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- **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-American Culture**

**NEWSLETTER # 88**

**FEBRUARY 2016**

## **Happy and Prosperous New Year 2016: Year of the Monkey**



### **Families Who were Allied with US Barred from Communist Party**

*John Boudreau, K Oanh Ha*

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2015-12-23/vietnam-s-divide-slow-healing-fewer-prospects-for-children-of-u-s-allies?cmpid=yahoo.headline>

As a graduate from one of Vietnam's most prestigious schools, 22-year-old Cao would seem to have a bright future ahead of him — if only the past would get out of the way. He's found his career prospects hemmed in by the lingering legacy of a war that ended nearly two decades before he was born. Two of his uncles served in the defeated South Vietnam military that was allied with the United States during what's known locally as the "anti-American war." After the country was unified under the Communist Party of Vietnam, his mother was denied admission to a university because of her brothers' ties to the southern regime. Even as Vietnam relaxes old regulations that punished those associated with the former Republic of Vietnam, many in the south believe the system still favors those with Communist ties.

Cao didn't even bother applying to Vietnam's state-controlled companies that offer employment security, bonus payments and increased job opportunities for family members. "To be able to get jobs in the state system, one must have parents or relatives working there, so those are not accessible for normal people like us," said Cao, a graduate of the Ho Chi Minh City Foreign Trade University. After the war, trusted Communist Party members and their families were awarded with top posts, while Vietnamese who were allied with the U.S. were punished and their children denied opportunities. Many northerners were sent to the conquered south. Today, those policies have contributed to an enduring system that still appears to tilt toward northerners and Communist Party members:

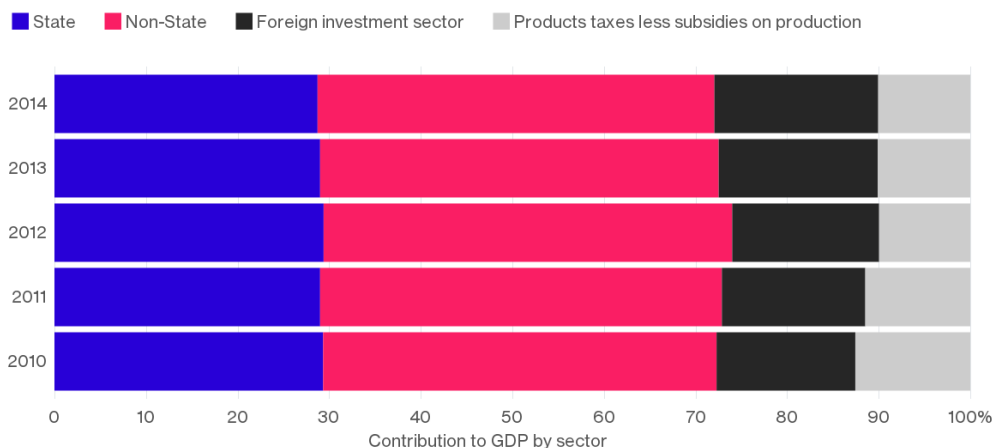
- Twenty-two of Vietnam's 25 largest state-owned enterprises are based in Hanoi, the nation's capital.

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- The Communist Party prohibits membership if one's parents (or those of a spouse) worked in the government or "armed forces of the enemy."
- Two-thirds of Vietnam's roughly 3 million Communist Party members resided in the country's northern provinces from Quang Tri and above as of 2010, according to Carlyle Thayer, an emeritus professor and Vietnam expert at the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra. The north accounts for 46 percent of the nation's 87 million people.
- Some 70 percent of the current government's cabinet are northerners, compared to 30 percent who are from southern and central provinces.
- Vietnam's Communist Party, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Public Security did not respond to questions on reconciliation before publication.
- In an April 30 Ho Chi Minh City speech marking the 40th anniversary of national reunification, Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung called on Vietnamese in the homeland and abroad to "uphold nationalism, patriotism, humanitarian tradition, tolerance, not discriminating the past, rising above differences, for sincere national reconciliation."

### Uneven Playing Field

Vietnam's state companies contribute a third to GDP but take up 50% of public investment



Source: General Statistics Office

Bloomberg

"It's discriminatory to have regulation that bans party membership for people whose parents or parents-in-law worked for the old regime," said Vu Tien, who attends university in Ho Chi Minh City and asked not to use his full name. His father served in the South Vietnam military, and he's decided to emigrate to a western country because he sees better economic prospects for himself overseas. "It's nonsense and an unfair policy, since the war ended 40 years ago."

In many ways, enmity has softened over the decades between the once bitter enemies, and regional attitudes also contribute to the political and economic imbalance. The daughter of Dung, a southerner who was wounded as a Viet Cong medic during the war, is married to Vietnamese-American Henry Nguyen, whose father worked for the South Vietnam government. Vietnamese with ties to the old regime can now gain some positions in government and state-owned enterprises, though they likely can't hold top positions, said Duc and other researchers.

The split in party membership between the north and south is tied to the legacy of the war — most of the communist revolutionaries were from the north — and an indifference among southerners about the party, Thayer said. "This is pretty stark," he said. "Joining the party is not necessary for their careers. 'I couldn't be a public security man, so what?' The north won the war and the south won the economy."

