would like to tell people of my generation that what I am going to say about historical events is my own opinion and that not everyone would agree with me.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before 1945, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia—three countries that made up the Indochinese peninsula—were French colonies. On March 9, 1945 the Japanese overthrew the French administration. The State of Vietnam declared itself an independent nation though under Japanese control. In mid-1945, World War II ended with the victory of the Allies (France, England, and the Republic of China—not communist China)--and the defeat of Germany, Italy and Japan. Taking advantage of the surrender of the Japanese, which resulted in a “political vacuum” in Vietnam, the Viet Minh front that had secretly been working against the French, seized power in August 1945. They formed a new government and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (we later knew that this government was communist).

Less than a year later, in 1946 the French came back to Indochina setting foot first in South Vietnam. Their purpose was not to dominate their former colonies as before. Instead they intended to make them part of what they called the French Union.



Continue on next page

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

The non-communists could see a dangerous threat. On one hand the communist doctrine was spreading, on the other the French would not abandon their intention to control our country with a new form of colonization. Unable to defeat either of these forces, a group of politicians chose to cooperate with the French via a number of political agreements with the purpose of gradually working out a plan for the future independence of Vietnam. This situation inevitably led to a war between the communist Viet Minh on one hand, and the French and the South Vietnamese government headed by former Emperor Bảo Đại on the other. Each side controlled the territories it successfully occupied with no clear cut boundaries.

After nearly nine years almost immediately following the well-known battle of Điện Biên Phủ, which the Viet Minh came out victorious, a conference was called in Geneva, Switzerland in 1954. Participants to this conference included France, England, the Soviet Union, Communist China and the two sides of Vietnam: the State of Vietnam (non-communist) and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (communist). An agreement was at last reached providing for a cease fire and the temporary division of Vietnam into two zones:

- North of the 17th parallel belonged to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, backed by communist countries such as the Soviet Union, communist China and the East European nations.

- South of the 17th parallel belonged to the State of Vietnam (this name was later changed to the Republic of Vietnam), recognized by the United States, France, England and other countries.

The French gradually withdrew from Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people enjoyed a short period of relative peace. Less than two years after the Geneva Accords, North Vietnam (communist) was determined to wage a war which they called by different names: war to liberate the South, war to unify the country, war to defeat the “imperialist Americans” and their puppet South Vietnamese government. Since they were strongly supported by the Soviet Union and China, South Vietnam needed help from the United States and other countries of the Free World to fight against them.

Was it actually a war of liberation as claimed by the aggressors? Or was it a war of ideology? Or was it simply an invasion? In a speech given at the Geneva Conference on May 12, 1954 Secretary of State Nguyễn Quốc Định of the State of Vietnam (non-communist) said something like this,

“History will tell you (the Vietnamese communists) that the communist doctrine may help you get independence from the French, but Vietnam will become a satellite of China.”

The statement has been gradually proven correct.

On April 30, 1975, the day the communists proudly called the “Great Spring Victory,” the day from which they said not a single enemy will be found in Vietnam, the Chinese flag was flying high on our island of Hoàng Sa (Paracel Islands). By contrast in 1974, when the Americans were no longer involved in the Vietnam War, the South Vietnamese

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

Navy Captain Nguyễn Văn Tha fought to protect this beloved island from the Chinese invasion. Unsuccessful in his mission, he died with his ship. Recently China had an administrative map of the province of Tây Sa drawn, which included our Hoàng Sa island.

It is obvious that the Vietnamese communists did not dare to fight against their “big brother” China. The two countries fought side by side to spread their communist ideology all over the world: this was a war of ideology.

It was an invasion as well. After the Geneva Accords in 1954 Vietnam was divided into two territories. If one side conquered the other, it meant an invasion. North Vietnam used to say that South Vietnam was but a “puppet” government of the USA and it must fight them both to “free” the people of South Vietnam and unify the country. But let us listen to a famous professor and historian of theirs, Mr. Trần Quốc Vượng.

