

# Viet Nam: *The Third Indochina War?*

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During their first few years in the United States, most Vietnamese refugees concentrated on survival. Now they are increasingly turning to politics. Early last year, Lieu and his followers decided to go public. They established their financial headquarters in Arlington, Virginia, and they started raising money from Vietnamese businessmen, some of whom have charged that the fund-raisers practice extortion.

The front recently began holding rallies, which have attracted from one thousand to three thousand people, in places like Anaheim and San Jose, California, where there are large refugee communities, and even such unlikely places as Oklahoma City. The rallies are smoothly run. They feature a chorus of Vietnamese teenagers dressed in brown paramilitary uniforms and a combative speech by Lieu or one of his top assistants. Red and yellow — the colors of the old South Vietnamese flag — predominate. The largely Vietnamese crowds respond enthusiastically.

But of course not all Vietnamese in the United States support the movement. Some community leaders believe the "back to Viet Nam" campaign diverts attention from efforts to aid the many immigrants who continue to arrive in California. But opposition to the resistance can be dangerous.

Take the case of Lam Trong Duong. A graduate of Oberlin College, the twenty-five year old Duong was an outspoken supporter of the Hanoi government. He worked as a community organizer in San Francisco's Tenderloin and he published a pro-Hanoi newspaper, which he mailed, unsolicited, to several thousand anti-Communist Vietnamese. It was not something that made him very popular. His life was threatened many times, and on July 21, 1981, he was shot to death in front of his apartment building in broad daylight. A group calling itself the "Anti-Communist Viets Organization" sent a letter to the Associated Press claiming credit for the murder of the "communist" Duong. Although the San Francisco police discount a political murder and say the Duong murder is still an open case, it is widely regarded in the Vietnamese community as a political killing.

It fits a pattern of harassment and violence against Vietnamese who do not share the virulent anti-Communism of many of their fellow



refugees. In April 1981, a Molotov cocktail was hurled at Vietnamese historian Ngo Vinh Long after he took part in a panel discussion at Harvard University; his assailant, a former South Vietnamese soldier, was freed on grounds of temporary insanity. Since Duong's murder, Nyugen Dam Thong, a newspaper editor in Houston, was killed after he charged in his paper that a bogus Vietnamese front group was fundraising without authorization in the name of the resistance movement.

This intimidation has naturally had a chilling effect on political discussion. Where once the few Vietnamese in the United States who are still sympathetic to the Vietnamese government sponsored public forums in Berkeley, San Francisco and other cities, they now meet only in private.

## A PRAYER FOR LAND

Lost in the tempests  
Out on the open seas  
Our small boats drift.  
We seek for land  
During endless days and endless nights.  
We are the foam  
Floating on that vast ocean.  
We are the dust  
Wandering in endless space.  
Our cries are lost  
In the howling wind.  
Without food, without water  
Our children lie exhausted  
Until they cry no more.  
We thirst for land  
But are turned back from every shore.  
Our distress signals rise and rise again  
But the passing ships do not stop.  
How many boats have perished?  
How many families lie beneath the waves?  
Lord Jesus, do you hear the prayer of our flesh?  
Lord Buddha, do you hear our voice  
From the abyss of death?  
O solid shore  
We long for you!  
We pray for mankind to be present today!  
We pray for land to stretch its arms to us!  
We pray that hope be given us  
Today, from any land.

— A poem written by an unknown Vietnamese at a refugee camp in 1978

In an interview, Lieu said that there are Vietnamese "traitors" among the refugees in the United States. He also said that most Americans are not sufficiently alarmed by the international Communist threat. "If we do not prepare now, the Communists will win in Central America, take over Mexico and be right on our border." He talked of organizing a band of Vietnamese and Cuban veterans to fight the leftist guerrillas in El Salvador so that Washington does not make the "tragic mistake" of committing American troops. "We can raise an army in a minute in Miami and California," he boasted.

Asked whether he wants Washington's support in his self-proclaimed effort to overthrow the Vietnamese government, Lieu smiled and said cautiously, "First, we must win the sympathy and support of the American people and of the news media. Then we will see about the government."

Stephen Talbot produces documentaries for PBS in San Francisco. His article is reprinted from *The Nation*.

## OUR GREEN GARDEN

Fires spring up like dragon's teeth at the ten points of the universe.  
A furious acrid wind sweeps them toward us from all sides.  
Aloof and beautiful, the mountains and rivers abide.

All around, the horizon burns with the color of death.  
As for me, yes, I am still alive,  
But my body and the soul within it writhe as if they too had been set afire.  
My parched eyes can shed no more tears.

Where are you going this evening, dear brother, in what direction?  
The rattle of gunfire is close at hand.  
In her breast, the heart of our mother shrivels and fades like a dying flower.  
She bows her head, the smooth black hair now threaded with white  
How many nights, night after night, has she crouched wide-awake,  
Alone with her lantern, praying for the storm to end?

Dearest brother, I know it is you who will shoot me tonight,  
Piercing our mother's heart with a wound that can never heal.  
O terrible winds that blow from the ends of the earth  
To hurl down our houses and blast our fertile fields!

I say farewell to the blazing, blackening place where I was born.  
Here is my breast! Aim your gun at it, brother, shoot!  
I offer my body, the body our mother bore and nurtured.  
Destroy it if you will,  
Destroy it in the name of your dream,  
That dream in whose name you kill.

Can you hear me invoke the darkness:  
'When will these sufferings end,  
O darkness, in whose name you destroy?'

Come back, dear brother, and kneel at our mother's knee  
Don't make a sacrifice of our dear green garden  
To the ragged flames that are carried into the dooryard  
By wild winds from far away.

Here is my breast. Aim your gun at it, brother, shoot!  
Destroy me if you will  
And build from my carrion whatever it is you are dreaming of.

Who will be left to celebrate a victory made of blood and fire?

— Thich Nhat Hanh

Thich Nhat Hahn is a Vietnamese Buddhist monk and a scholar and poet.

## REFUGEE DEPRESSION

Falling into shame, sadness or desperation, much of it related to broken-up families, is a common syndrome among Vietnamese refugees, according to Vinh The Do, of Portland's Indochinese Cultural Center Mental Health Program. Vinh devised the Vietnamese Depression Scale now in use across the country.

Vinh Do believes refugee depression is related to the growing National Liberation Front Movement led by former South Vietnamese Admiral Hoang Co Minh.

"Life is better here in the United States materially, but not psychologically or spiritually," he says, adding that the Vietnamese "suffer from the loss of hierarchy" which makes them open to the cause of the movement.

Of eight thousand Vietnamese refugees in Oregon, about two thousand are estimated to be happily and comfortably employed, about one thousand are in school, and two thousand have inadequate but acceptable work, according to Kirby Juhola of the Indochinese Cultural Center's Job Services division. The remaining three thousand are either not seeking work, or are not employable or are in a marginal group who wander, who have no desire to learn English or who have stress-related anxieties. "The minute they get comfortable, they get anxious, looking constantly over their shoulder," Juhola says. "They might listen to someone with a plan."

— Penny Allen

from "The War That Won't Go Away," Northwest magazine.