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Many young graduates, particularly those in the south, prefer to work for foreign companies such as Intel Corp. and Samsung Electronics Co. Vietnam's bustling economy — which the government predicts will expand 6.7 percent next year, the fastest pace in nine years — offers many career opportunities outside the state sector. Many young professionals in the south also say they have no interest in joining the Communist Party.

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam's financial hub and home to Vietnamese with ties to the old southern regime, generates almost a quarter of the country's gross domestic product. Hanoi, in contrast, contributes 10 percent of GDP.

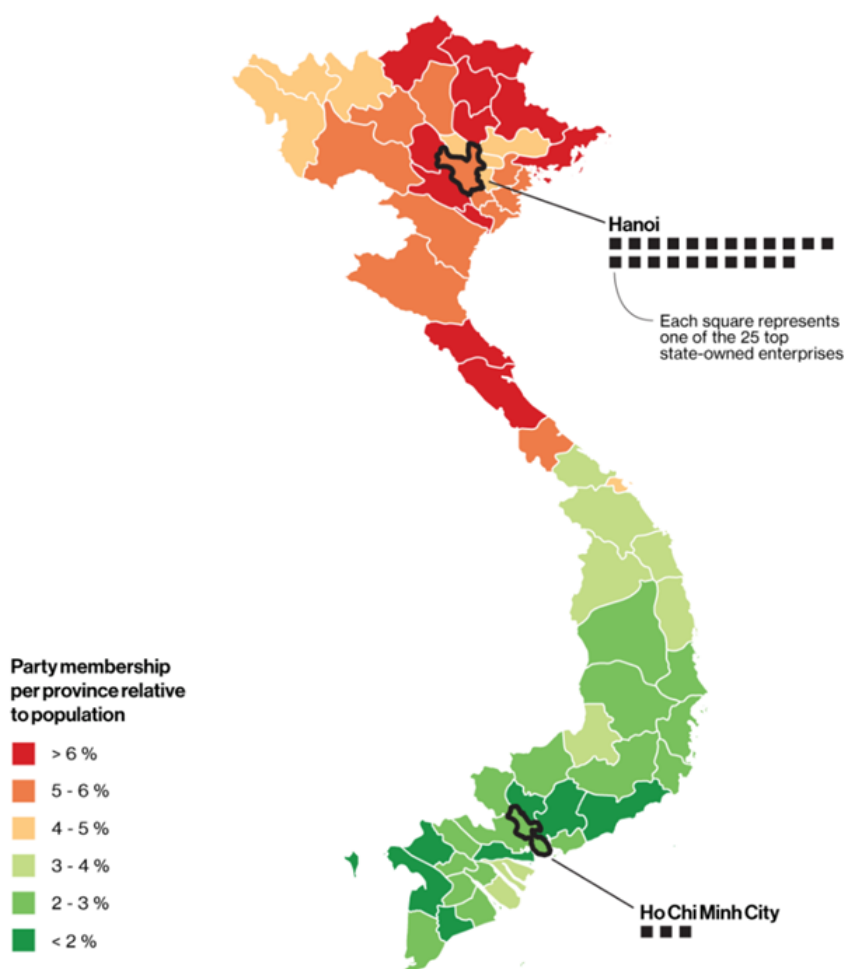
Advantages for the victors of the war, though, continue to alter the economic landscape, from the hiring of key government

officials who shape fiscal policy to the preponderance of state-owned companies based in the north that receive preferential access to capital from government-aligned banks. State-owned companies use about 50 percent of Vietnam's public investment and tap 60 percent of the country's bank loans, while contributing to just a third of GDP, according to government data.

The prevailing sentiment toward those who were defeated is illustrated by a dilapidated cemetery near Ho Chi Minh City for thousands of South Vietnam troops. Some of the graves are nothing more than mounds of dirt and others lack tombstones. Security guards use the cemetery to raise chickens. Across a nearby highway, the graves of veterans who fought on the side of the Communists are carefully tended to and are surrounded with flower beds in the "martyr's cemetery." The reconciliation of old wounds would give the economy a further boost, said Tuong Lai, a sociology professor and Communist Party member, who served as an advisor to the late prime minister Vo Van Kiet. The former premier oversaw the economic reforms in the 1990s, resumption of diplomatic rela-

### Membership in Vietnam's Communist Party is heavily skewed to the north

Almost 70% of Communist party members live in the north, though those provinces are home to less than half of the country's 87 million population. Northern provinces also have higher percentages of party membership relative to their population. The nation's resources are also heavily leveraged in the north -- 22 of the 25 largest state-owned companies are based in the capital city of Hanoi.



Sources: Carlyle Thayer's compilation of 2010 provincial data on party membership, Vietnam government website

Bloomberg Graphics

tions with the U.S. and called for national reconciliation in a 2005 newspaper interview.

"To integrate with the world, Vietnamese authorities first need to reconcile and become friends with its people whom they consider foes," Lai said. "If we fail to have a true reconciliation within the nation, how can we do that with the world?"