“We must not call them ‘puppet.’ The Republic of Vietnam has been recognized many countries in the world. And the most tragic thing was there was not reconciliation after 1975. This was proved by hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese fleeing the country, many of them lay dead in the sea. Compared with people dying on the Trường Sơn road during war time, the death of these people was both fearful and sublime. Why? Because they fled in search of Freedom.”

According to the book Nhân Vật Lịch Sử (Prominent Figures in History) written and published by the communist side in 1977, there was a time when Vietnam was divided into two countries: the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (communist) and the Republic of Vietnam (non-communist). The communists themselves recognized the existence of two Vietnams.

We can clearly see that we lost the war on April 30, 1975 to the North Communists because their allies provided them with plenty of arms and ammunitions while our ally abandoned us mid-way in our mutual mission, safely withdrawing from Vietnam by means of the Paris Accords in 1973. Unable to defend the country from invasion, a number of high ranking military officers chose to end their lives instead of getting caught by the enemy. There were Generals Hưng, Hải, Vỹ, Phú and Nguyễn Khoa Nam, heroes in our history.

Let me say a few words about General Nguyễn Khoa Nam. He was born to the Nguyễn Khoa family. His mother was a descendant of Emperor Minh Mạng. He was a talented army officer, a Buddhist and a person gifted in music and painting. It was from both his father’s and mother’s side that he inherited these qualities. His friends and some journalists spoke highly of him.

I was from the same hometown of General Nam, the Vỹ Đa village, where many of his blood relatives lived. I attended the same school he did, Khải Định secondary school, although four years his junior. We did not see each other for many decades. Then in November 1974, he was appointed Commander in Chief of the Fourth Military Zone and Fourth Army Corps, with headquarters in the city of Cần Thơ. I was then the medical doctor in charge of Phan Thanh Giản Military Hospital in the same city. I was happy to work under someone I already knew. I thought

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

of paying him a visit but many events occurred before I could afford to go and see him: the fall of Ban Mê Thuột and of the First Military Zone to the enemy and the chaotic withdrawal of the Second Military Zone divisions. The war was spreading to the Third Military Region.

General Nam was angry with the decision to withdraw. Answering the French journalist Pierre Darcourt, he said, "Everybody is angry. The military is being humiliated." On April 28, 1975, when he met with General Pazzi in the French diplomatic corps in Cần Thơ, he said, "Please be my witness. Our Fourth Army Corps does not lose the war. It's the Saigon government that ties our hands and forces us to lose."

The military situation changed fast. Confused, I came to General Nam for advice.

"What does the Medical Corps need?" he asked.

"My General," I said, "The situation is getting worse and worse. Do you have any plan for the Fourth Army Corps?"

"Don't worry," he calmly replied. "I just met with a delegation coming from the French Embassy. There will be a diplomatic solution. Our Fourth Military Zone will not be invaded. Our army is still fit for war."

I was about to leave when he added:

"If we have to fight, what is the position of the Medical Corps?"

"At your service, my General," I answered.

"What does the Medical Corps need?"

"Our hospital cannot withstand the enemy's 122 mm mortar. We need a strong shelter to use as an operating room and a generator, just in case."

"I'll have it built immediately," he said.

The shelter was almost finished when South Vietnam fell to the communists.

In the morning of April 30, 1975, the last conference was held in the meeting room of General Nam's headquarters where the chiefs of all offices in Cần Thơ, military and civilian alike, listened to General Nam's orders. Vice-Commander Lê Văn Hưng was also present. During the meeting, General Dương Văn Minh's voice in Saigon was heard from loudspeakers ordering everybody to put down their arms. General Nam had no choice but to obey his superior—the last President of South Vietnam.

Colonel Nguyễn Đình Vinh said, "Our military career ends this very moment. Let's respectfully salute our Commander in Chief and Vice Commander." Solemnly, we saluted them. The meeting was over. Everything was over. A strong army was dissolved.

