



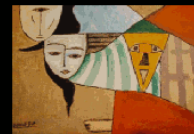
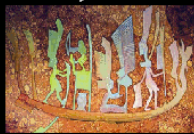
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**SACEI
Person of the Year**

SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE



To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese Culture

Since 2010, the SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR is awarded each year to the person who has shown throughout the years through his work or writing:

1. To have fought for Freedom and Human Rights in Vietnam,
2. or to have contributed to Vietnamese-American arts, culture, & education,
3. or to have greatly benefited the cause of the Vietnamese and Vietnamese Americans.

The Award will be presented to the individual and/or organization at the SACEI Annual Meeting.

2012 SACEI PERSON OF THE YEAR



CITATION



He joined the Marine Corps in 1956 and following discharge completed his undergraduate studies in Agricultural Engineering at Oregon State University.

In 1963, he joined the forerunner of the Peace Corps and served for two years in the Central Highlands in South Viet Nam, working mainly with the Montagnards and became fluent in both Vietnamese and Rhade.

In 1965, he joined USAID, the United States Agency for International Development and served as a provincial development officer in the Central Highlands of South Viet Nam. He was captured by the North Vietnamese during the "Tet Offensive" while trying to rescue four Americans housed in a section of town that had been overrun by a North Vietnamese battalion. For this, he received the State Department's highest award for heroism. He also received a second award for valor for his actions during captivity.

He was held as a POW in numerous camps in South Viet Nam, Cambodia, Laos and North Viet Nam where he spent 27 months in solitary confinement, including one year in a cage in Cambodia and one year in a "black box." He almost died in captivity from malnutrition and malarial fever. He was released during "Operation Homecoming" in 1973.

While on medical leave, he returned to Viet Nam and continued his work with the Ministry of Ethnic Minorities. After the fall of Viet Nam in 1975, he assisted in processing Vietnamese refugees to go to the U.S.

In 1978, he completed a Master's Degree in Agro-forestry at the University of the Philippines at Los Banos. Back in the States, he continues his work with USAID, and is active in POW/MIA affairs, and other South East Asian political issues including fight for human rights in Laos. He writes extensively on these issues.

Mr. Benge received several honors for his service in Vietnam. For efforts in rescuing eleven Americans (USAID personnel) before capture, he received the State Department's highest award for heroism. He received a second award for valor for his actions during captivity, and the [Vietnam Service Medal](#). He was awarded three medals from the Government of South Vietnam -- *Chương Mỹ Bội Tinh đệ 2 hạng* (The highest civilian servant service medal of the RVN; *Y Tế Bội Tinh* (from the Ministry of Health, and *Phát Triển Sắc Tộc Bội Tinh* (from the Ministry for the Development of Ethnic Minorities) for his work in civil and political affairs, public health, and ethnic minority affairs.



The 2012 SACEI MAN OF THE YEAR

Mike Bengé



THE 2012 SACEI MAN OF THE YEAR

MIKE BENGÉ

In recognition of your Outstanding Contributions to Vietnamese
Arts, Culture, and fight for Human Rights



American Hip-Hop Defines Vietnamese Communist History:

“Ho”, “Ho”, “Ho” Chi Minh



More than half a century after his death, Vietnamese prime minister and president Ho Chi Minh is still revered by leftists as a hero, a patriot and nationalist, the celibate, benign and priestly Uncle (Bác) Ho, and the George Washington of his country. A closer look reveals him to have been an unscrupulous communist “Ho” paid by Moscow, whose loyalty was not to the Vietnamese people but to the World Communist Movement – the Comintern.

Ho firmly adhered to the Leninist principle that nations should subordinate national interests to those of the international Communist movement.¹ Ho Chi Minh was “the Third International’s dream; tricky, cunning, and phony but always hiding under the cover of a patriot with a gentle mannerism and oratory skills.”² An American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) operative who met the chameleon Ho in North Vietnam during World War II thought Ho to be an “awfully sweet guy that little old man sitting on his hill.”³ In reality, Ho reminds one of the dirty old man posing as the kindly old benevolent uncle, who is kept hid in the closet and who no one talks about.