## *The Bien Hoa Cemetery*

Forty years after the war, the Hanoi communist government continues to desecrate the South Vietnamese Bien Hoa cemetery and let rooster walk across the dilapidated cemetery.



Roosters walk across a dilapidated cemetery for thousands of South Vietnam troops near Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



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EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
Hanoi, Vietnam

October 27, 2015

AMBASSADOR

Dear Chairman Royce and Representative Lowenthal:

I recently paid a visit to the historic Bien Hoa cemetery, now known officially as Binh An People's Cemetery, to gauge conditions at this important site and pay my respects to the thousands of ARVN soldiers buried there. (Please see photo, below.) I know how important it is to so many people in your districts to participate in the cemetery's renovation and upkeep, so I wanted to take this opportunity to provide an update on our efforts to move this process forward.

Let me first affirm that we understand how significant this issue is. The United States will always remember the sacrifice made by these soldiers. And for the families and friends of those buried there, as well as representative groups such as the Vietnamese American Foundation, the ability to participate in renovating Bien Hoa is particularly meaningful. Gaining written permission to access and improve conditions at the cemetery would help them close a difficult chapter of their lives and remove a symbolic but very real barrier to reconciliation. On the bilateral level, this issue resonates because it is emblematic of our efforts to honor the past even as we look to a stronger partnership with Vietnam in the future.

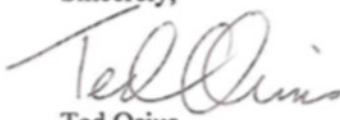
This has not been an easy problem to solve, but I believe we are getting there. Rena Bitter, our Consul General in Ho Chi Minh City, has met several times with the Binh Duong People's Committee, as did her predecessor, to discuss operational issues, and with good results. The cemetery continues to be reserved exclusively for ARVN soldiers, and graves are exhumed only at the request of the families of the deceased, as Representative Lowenthal saw in his April visit. And as I observed during my October 16 visit, a sizeable staff maintains the grounds, including the memorial to the fallen. Vietnamese officials at all levels understand our interest in this site and the fact that it is of great significance to many Americans.

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Still, the conditions of individual graves vary widely, and more can be done to renovate the grounds. We have advocated for written permission for a representative group, such as the Vietnamese American Foundation, to have regular access to help upgrade the grounds and fix the many gravesites that are falling into disrepair. Consul General Bitter has sent a diplomatic note to the Binh Duong Provincial People's Committee emphasizing the importance of this request, and the People's Committee has agreed to meet with her in November to discuss it further. I also met with the Party Secretary of Ho Chi Minh City, Mr. Le Thanh Hai, who agreed to communicate to his colleagues in Binh Duong that progress on this issue would improve relations.

In sum, we are moving forward. I hope this information is useful, and I want to thank you for your longstanding commitment to promoting a resolution to this matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if we can be of further assistance, and we will keep your offices apprised as we make progress.

Sincerely,



Ted Osius

The Honorable  
Edward R. Royce, Chairman,  
Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
House of Representatives.

The Honorable  
Alan Lowenthal,  
Committee on Foreign Affairs,  
House of Representatives.



## The Montagnards

Mike Bengé

**Reader's Note:** The following letter is written in response to Van Nguyen Duong's critique in SACEI Newsletter 85 of Dr. Geoffrey Shaw's article *Nguyen Cao Ky & Vietnam 1965*. Although Mr. Duong claims that Shaw's article "is full of errors," in turn, so is Duong's critique. While Duong states "I do not know whether Dr. Shaw knew enough about the long story of the FULRO..." Duong's critique makes me wonder whether he knew enough about FULRO either.

Before commenting on Duong's critique, I would first like answer a question posed by Dr. Shaw in his article: "... what did Cao Ky do to so alienate and annoy these mountain folks who had come to view the GVN with considerable more tolerance than they had previously?" Here are some "Ky" facts well known by the Montagnards:

1. Late in 1961, a Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) flight led by Nguyen Cao Ky napalmed the Mhong Rlam villages of Buôn Plum, Buôn Krong and Buôn Jar in Lạc Thiện District, Đắk Lắk Province. The bombing was based on months-old intelligence that a VC propaganda team had visited these villages. Most of their long-houses, belongings, rice stores and seed for the next season's crops were destroyed, and some 75 people were instantly killed. Many more were severely wounded with horrific burns, and later died after receiving no medical treatment. Although the villagers were promised food, rice seed, medical assistance and materials to rebuild their homes and livelihoods, they received no relief for over a year-and-a-half; thus many more died of malnutrition as a result.
2. Nguyen Cao Ky paid spies to infiltrate and create dissidence among the FULRO; after gaining the confidence of the leader of FULRO, Y-Bham, Y-Sen Nie Kdam and Y-Ngo Buon Ya began badmouthing Y-Dhon Adrong, Y-Bham's deputy, claiming that the FULRO violence was due to Y-Dhon, resulting in the latter's execution sometime later. Another spy, Y-Kdruin Mlo – aka Philippe and "Cowboy" – was reportedly promised riches beyond his dreams and a position in the government to lord it over the Montagnards, if he assassinated Y-Bham. Soon after, Y-Druin was charged by FULRO as being "*un garçon mal élevé de son bas âge*" and with "crimes of treachery and thievery" and was executed.
3. When Nguyen Cao Ky became Prime Minister, he terminated proposed development programs promised by General Khanh, including development programs, the restoration of "the right" to join the ARVN, and the restoration of land rights to minority populations. Rampant grabbing of traditional Montagnard lands by Vietnamese accelerated under the reign of Ky.