With a heavy heart, I returned to my hospital, one of the few places that were still functioning. The sick and wounded kept arriving. I thought to myself, "To tomorrow, we will no longer have freedom. What kind of treatment

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

the conquerors have for the defeated? As for those generals who do not leave the country, what will their fates be?" Along with my thoughts came my dripping tears.

The communists still did not make their appearance for the whole day of April 30. The city of Cần Thơ was unusually quiet. About 0530, General Nguyễn Khoa Nam's staff announced his visit to Phan Thanh Giản Hospital.

He wore his usual uniform with two black stars.

"You are still here?" he said.

"Yes, my General. Just like you."

"Let me visit the sick and wounded," he said.

He and I sadly walked side by side. The hospital looked deserted with only 200 patients scattered in all the wards. Many of them had left. General Nam visited everybody. He pensively stopped at the ward reserved for the wounded communist soldiers.

When he took leave, I silently prayed for his safety. What would become of him if he met communist soldiers on the way back to his residence?

That night was not as quiet as during the day. Infuriated soldiers and officers who still had weapons in their possessions fired continuously in the air as if to get all their anger and hatred off their chests. Some people thought Generals Nam and Hưng were fighting against the Việt Cộng.

The gunshots stopped at last. The quiet night seemed endless. At about 2300 hours, General Hưng shot himself in his office. His family was present in the house. His widow announced the news to General Nam.

Early the next morning, from General Nam's official residence came a telephone call to Phan Thanh Giản Hospital advising that General Nam had committed suicide with a Browning revolver.

I was saddened by the bad news although I had more or less foreseen it. We arranged to bring him to the hospital for the last formalities and funeral. This time, all the hospital employed greeted the General with deep emotions.

Dr. Trần Quốc Đống, on duty that day (he is now in Australia) examined the body and had a death certificate issued. We then proceeded for the funeral. Among his personal objects, we found:

- a small Buddhist sutra book wrapped in a plastic bag,
- a 7.2 mm Browning revolver,
- and a metallic identity card.

We placed them in the coffin to help identify the body if needed.

The deaths of Generals Nam and Hưng moved everyone in the city of Cần Thơ, not just their soldiers the staff of Phan Thanh Giản Hospital. The Cần Thơ chapter of the Red Cross gave two best quality coffins for General Nam and Dr. Phạm Hữu Tú, captain MD serving at the Fourth Army Corps, shot by the Việt Cộng on the night of April 30, 1975.

Continue on next page

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

General Nam's body was placed on a stretcher covered with a white sheet. He looked like he was sleeping calmly, his sweet face turning pale, his limbs not yet stiff. By his side was Dr. Tú's body.

A decent altar was temporarily set up for them with candles and fragrant incense. All the hospital staff formally saluted the heroes who passed away at the 25th hour of the war.

Then the coffins were closed. The officers, myself included, carried them to a civil vehicle heading for the Cần Thơ Military Cemetery. Major and pharmacist Mai Bá Vỹ supervised the whole funeral rituals. Half of the hospital squad was assigned to dig the graves.

We were fortunate to complete the ceremony before the people of the new regime took over the hospital.

I would like to point out some characteristics about General Nam's death.

1. First, there was a coincidence between General Nam and the patriot Phan Thanh Giản who 108 years earlier in 1967 was Viceroy of what was the Fourth Military Zone in 1975. Both of them served in the same area; both of them committed suicide when they could no longer defend their country; and General Nam's funeral was held in a hospital named Phan Thanh Giản.

There was a difference though. Emperor Tự Đức and the cabinet were so angry at Mr. Phan Thanh Giản's failure that they got his name removed from the stele honoring highly educated scholars. On the contrary, General Nam wanted to fight the enemy but his superior—the president and commander in chief—tied his hands.