Rather than Washingtonian, Ho was much more Orwellian (see Orwell’s satire on communism: *Animal Farm* where “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others”)⁴ and Stalinist in his politics. As a communist internationalist taking orders from Moscow, Ho sought to emulate his hero, the butcher Joseph Stalin, by creating a South East Asian Communist Union.

Ho’s Life of Lies

Born Nguyen Sinh Cung, he stole the name the world remembers -- Ho Chi Minh -- from a dead man. He was a political chameleon from birth to death. Researchers have documented that he used some 150 to 167 different names to disguise his identity.⁵ In his twelve volume *Ho Chi Minh Toan Tap* (Ho Chi Minh’s Complete Works), Ho documented his extensive work for the Third International, even recording how much he was paid each month by Moscow.⁶ There can be no doubt that he was a devout international communist from the early 1920’s. For his loyalty, Ho Chi Minh was honored by Moscow as a *Cominternchik* -- the Communist International’s recognition for a faithful member of the first rank.

In a letter written by Ho Chi Minh on November 4th, 1924 to the Executive Committee of Comintern, *Ho wrote, The national struggle for the proletariat ... though in substance is NOT about a fight for our nation, but initially, must be presented as a fight for nationalism, for patriotic reasons.*⁷ In his last testament before his death in 1969, Ho Chi Minh appealed to the Soviet Union and China to resolve their differences and reestablish the unit of the World communist movement – the Comintern – the Soviet-created organization charged with promoting Marxist-Leninist revolution around the world.

In 1920, Ho became a founding father of the French Communist Party. Given a grant in 1924 to study revolution in Moscow at the Lenin Institute, Ho became a Soviet citizen, taking the alias “Linov.” Ho soon rose to a position of leadership in the Comintern and “derided those who put nationalism over communism as ‘bourgeois nationalists’ or chauvinistic nationalists.”¹ With a Soviet passport, Ho (aka Linov) was assigned by Moscow to the Russian consulate in Canton, China, in 1926 as an aide to the Machiavellian Soviet diplomat Mikhail M. Borodin, the Soviet Comintern’s chief agent in Asia stationed in China. Ho was tasked to organize Vietnamese immigrants and other Asians into revolutionary groups. While in China, Ho reportedly joined the Chinese communist party and served in the Chinese Communist Eighth Route Army.⁸ According to Vietnamese Communist Party’s documents, in the autumn of 1929, the Comintern (Communist International) instructed Ho to go to Hong Kong “to gather all genuine communist elements to form a single communist party.”⁷ Using the alias Sung Wen, Ho founded the Indo-China Communist Party at the First Party Conference in Hong Kong in 1930. (Note that this was not just a Vietnamese Communist Party, an indication of Ho’s intent to create a Soviet-style Union of South East Asia and that his true goal was communist unity rather than nationalism.)

Later, on orders from Moscow, Ho was sent by the Comintern to organize communist parties throughout South East Asia.⁹ Ho first went to Siam (Thailand) where he disguised himself as a Buddhist monk and operated out of a Temple in Ubon Thani province while forming the nucleus of a communist party there.¹⁰ Ho then went to Malaya, Singapore and Indochina to preside over the creation of communist parties in these countries. “The Malayan communist party, like its counterpart in the Philippines, traces its origins to the Comintern’s early missionary expeditions of the 1920s. Communist agents from China began the hunt for

supporters in Singapore, at the tip of the Malay Peninsula, in 1924, but with only modest success. The Malayan communist party was not formally organized until 1930, at which time the Vietnamese communist leader Ho Chi Minh, a French communist leader, and some Chinese communists presided over its official founding, and placed it under the direction of the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau in Shanghai.¹¹ Ho explained to his comrades that "Communists not only should take to heart revolution in their own country, they also should make contributions to the international proletarian revolution."⁹ All parties were to report to the Comintern's Far Eastern Bureau headed by Ho.