Furthermore, I would like to clarify two other items in Dr. Shaw's article:

1. His statement "Ironically, it was the Viet Cong themselves, who did the most to drive the Montagnards into the arms of the government." could be mistakenly interpreted by some readers. Viet Cong or VC is short for *Viet Nam Cong San* – Vietnamese communists; nevertheless, it is conceived by some as meaning communist guerillas indigenous to South Vietnam, even though in 1959 a North Vietnamese communist party edict placed the command and control of all communist forces in Vietnam under the Party in Hanoi.
2. The Massacre of Stieng Montagnard refugees in Dak Son village, Phuoc Long Province on December 5, 1967 was carried out by six hundred NVA from the 88th Regiment of the 1st PAVN Division. However, it was somewhat different from their usual *modus-operandi* of attack by pouring machine-gun, mortar and rocket fire into the village, for they were also armed with flamethrowers. All told, 252 of the unarmed Montagnard, men, women and children were murdered in the most horrible way, 33 wounded suffered third-degree burns over up to 20% of their bodies, and another 100 were kidnapped.

**Now, on to Mr. Duong's knowledge or lack thereof regarding FULRO.**

FULRO (Unified Front for the Struggle of the Oppressed Races and in French – *le Front Unifié de Lutte des Races Opprimées*) emerged in 1964 and there was and still is much confusion among scholars, diplomats and others about the organization; however, it was not a "Montagnard autonomy movement."

In the first part of Mr. Duong's critique, he has managed to mix apples and oranges in regard to the evolution of the Buôn Enao Project and FULRO, and in many places his timelines, names, numbers and locations do not jibe (e.g., 150,000 "... highlanders

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were trained ... Therefore the U.S. had trained and equipped almost one infantry division of armed men ..." (actually around 30,000 were trained and a division consists of between 10,000 and 20,000 soldiers.)

He uses FULRO interchangeably with the CIDG forces, when in fact, only a small number of those trained by the U.S. Special Forces became FULRO, though most agreed with FULRO's goals. He blatantly claims, "The CIA and the U.S. Special Forces transformed the FULRO into a dangerous armed entity" when in fact FULRO itself did the transformation.

Mr. Duong is contradictory in his statements, for example: "When South Vietnamese President's advisor Ngo Dinh Nhu visited Buon Enao early in 1962, he was elated about the result and wanted to apply the concept to all the highland region." Mr. Duong then contradicts this by stating "The project Buon Enao became bankrupt." and "In August 1962, Mr. Nhu ordered the cancellation of the rest of the fighting buon." In fact, **Nhu never liked the program and was paranoid over arming the Montagnards**, and the Buon Enao Program was very successful (not bankrupt as Duong alleges) with approximately 30,000 Montagnards who were trained and served as CIDG and MIKE forces (Mobile Strike Force Command) in 50 A-Team Camps.

Rather than going into too much more detail, below is a brief on the program:

The "Buon Enao Project," formally named "The Tribal Area Development Program"; later it was changed to the "Village Defense Program" and finally it morphed into the "Civilian Irregular Defense Group" (CIDG). The CIA operatives initially associated with the program departed in October 1962 and the program was turned over to MACV (Military Assistance Command Viet Nam) in "Operation Switchback" with rules that only military personnel were to thereafter participate in operations at Buon Enao, and it was to be financed only by the U.S. military.

At the end of 1962, the CIDG program had 24 U.S. Special Forces detachments scattered throughout Vietnam, and those in the Central Highlands were composed mainly of Montagnard forces. Each A-Detachment had 12 U.S. S.F. men who advised a counterpart team of 12 men from the LLDB (Lực Lượng Đặc Biệt). Not only were the A-Detachments located in areas where the Rhadé, M'Nong, Jarai lived, but they were also established where Bru, Cua, H're, Banhar, Pacoh, Katu and other tribal groups were located. At the height of American Special Forces operations in the Central Highlands there were approximately 30,000 Montagnards serving as CIDG and MIKE forces (Mobile Strike Force Command). Approximately 50 of the 80 plus A-Team camps in Vietnam had Montagnard troops. Each A-Team had three or more companies averaging 600 troops per camp; if needed, an extra company of Vietnamese might be added.

For more information on the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (Buon Enao) Program see <http://www.history.army.mil/books/vietnam/90-23/90-232.htm>

In 1957, pressure on highland populations led to the formation of the ethno-nationalistic movement BAJARAKA (Banhar, Jarai, Rhade, and Koho peoples representing major tribal groupings) with Y-Bham Enuol, a Rhade, as one of its leaders. BAJARAKA's explicit resistance to the Diem regime resulted in the imprisonment of most of its leadership, including Y-Bham, in September 1958. After the coup against the Diem regime, Y-Bham Enuol and the other leaders were released in February 1964. The Saigon government immediately appointed Y-Bham as the Assistant Chief of Darlac Province as a conciliatory gesture.