2. In death, General Nam continued to frighten his enemies. They thought he had not died yet and that the corpse was someone else's. They even considered digging the grave to find the truth. As for the people of Cần Thơ, they thought and hoped that the general had gone into hiding waiting for the right moment to liberate the people from the communists.

3. In the afternoon of April 30, 1975, as a commander in chief, General Nam visited the sick and wounded soldiers at Phan Thanh Giản Hospital; the following morning as a war dead, he was brought to the same hospital for his funeral. The day before, alive, he visited the patients. The next day, deceased, he visited the dead at the Cần Thơ Military Cemetery. He stayed there with them for nearly ten years before being exhumed.

4. The last moments of Generals Hưng, Hải, Vỹ, Phú who also committed suicide on April 30th or shortly after, were spent with their families and their funerals were taken care of by loved ones in a cozy atmosphere. As for General Nguyễn Khoa Nam, a bachelor who considered the army as his extended family, the Fourth Army Corps became his family. He was buried with respect and love by those who had fought side to side with him and by other army officers and soldiers.

Continue on next page

Gen. Nguyen Khoa Nam ...

5. There are a few interesting details around General Nam's exhumation. In February 1984, Mrs. Kim Đính, sister-in-law and former Senator Nguyễn Khoa Phước's wife went to Cần Thơ to have his remains cremated and his ashes brought to Saigon. His personal belongings that the hospital staff had placed in his coffin were still there. Only, the Browning revolver had become rusty.

On her way to Saigon at one of the ferries, Mrs. Kim Đính silently prayed then spread part of the ashes into the Hậu Giang River, a symbolic act meaning that part of him would rest in the territory where he last worked. The other part of the ashes was brought to Gia Lâm Temple in Saigon.

General Nam has become one of the heroes in our history praised by many poets and writers. As poetry is the most sincere form to express one's feeling, I would like to quote the following poem by a military medical doctor, Dr. Hà Thúc Như Hy as a eulogy for the hero Nguyễn Khoa Nam.

Một mai sau

Và mãi mãi muôn đời,

Nguyễn Khoa Nam

Tên người còn nhắc nhở

Người anh hùng vị quốc vong thân

Sinh vị tướng, tử vị thần.

Một cái chết muôn ngàn lần sống

Một cái chết cuối đầu giặc cộng

Để miền nam kêu hành ngàn mặt lên

Cho Hương Giang rửa sạch ưu phiền

Và Tiền Giang triền miên ưu tiếc.

Some day

And ever after

General Nguyen Khoa Nam

Your name will eternally be treasured

Deified in death, warrior in life,

For the sake of the country, you gave your life.

Your death is worth a thousand of lives,

A death that makes the enemy stoop

And southern people proud

The Hương Giang cleanses all sorrows

And your memories the Tiền Giang forever cherishes.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last word to say is my apology for using too much of your time. But please do understand that a historical event occurred but once and the person who is telling it has one life to live. I am a former military officer approaching my eighties now and would like to tell the truth about what I know of that period of time in 1975 and to express my respect and gratitude to the heroes in our history.

Speech delivered on the 33rd anniversary of the death of General Nguyễn Khoa Nam in Houston, TX on 4 May, 2008.

Forty-two Years Ago, “It Seems Like Peace”

Nguyen Ngoc Bich

On January 27 forty-two years ago, U.S. Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Hanoi’s Foreign Minister Nguyen Duy Trinh put their signatures on the “Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam.” Next to Secretary Rogers’ signature is the signature of the Republic of Vietnam Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Tran Van Lam, and next to Nguyen Duy Trinh’s signature is the signature of Madame Binh, the Foreign Minister of the so-called “Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam.”

What is odd about this document is that neither of the two main negotiators of the Paris “Peace” Accord, namely U.S. National Security Advisor, Dr. Henry Kissinger, and Hanoi’s “Advisor,” Mr. Le Duc Tho, had his name appear anywhere in the document. Despite this, they went on being the recipients of that year’s Nobel Peace Prize (1973), which Le Duc Tho at least had the decency not to accept.