Ho had left Vietnam 1912 and did not return until 1941 -- his first return in thirty years -- and he arrived as the representative of the Comintern to preside over the Eighth Plenum of the Indo-China Communist Party held in Pac Bo, Cao Bang Province.¹² When returning to Vietnam, Ho played down classical communist doctrines such as collectivism and the elimination of religion, appealing instead to Vietnamese nationalism, anti-French sentiment, and promising civil liberties -- just as the Comintern had prescribed in 1929. Ho failed to mention that communism taught that God was a myth and that religion was the opiate of the people, and even went so far as to quote from America's Declaration of Independence. Nevertheless, Ho, the perpetual chameleon, presented himself much of the time as a nationalist, for if it was no more than just a grubby communist; he would garner little or no sympathy from naïve people who knew no better.

Ho the Liar and Literary Thief

Ho was a plagiarizer and a literary thief who put his name to several papers, books, and poems (e.g., *Prison Diaries*) written by others. "In *Stories of President Ho's Life in (Revolutionary) Activities* by Tran Dan Tien (one of Ho's many aliases), Ho fabricated and wrote his own biography, extolling and praising himself to repletion." Ho carefully chose and stole names to aggrandize himself, such as Uncle (Bác) Ho -- in Vietnamese a very reverential pronoun form, Ho Chi Minh -- one who enlightens, and Nguyen Ai Quoc -- Nguyen the Patriot. According to Can, "It has been well known that even the date, the month and the year of Ho's birth were all 'phịa' ... blatant lies ... is there anything to assure that 'Stories' related by 'himself' have not been concocted?" Like his role model Stalin, Ho directly participated in creating his own image to be handed down to posterity. Ho also wrote a number of papers, editorials, etc. under the names "T Lan" and "Tran Dan Tien," as well several other pseudonyms. While in China, Ho lectured on politics and ideology, and these lectures were published in book form as *The Revolutionary Path* but it was not mentioned under which name. Ho stole the name Nguyen Ai Quoc, a pseudonym of his landlord in Paris, Phan Van Truong, in order to claim credit for Phan's prolific writings of newspaper articles and leaflets on behalf of the "Group of Viet Patriots" and the "Group of Viet Revolutionaries." Ho also falsely took sole credit for writing *The Proceedings against French Colonization* published in France in 1925.⁸

Ho and the OSS

Ho's involvement with the OSS during WWII can be summed up as *Much Ado About Nothing* (a Shakespearean comedy, but in Ho's case a black comedy), for the US policy at that time was the enemy of our enemy is our friend, whether they were nationalist or communist. The OSS support of the Viet Minh had a two-fold purpose: wage guerilla war against the Japanese; and help rescue American pilots and crews downed during bombing and reconnaissance missions against the Japanese (and sometimes the Vichy French) in Indo-China, and those downed while flying support missions over the China-Burma Hump.

Not all of the core Viet Minh members subscribed to communism, but Ho and his not so merry henchmen had a loud voice and carried a wicked stick. However, several of the so-called non-aligned Viet Minh leaders posing as patriots were in fact communists with allegiance to Ho. Nevertheless, the effort was naught, for although Ho took aid from the OSS, "the Viet Minh really didn't want to enter into a full-scale guerrilla operation against the Japanese."¹³ And according to records of the Air Force Historical Foundation, Ho and his people rescued only one pilot, and immediately turned him over to the Vichy French,¹⁴ who were collaborating with the Japanese, for a reward. Nevertheless, after the Japanese surrendered, Ho Chi Minh used the fact of OSS support to give the impression that the U.S. was actually backing him when he openly declared independence.

After the Japanese defeat and retreat from Vietnam in 1945, Ho, with his communist army of 60 men, rushed to Hanoi and proclaimed himself the President of Vietnam.¹² Three days after his self-anointed ascension to the throne, Ho reportedly wrote in secret to the French, inviting them back into Vietnam as a colonial power -- a deliberate move to incite the masses; one that caused the death of tens of thousands of Vietnamese.