Nevertheless, Y-Bham Enuol and other Montagnard leaders again organized a new underground movement called, *Front de Libération des Hauts-Plateaux Montagnard* (FLHPM); i.e., the Montagnard Highlands Liberation Front. The Cham people in Vietnam and Cambodia and the Khmer Krom in Southern Vietnam had similar movements called FLC (*Front Liberation du Champa*) and FLKK (*Front Liberation du Khmer Krom*). FLC was led by Lt. Colonel Les Kosem (alias Y Prin Enuol or Po Nagar), a Cham Muslim born in Phan Rang (now Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam) who was serving in the Cambodian Royal Army. FLKK was led by Um Savuth (or Om Savuk alias Chau Dara), a Khmer Krom (formerly Southern Cambodia that was annexed by Vietnam) native. Savuth and Kosem had formed a close bond while serving in the Cambodian Secrete Service. Both groups led by Kosem approached Y-Bham Enuol and asked to him to join them and combine the Movements; foolishly, Y-Bham agreed.

In 1964, FLHPM united with FLC and FLKK, giving birth to FULRO (French acronym meaning *Front Unifié De Lutte Des Races Opprimées*). FULRO was an attempt to form a political trinity of minority peoples – the Cham, Khmer Krom, and Montagnards – that had been repressed by and lost lands to the Vietnamese before and after the rise of Ngo Dinh Diem. They were expressing ethno-nationalistic irredentist claims even though this may have seemed irrational to others; theoretically the Cham could claim all of the territory from Hoanh Son to Mui Ke Ga (half of the contemporary coastline), while the highland peoples could claim the majority of the Annamite chain, and the Khmer Krom the entirety of the Mekong Delta.

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There had been bad blood between Prince Sihanouk, the monarch of Cambodia, and Ngo Dinh Nhu, for in 1958 he had organized a failed assassination attempt on Prince Sihanouk, adding to the traditional distrust he had of the Vietnamese. Thus Sihanouk was more than willing to create difficulties for Vietnam and grant Lt. Colonel Les Kosem access to arms and funds for FULRO.

Although the movements had a new name, the goals of the Montagnards remained the same – to win political autonomy, tenure to their land, and freedom from oppression. Perhaps one of the biggest mistakes of the FULRO movement occurred in 1964, when eager for official recognition, 3000 Montagnard CIDG forces in five (not two) U.S. Special Forces A-camps revolted and joined FULRO as combatants (the camps were not attacked from outside by FULRO forces, as Mr. Duong insinuates). Y-Bham was a diplomat and believed in negotiation with a show of force to gain concessions, and violence only as a last resort. His deputy Y-Dhon Adrong was said to have been the militant one who instigated the violence in 1964 in the Buon Sa Par Special Forces A-Camp, resulting in the killing of 30 South Vietnamese soldiers, after which Y-Dhon fled to the “former” French Camp Le Rolland in Monduliri Province. Also, ARVN’s 23<sup>rd</sup> Division did not surround Buon Sa Par to quell the rebellion, nor did Lt. Colonel Y-Buon Sur join FULRO forces as Mr. Duong alleges. However, Lt. Colonel Y-Buon Sur was the principal in dealing with FULRO in the province on behalf of the Cambodian Government, as the Cambodian Province Chief of Monduliri. Mr. Duong states “Colonel John F. Freund, adviser to General Co transported Y-Bham Enoul to Buon Enao to meet with General Co. The meeting settled peacefully.” Y-Bham had his own transportation and driver to go to Buon Enao, and Freund’s participation in the meeting was incidental but his advice extremely dangerous. Freund had recommended Co bomb Buon Sa Par, and Freund had radioed the U.S. Special Forces in the camp to escape during the confusion (based on the author’s interview with SF personnel who had been in the camp). Fortunately, General Co had more sense than Col. Freund and ignored his advice. On September 15, 1965, through negotiations 500 FULRO soldiers returned to Vietnam and assembled at Buon Buoc to be re-trained and integrated into local forces near their place of origin; however, after training, for many, the second half of the promise did not materialize and they returned to Cambodia. (They did not surrender, and Buon Buoc, is not part of Ban Me Thuot as Mr. Duong states.)

Furthermore, Mr. Duong claim is highly unlikely that “General Vinh Loc sent Lieutenant Colonel Y-Em to attack Camp Rolland, to take Y-Bham and Y-Dhon prisoners and to bring them back to Ban Me Thuot.” Col. Y-Em was Y-Bham’s son-in-law, and as such, Y-Em would never have agreed to undertake such a mission. The Montagnards did not trust General Vinh Loc considering him as a “wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Only if Y-Em was acting as an emissary, and assurances were given that conditions were safe, would Y-Bham have accompanied Y-Em back to Vietnam for negotiations. He went as a diplomat, not a prisoner, thus he was allowed to return to Cambodia at will. Y-Bham had more than once returned to Ban Me Thuot on his own initiative to discuss negotiations with Colonel Le Van Than, the Province Chief and his former boss whom he considered his friend.