In retrospect, all of us must no doubt admit to the fact that the whole process of negotiation which lasted nearly five years (May 1968 to March 1973) and its product, the so-called Paris “Peace” Agreement, were no more than spectacular bluffs set up to throw the wool over people’s eyes, not excluding the then UN Secretary General, Kurt Waldheim, and the Swedish Nobel Peace Prize Committee. Either that, or if they were in the know, then they were part of a contemptible cabal.

In these circumstances, one may be pardoned for cussing at all the great powers at the time, and the more powerful the nation the more it was to be blamed. Take the U.S., for instance, when it took upon itself to overthrow President Diem it had to assume the main burden of thwarting the Communist aggression in South Vietnam. When it decided to send massive troops to Vietnam (in March 1965), it didn’t bother to ask for the permission of the southern administration (then headed by Premier Phan Huy Quat), and when it decided to leave Vietnam it did its best to twist the arms of President Thieu and force him to accept an arrangement wholly unfavorable to the South (as it allowed for the North Vietnamese, called PAVN, troops to stay south of the 17th Parallel).

Admittedly, President Thieu did not blindly sign on to the agreement. Before he reluctantly agreed to the RVN signing onto the accord, he fought tooth-and-nail to get the U.S. to promise “one-on-one” replacement of depleted war material and ammunition and managed to get written commitments from President Nixon to react vigorously to any Hanoi violation of the agreement. In the end, however, neither Nixon nor the U.S. Congress could honor their words—which prompted a famous composer (an artist, he is usually more clairvoyant about these things) to write: “It only seems that we are having peace”! What a perfect hit!

However

However, when we speak about the damage done to the Vietnamese people (the people bearing the brunt were the South Vietnamese but we should not forget either about the North Vietnamese who, as expressed by the poet Nguyen Chi Thien on their behalf, had been waiting for many, many years for true liberation by the South Vietnamese: “O South Vietnam, ever since the day of your destruction / I have lived a thousand, ten thousand agonies.” We should not forget, though, that even a great power like the U.S. had its own limitations and commitments. For instance, do we, even now, know what was the part played by Israel in the loss of South Vietnam? If only we could put ourselves in the shoes of the Americans who had to face at least two fronts, the Soviet Union and Red China, with feet caught in the Vietnam quagmire!

We must take this larger view in order to see why Nixon had taken the road he pursued at the time. In facing two formidable enemies, he had chosen to go with Beijing in order to confront the Soviet Union—not unlike the choice made by Winston Churchill and F.D.R. during the Second World War to go with the Communist Stalin to fight the Fascist Hitler, to choose what is the lesser of the two evils, despite the fact that earlier Stalin had made a secret pact with Hitler (the August 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact).

Continue on next page

Forty-two Years Ago....

But in order to go with China, Nixon had to let go of something. And that something was the hint intimated by Kissinger when he met with Zhou En-lai when the two met in 1972: Kissinger told Zhou that if the U.S. cannot and would not remove an ally in South Vietnam it could still live with a communist regime in Vietnam if it resulted from the normal evolution of things. One can imagine that Zhou immediately flew to Hanoi after that encounter to let Hanoi know the one information that it needed to launch everything it had into an attack known as the Easter Offensive of March 30, 1972. With this offensive Hanoi has thought that it could secure a victory as decisive as Dien Bien Phu, which earlier had concluded the anti-French war.

Little did Hanoi expect that with all U.S. ground troops having been removed from the South, the ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) was still strong enough to repel the communist attacks against Kontum and especially An Loc (later dubbed the Stalingrad of the Vietnam War) and eventually to retake the Quang Tri Citadel in September of that year (after killing off one PAVN company per night for nearly two months). These resounding victories, on top of the U.S. mining of harbors and waterways in North Vietnam and especially the Christmas bombing of Hanoi, forced Le Duc Tho to go back to the negotiation table.