Clearly, Les Kosem had co-opted the FULRO movement for his own personal reasons and/or those of the Cambodia government. This was apparent when he and his cohorts were present at Buon Sar Pa wearing “colors” when the Vietnamese were killed. Just prior to the scheduled Phnom Penh Conference of Indochinese Peoples in early 1965, a Provisional Government of the High Plateau of Champa was created to provide an image of legitimacy. At the conference, papers presented listed Chau Dara (Om Savuk) as President, Po Nagar (Les Kosem) and Y-Bham as Vice Presidents. Delegations from 24 countries were present. Y-Bham Enoul addressed the goals of the Montagnard’s segment of FULRO in its struggle to gain autonomy for the Central Highlands of Vietnam.

After 4 years of cooperating with the combined front, Y-Bham realized that the Montagnards were being used by Les Kosem and the Cambodians who were attempting to dominate FULRO, and the inclusion of FLKK and FLC in the Montagnard movement was untenable to the Vietnamese. He decided to withdraw completely from the combined FULRO movement and made the announcement that FULRO was abolished and the earlier Montagnard independence movement, FLHPM (*Front de Liberation des Hauts-Plateaux Montagnard*) would continue its effort to regain sovereignty and integrity for the Montagnards in the Central Highlands. This decision was made known to the Saigon government at the same time.

On May 4, 1967, Y-Bham Enoul met with II Corps General Vinh Loc at Ban Me Thuot and proposed that the Saigon government accept the following 8 points of the Montagnard people’s aspirations:

1. To accord a *Statute Particular* and a special Constitution for the Montagnard people as had the French in 1946.
2. To set up a special commission for Montagnard affairs at Buon Ama Thuot, the capital of the Autonomous Montagnard Republic, *Plateaus Montagnard Du Sud* (PMS).

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3. To permit recruitment and organization of the Montagnard Armed Forces.
4. To return to the Central Highlands all Montagnard civil servants and military men on duty outside Montagnard territory.
5. To permit the Montagnard people to receive aid directly from the U.S. or from other nations.
6. To raise the Montagnard flag to the same height as the Vietnamese flag.
7. To clearly delineate the borders of the Central Highlands so that the Montagnard people could regain their autonomy.
8. To agree to the participation of the Montagnard people in another Geneva Conference or in other international conferences to resolve issues

In 1967, tensions eased between the Vietnamese and Montagnards, and six Montagnards, including a member of FULRO, were elected to the National Assembly. President Nguyen Van Thieu signed a special law which recognized the Montagnards' right to own their land, and the GVN established the Ministry for Ethnic Minorities with Paul Nur installed as a regular member of the Cabinet.

In July, 1968, the government invited Y-Bham to Ban Me Thuot for further negotiations. Y-B'ham returned in August to a Special Forces camp in Quang Duc Province and was flown to Ban Me Thuot for the meeting. Although, some Montagnard leaders recognized that the GVN had outlined a somewhat credible minority policy, Y B'ham remained dissatisfied.

On September 16, 1968, President Nguyen Van Thieu consented to meet with Y-Bham Enuol in Saigon to discuss FLHPM's eight-point proposal. No concrete decision was made at the end of the meeting. By December 11, 1968, negotiations between Y-Bham and the Vietnamese authorities culminated in an agreement to recognize minority rights, establish a Ministry to support these rights, and to allow Y-Bham Enuol to remain permanently in Vietnam.

With this understanding, Y-B'ham returned to Cambodia and notified his representative in South Vietnam, Y-D'he Adrong, to make final agreements for FULRO's permanent return to the country. An agreement was reached on December 12, 1968. Among other things, it specified that the Montagnards could form their own political party, fly their own flag in the same manner as do other political parties in the Republic of Vietnam, and that the returning FULRO soldiers would be trained and organized into Regional Force companies with Montagnard officers in command.

However, Cambodian Colonels Les Kosem and Um Savuth had become increasingly jealous of and angered by Y-Bham's negotiations and concessions by the Vietnamese. On December 30, 1968, Kosem, at the head of several battalions of the Royal Cambodian Army, surrounded and took *Camp le Rolland*. Y-Bham Enuol, his praetorian guard, and several of his most loyal followers were arrested and taken to Phnom Penh and placed under house arrest at the residence of Colonel Um Savuth of the Cambodian army, where he remained for the next six years. A number of the FULRO "young Turks" joined the Cambodian army and received commissions as officers.

On February 1, 1969, a final treaty was signed between Paul Nur, the Chief of the Ministry for Ethnic Minorities, representing the Republic of Vietnam, and Y-D'he Adrong representing FULRO, signifying the end of FULRO as a "political" movement, especially as its previous backer, the Sangkum regime of Sihanouk, was to fall to the Cambodian coup of 1970. Nevertheless, Colonels Les Kosem and Um Savuth survived the coup and Y-Bham and the others remained under arrest.

On April 17, 1975, the Khmer Rouge communists took Phnom Penh. General Y- Bham Enuol, Lieutenant Colonel Y-Bun Sur, and some 150 members of FULRO were, at the time, under house arrest in the compound of Colonel Um Savuth of the Khmer Army located near Pochentong Airport. They left the compound and sought refuge in the French Embassy. However, the Khmer Rouge forced the senior French diplomat to hand the group of men, women and children over to them. They were then marched to the Lambert Soccer Stadium and executed. Colonel Les Kosem escaped to Malaysia and the fate of Um Savuth is unknown by the author.

The Montagnards' tragedy began with the desire by highlands tribes for freedom and self-government, for their own army, and tenure to their traditional farm and forest lands. Vietnamese forces didn't come to the aid of Montagnard villages under communist attack in a timely manner, and if and when they came, the ARVN often pillaged the villages. The Montagnards felt that only they had a true stake in the highlands, which they would adamantly defend, unlike the Vietnamese. (This was demon-

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strated in 1975, when South Vietnamese forces abandoned the highlands.) After the Vietnamese communists took over the control of the country, many of the Montagnard leaders and FULRO commanders were executed or died in the communist gulags, and the rest live in dire poverty despite the alleged economic miracle of communist Vietnam. The Montagnards still yearn for their freedom, but it will never come about under communist rule.

Michael D. Bengé was the recipient of South Vietnam's highest civilian servant medal – *Chương Mỹ Bội Tinh đệ 2 hạng* – for his work with FULRO. For more information on the Montagnards, see his paper, *The History of the Involvement of the Montagnards of the Central Highlands in the Vietnam War*, published in "The Fall of Saigon," SACEI, Forum #8, March 2001.

## Hue Nguyen: Textile Manufacturer

<http://www.latimes.com/socal/weekend/news/tn-wknd-et-1213-refugee-textile-artist-20151211-story.html>



Hue Nguyen has been an employee for 30 years at textile manufacturer Hoffman California Fabrics in Mission Viejo. Hue creates fine art oil paintings every year to raise funds for the Smile Train organization. Hue was among the groups of refugees who arrived in California after the Vietnam War. (Don Leach / Daily Pilot)

### Kathleen Luppi

Boarding a helicopter in search of a new life, Hue Nguyen, then 36, carried three pieces of clothing, clutched his 5-year-old son's hand and joined his wife on a military craft that seated 23 people.

It was a situation that so many had taken before him as they fled squalor and tragedy in Vietnam for hope in the United States.

"They couldn't take everyone," said Nguyen, whose brother stayed in Vietnam because he didn't want to leave his children. "I felt terrible hearing my brother's voice."

Little did they know, as the family huddled together for 10 days at Camp Pendleton, the first stop for many

Vietnamese refugees in the U.S., that he would become a successful textile artist who would create thousands of freehand pencil drawings and hand-painted artwork for Hoffman California Fabrics, a Mission Viejo-based design and manufacturer of screen-printed and hand-dyed fabrics for independent retailers.

Nguyen has contributed to what is referred to as the "authentic Hoffman look," creating designs for surfing-focused companies like Roxy, Volcom, Stussy and O'Neill.

It is a world, a life, a career that he could not have imagined growing up in Ben Tre. The capital city of Ben Tre Province has been called a flashpoint in the Vietnam War. In 1960, the Viet Cong attacked and took temporary control of several districts in Kien Hoa Province, now called Ben Tre Province, and confiscated land from landlords and redistributed it to poor farmers.

Nguyen, 74, of Westminster, said he and his wife and son were fortunate to have been among the groups of Vietnam War refugees that the Lutheran Church helped bring to the U.S. in 1975. After staying at Camp Pendleton for almost two weeks, the three were assisted by sponsors and relocated to Shawnee Mission, Kans.

There, the family got an apartment and a 1969 Chevy Nova.

While living in Kansas, Nguyen, who had been a student of the National School of Decorative Arts in Gia Dinh, Saigon, became a member of the Greater Kansas City Art Assn. He placed second in the oil painting category at the association's 1977 art exhibition.

After living in the Midwest for two years, he and his family moved to Westminster, Calif., where he took a job as a sketch artist, making \$5 per portrait.

But after seeing a help-wanted newspaper advertisement for an in-house artist at Hoffman California Fabrics, Nguyen applied. Tony Hoffman, Hoffman Fabrics president, vividly remembered Nguyen's application interview.

Nguyen came into the office carrying a large frame wrapped in brown paper. Hoffman and his father, Walter, asked to see

*Continue on next page*



Nguyen's portfolio.

"He rips the paper off and it's a huge oil painting of then-President Jimmy Carter," Hoffman said with a laugh. "We had to hire him after that. I mean, who does that? Hue always had a great spirit and he always smiles."

"This is like family," Nguyen said smiling as he pushed up his black eye frames.

Three generations of the Hoffman family are currently involved in day-to-day operations at the Mission Viejo office and warehouse, which employs more than 50 people and creates nearly 800 designs for its collections. The business, founded 90 years ago by Rube Hoffman, is now led by Tony, grandson of Rube.

Rube's son Walter is a onetime big-wave surfer and beachwear industrialist who, though in his late 80s, still walks around Hoffman Fabrics, checking in on employees and holding meetings.