Instead of exploiting this upperhand situation, the U.S. chose to keep its word to Beijing to concentrate on bringing down the Soviet Union, an objective in which it eventually succeeded when Eastern Europe collapsed in 1989, to be followed by the collapse of Communism in its very cradle, the Soviet Union.

The ARVN victories of 1972, glorious and costly as they were, in the end only bought the Republic three more years of freedom. It finally fell into the hands of the communist North in April 1975 after the Soviet Union and China competed in showering Hanoi with so much military hardware that it could simply overwhelm the underarmed South Vietnamese, this time abandoned by the U.S. (most especially the U.S. Congress).

Conclusion

What can we then say about the lesson of the Paris "Peace" Accord of 1973?

Not a few Vietnamese, in fact probably the majority, blame it all on the United States. This is hardly fair since no matter what one thinks, the U.S. has incurred 58,000 fatalities, not to count hundreds of thousands of wounded and some 4.5 million men-in-arms who have served in Vietnam. What other country has sacrificed so many of its beloved sons (and daughters) for another country?

One of the most telling lessons of Vietnam is probably that the U.S. is a young nation and that the American people, with their youth and pragmatism, do not have a great deal of patience. When they came to Vietnam they came en masse and were truly gungho but failing to get immediate results, they soon tired out and wanted to turn their attention elsewhere. Besides, there were also other priorities that they could not foresee when they went in, such as the OPEC-inspired crisis in gasoline at the end of 1973 which caused the unimaginable—long queues for gas even in the most powerful nation on earth.

Also, who could imagine that in a little more than one year after Paris President Nixon would have to resign because of Watergate. With him out the White House, it becomes a given that his successor, President Gerald Ford, could not, with a belligerent and hostile Congress, continue with his policy even if it were a good one. Dr. Kissinger, to exculpate himself, has made Watergate the scapegoat for the U.S. final defeat in Vietnam.

In the end, the political leaders of South Vietnam should also take their part of blame in the whole fiasco. For no matter how brave, even heroic, the ARVN was ("brave in defeat" is how Rear Admiral Ho Van Ky Thoi described the Vietnamese navy in the Paracel islands battle against the Chinese in January 1974, or as demonstrated in George J. Veith's book *Black April*, which came out last year), the political leaders of South Vietnam should have internalized this fundamental truth—that the fate of one's nation, even in a highly interdependent world, cannot simply be trusted into the hands of another nation even if it were one's closest ally. With a nation in glory or in crisis, the common man has its share of responsibility, says an old adage, let alone the very top leaders of the nation!

Protesters Target Riverside for Partnering with City in CanTho

Anh Do. LA Times, Jan 28, 2015

<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-riverside-vietnam-protest-20150128-story.html>

<http://news.yahoo.com/video/vietnam-war-veterans-protest-riverside-004340819.html>

Days after signing an agreement to forge a relationship with a city in Vietnam, elected leaders in Riverside are bracing for hundreds of Vietnamese American protesters who have vowed to gather outside City Hall and demand that officials rescind their pact with the communist country.

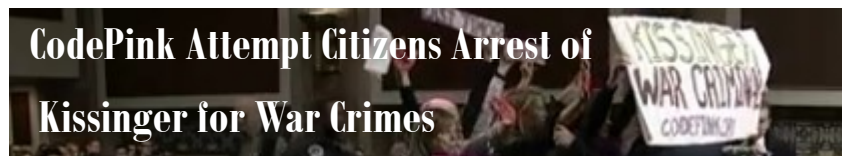
Organizers from Little Saigon, an immigrant community where deep animosity remains toward the communist government that controls their homeland, have rented a fleet of buses and said that hundreds of protesters will begin assembling outside the Riverside Civic Center on Thursday.

The group successfully persuaded Irvine to sever a similar relationship with a small coastal city in Vietnam last year.