When Nguyen is not at his workplace — it takes him three days to draw and color a layout — or transporting his three grandchildren to and from school as his son and daughter-in-law work, he is involved with Smile Train. The international children's charity provides free cleft-repair surgery for children in developing countries. Cleft lip and cleft palate are facial and oral malformations that can make it difficult to eat, breathe and speak.

Nguyen creates oil paintings for his art exhibition and donates all the proceeds to the charity. He has done this for five years and helped to pay for 15 children's surgeries.

At an art show earlier this month, held at the Nguoi Viet Gallery in Little Saigon, Nguyen displayed paintings capturing images of Rome, Santa Barbara, Switzerland and London, among many other locations.

He and his wife of 47 years, Diep, welcomed visitors. At one point, he walked John "Blue Moon" Odom, a former [Major League Baseball](#) pitcher who won three consecutive World Series championships with the [Oakland Athletics](#) in 1972, '73 and '74.

"How lucky am I?" Nguyen said pulling his hands to his heart when he Odom walked in.

"He's very good," Odom said, noting that Nguyen made a painting of him. "My wife really loved that picture."

Nguyen is already thinking of working on a second portrait of Odom and doesn't see himself putting down the paintbrush any time soon.

"Painting is relaxing and makes anyone happy," Nguyen said. "I'll be 80 or 90 and still painting."

## Elizabeth Phu, Adviser to President Obama

<http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-obama-aide-refugees-20151120-story.html>

The pirates had a price: 10 wedding bands, in exchange for pulling the broken-down boat of Vietnamese refugees to the Malaysian shore.

A young father named Frank Phu saw no other way to save his wife and toddler daughter, so he collected the rings into a tiny sack, clamped it between his teeth and swam to the pirates' ship to make the deal. Tugged by the pirates, the passengers made it near the Malaysian island of Pulau Penang, and eventually to a nearby refugee camp run by the government.

Over 36 years after arriving as a "boat person," as the refugees were crudely called, the young girl, Elizabeth Phu, has come back to this southeast Asian nation -- this time as an American citizen and advisor to [President Obama](#), part of the White House team accompanying him on his 10-day, three-country tour of world-leader summits.

In her years at the White House, Phu has helped Obama to shape policy on southeast Asia, a region crucial to the president's view of the world in terms of trade and strategic alliances.

Phu's story is the kind the administration points to for evidence. She graduated from Miramonte High School outside Oakland and attended college at UC Berkeley and graduate school at UC San Diego.

For the last three years, she has been detailed to the National Security Council staff at the White House, serving now as director for Southeast Asia and Oceania affairs.

The story of her family's escape from Vietnam she tells easily. Describing her current stature causes her voice to crack.

"A refugee from a communist country can come here and grow up in the U.S. and have the privilege of working in the White House," she said. "It makes me so proud to be an American."



## Voices from the Second Republic of South Vietnam

K W Taylor

VOICES  
from the  
SECOND REPUBLIC  
of SOUTH VIETNAM  
(1967-1975)



K. W. TAYLOR, EDITOR

Cornell Southeast Asia Program Publications

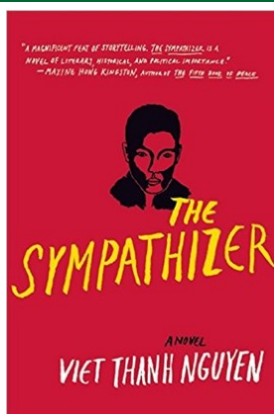
The Republic of (South) Vietnam is commonly viewed as a unified entity throughout the two decades (1955–75) during which the United States was its main ally. However, domestic politics during that time followed a dynamic trajectory from authoritarianism to chaos to a relatively stable experiment in parliamentary democracy. The stereotype of South Vietnam that appears in most writings, both academic and popular, focuses on the first two periods to portray a caricature of a corrupt, unstable dictatorship and ignores what was achieved during the last eight years. The essays in *Voices from the Second Republic of South Vietnam (1967–1975)* come from those who strove to build a constitutional structure of representative government during a war for survival with a totalitarian state. Those committed to realizing a noncommunist Vietnamese future placed their hopes in the Second Republic, fought for it, and worked for its success.

Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Republic-Vietnam-1967-1975-Studies-Southeast/dp/0877277656/>

## The Sympathizer

Viet Thanh Nguyen



It is April 1975, and Saigon is in chaos. At his villa, a general of the South Vietnamese army is drinking whiskey and, with the help of his trusted captain, drawing up a list of those who will be given passage aboard the last flights out of the country. The general and his compatriots start a new life in Los Angeles, unaware that one among their number, the captain, is secretly observing and reporting on the group to a higher-up in the Viet Cong. *The Sympathizer* is the story of this captain: a man brought up by an absent French father and a poor Vietnamese mother, a man who went to university in America, but returned to Vietnam to fight for the Communist cause. A gripping spy novel, an astute exploration of extreme politics, and a moving love story, *The Sympathizer* explores a life between two worlds and examines the legacy of the Vietnam War in literature, film, and the wars we fight today.

Available on Amazon

<http://www.amazon.com/Sympathizer-Novel-Viet-Thanh-Nguyen/dp/0802123457/>

## 2016: Year of the Monkey