The Riverside City Council voted in favor of entering a sister city relationship with Can Tho in March, yet activists weren't alerted until officials from the picturesque city in the Mekong Delta flew to California to formalize the partnership this month. Photos of the celebration appeared in local newspapers.

"It doesn't matter that the contract has been signed," said Dr. Huu Dinh Vo, board president of the Federation of Vietnamese Communities of the USA. "If we don't speak up, they will keep celebrating. We care about a country whose people are still suffering -- and we want them to reconsider their agreement."

CodePink Attempt Citizens Arrest of Kissinger for War Crimes



Washington, DC — On Thursday, January 29, CODEPINK protesters spoke out during Senate Armed Services Committee hearing attempting to perform a citizens' arrest on Henry Kissinger. Holding handcuffs and large signs that read: KISSINGER: WAR CRIMINAL and ARREST KISSINGER FOR WAR CRIMES, activists read aloud a citizens' arrest [pasted below]. In response, Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Chairman of the Committee, called the human rights activists "lowlife scum" and said it was "the most disgraceful and despicable demonstration he had ever seen."

Washington, DC — On Thursday, January 29, CODEPINK protesters spoke out during Senate Armed Services Committee hearing attempting to perform a citizens' arrest on Henry Kissinger. Holding handcuffs and large signs that read: KISSINGER: WAR CRIMINAL and ARREST KISSINGER FOR WAR CRIMES, activists read aloud a citizens' arrest [pasted below]. In response, Senator John McCain (R-AZ), Chairman of the Committee, called the human rights activists "lowlife scum" and said it was "the most disgraceful and despicable demonstration he had ever seen."

http://www.codepink.org/attempting_citizens_arrest_of_henry_kissinger_for_war_crimes

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ApY-P6oAxU>

Vietnamese Bloggers Assaulted for Visiting Fellow Activist

http://www.ifex.org/vietnam/2015/01/28/plainclothes_agents/

Human Rights Watch said [on January 25]. In January 2015, leading bloggers were targeted by plainclothes agents and beaten. Human Rights Watch said the attacks violated basic rights and that all involved in the assaults against bloggers and rights activists should be held accountable for their acts of violence, intimidation, and harassment.

18 Vietnamese Montagnards Cross Into Cambodia

communist-controlled Viet Nam ranks between 15th or 20th of countries oppressing religion. Recently an evangelical clergyman was assaulted and severely beaten on Saigon street, in broad daylight. This is simply another chapter in 40 years of police-state oppression and persecution. U.S. might....maybe....issue statements "expressing deep concern" over this issue. Wow. The U.S. tax-payer funded Commission on International Freedom has repeatedly recommended Hanoi be sanctioned; U.S. government has done n-o-t-h-i-n-g beyond "expressing concern."

<https://au.news.yahoo.com/world/a/26144476/18-more-vietnamese-montagnards-cross-into-cambodian-jungle-activist/>

This matter brought to attention of U.N. Unlikely anything will be done. According to various sources,



Vietnam's Concerted Effort to Keep Control of Its Past: *Thomas Bass*

http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/vietnams-concerted-effort-to-keep-control-of-its-communist-history/2015/02/01/3b4ebdf4-a8c6-11e4-a2b2-776095f393b2_story.html

Five years ago I began an experiment — not of my own devising — to study censorship in Vietnam. In 2009, I signed a contract to publish one of my books in Hanoi. Called “[The Spy Who Loved Us](#),” the book tells the story of Pham Xuan An, Vietnam’s most celebrated journalist during the Vietnam War.

Known events were excised from Vietnamese history: the Gold Campaign of 1946, when Ho Chi Minh paid a large bribe to the Chinese to get them to retreat from north Vietnam; the failed land reform campaigns of the 1950s; the exodus of the “boat people” after 1975; the 1978 war in Cambodia; the 1979 border war against China. The nam tien, the historic southward march of the Viets, in which they worked their way down the An-namite Cordillera, occupying territory formerly held by Montagnards, Chams, Khmers and other “minority peoples,” was cut. An’s last wishes, that he be cremated and his ashes scattered in the Dong Nai River, disappeared. They were replaced by a scene describing his state funeral, with the eulogy delivered by the head of military intelligence.

The Fun Had Ended: *Del Vecchio*

I am sorry to make this report.

As you all know, my main purpose here was to see as many old, crippled vets as possible, to bring them

some money and greetings from those who still remember and care about them. I saw several different groups in Saigon, then came to Hue to see more. What I did not know was that the provincial police chief had been waiting for three years for me to come here again. He has looked at our charity's website, hates it, does not want these poor old men to get help. And we were staked out from the second we arrived, and after having a lunch meeting with ten of the old cripples yesterday, it turns out we were barely back at our hotel before the police got them all and brought them in for questioning and general harassment.

My friend and I were notified this morning early that we were due at the police station at 8AM. No sooner had we walked out of the hotel than we were picked up by two men waiting in the shadows, followed to the station, and directed up some stairs to an interview room.

To make a long and abrasive story short, the police chief told me about waiting three years to see me. His rationale for calling us in is that we violated VN law, by coming here on tourist visas while intending to do any charity work. He more or less made up the rule that unless you are a fully registered charity with the VN government and work through them, you cannot come here and give anyone money. And that all charities have to be nonprofit, nonpolitical, and nonreligious in their work. Since we target the old ARVN, he says that makes us political. When he pressed me, I explained carefully that I give money to orphanages and the poor in churches and on the street, and in the past gave money to a former VC officer to help all the crippled in her village. And that I do not see the old vets as a political thing, but only as the poorest of the poor with no government support, and especially needy. He of course waved all that away.

It was an hour long harangue, complete with descriptions of how everyone else who does anything here goes through the government, and that then everything is fine. He is great friends with two different US vet groups who have been coming here for years. Of course they bring people and spend money, some of which ends up with the right people, so that works out just fine. There was a lot of repetition, and my VN friend engaged in long exchanges, some of which ended up with the cop showing a bit of anger, after which

Continue on next page

The Fun Had Ended ...

my friend would back off with some kind of apologetic restatement. They wanted me to sign a document in VN about the interview, I explained politely I could not sign anything I cannot read, and they let it

drop.

We go back to Da Nang this afternoon. I can never return again, to do so would only jeopardize the very people we want to help.

And lest anyone misunderstand, this is the classic communist control system. That the country really runs on state-controlled capitalism and does not supply any of the social services free that Marx called for does not matter, economic communism died a long time ago. This is government by a Mafia whose bunch of capos are in the politburo in Hanoi. They maintain extensive and intrusive controls of everything, but that's not always visible to the casual tourist. And they will exercise their total power any time and any way they wish, although they will always supply some kind of rationale for it, as they did today. This is what happens when the State is everything, has everything, controls everything. Some say those of us who worry about freedom are silly to do so. The lesson here is that it is never silly to worry about freedom, for yourself, and all you love and who come after you.

I am sorry to write this, my heart is heavy now. I will never see any of these vets again, yet it meant so much to them.

Cats Buried Alive in Vietnam

Vietnamese authorities have buried thousands of seized cats -- many believed to have been alive at the time -- after the felines were smuggled from China to feed the nation's illegal cat meat trade.

A truck containing three tons of live cats crammed into bamboo crates was impounded last Tuesday in the Vietnamese capital Hanoi, with police initially undecided how to deal with the animals.

But on Wednesday a police officer told AFP they had been buried in accordance with Vietnamese law on smuggled goods.

<http://news.yahoo.com/thousands-seized-cats-feared-buried-alive-vietnam-072651776.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/04/smuggled-cats-buried-alive-vietnam>



Tet 2015 in Vietnam

*While party members wine and dine,
the people especially the young ones, starve.*