Ho "believed that nationalism was a trap that lured colonized peoples away from class struggle."¹⁵ Clearly, Ho was not a Vietnamese nationalist, for if so, why would he have spent much of his entire career killing off other Vietnamese nationalists and patriots and destroying other political parties? After the victory against the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954, Ho and his henchmen planned to take over all of Indo-China (according to the strategy laid by the party), but "the leaders of both the USSR and the People's Republic of China (PRC) pressured Ho to sign the Geneva Agreements."¹⁶

Ho the Betrayer

Ho developed a nasty habit of betraying true Vietnamese nationalists and their leaders, who comprised a great part of the Viet Minh fighting the French. "Those who weren't outright murdered, Ho saw to it that their names and whereabouts were sold to the dreaded French *Sûreté* for blood money to fund the expansion of his communist party. During this period, tens of thousands of Vietnamese were killed. Ho called this the 'Selling of the pigs.' In 1925 he lured Phan Boi Chau, the true organizer of the Viet-

namese resistance against the French, to China on the pretext of receiving training. Phan Boi Chau was led to a French diplomatic villa where he was promptly arrested by the French.”¹ For this betrayal Ho was richly rewarded by the French in the amount of 100,000 piasters (others say 150,000); at a time when a water buffalo sold for five piasters.⁸ Those he couldn’t sell, he arranged for their assignation.

Ho’s Bloody Hands

Ho Chi Minh and his not so merry band of murders didn’t stop at just killing nationalists, but included many others that weren’t totally loyal to Ho and his brand of Stalinist communism. “As had Joseph Stalin, who ordered the ice-pick murder of the Soviet luminary Leon Trotsky, on orders from Moscow, Ho arranged the murder of Vietnamese Trotskyites, culminating in the killing of Ta Thu Thau, a most gifted Trotskyite leader and writer. Instead of being killed with ice-picks, the Vietnamese Trotskyites were tied together and thrown in rivers to slowly drown.”¹ Reportedly, the roster of the membership of the Trotskyite’s southern branch in its entirety was mysteriously passed on to the *Sûreté*, thereby letting the French do Ho’s dirty work.¹⁷ Moscow then ordered Ho to purge the pro-Chinese from the Party.¹⁰

Mark Moyar writes in his book *Triumph Forsaken*, “Among the many Vietnamese nationalists, who Ho saw as potential rivals, and had murdered without hesitation, were: Pham Quynh, renown literary and political figure; Ngo Dinh Khoi, the very prominent and talented brother of Ngo Dinh Diem, who they buried alive; Vietnam Nationalist Party leaders Nguyen The Nghiep and Nguyen Ngoc Son; Bui Quang Chieu, founder of the moderate Constitutional Party; and Ho Van Nga, a conservative nationalist leader in the south; Nguyen Van Sam, founder of the Front of National Union; Dr. Truong Dinh Tri, a political organizer in Tonkin and former Viet Minh official; and Truong Tu Anh, head of the influential Dai Viet Party.”¹

Before initiating the “land reform” pogrom against land owners in North Vietnam, Ho first asked Moscow’s approval. The purge was launched under the communist sacred principal of “It is better to kill ten innocent people than to let one enemy escape.”¹⁸ The Politburo ordered that five percent of the population of each and hamlet were to be eliminated. Hanoi government figures record that 172,000 were killed during the pogrom. Others claim the number was closer to 200,000 murdered, of whom four out of five were innocent of being “rich land owners.” Hoang Van Chi, a former aide to Pham Van Dong, claimed that as many as 500,000 were killed and 50,000 to 100,000 people were imprisoned during the land reform period.¹⁹ The murdered landowners included those who had supported Ho during the French war and others who supported land reform, including cadre who implemented it. During this period, The National People’s Party, a strong supporter of Ho’s revolution, was designated as an enemy organization by Ho’s Vietnam Labor Party, and thousands of its members were also murdered.²⁰ Later, the Vietnam Labor Party morphed into the Vietnamese Communist Party.

After the pogrom was terminated, Ho then went on the radio and pretended he knew nothing of the travesty – blaming it on misguided cadre. According to Hoang Van Chi, at the same time Ho shed crocodile tears (a hypocritical and insincere display of emotion) over this mass murder.¹⁹ Ho then went on to abolish the property rights of the common people, deeming all that all property belonged to the State. However, some of the best lands somehow became the property of a select number of communist leaders, in line with Orwell’s dictum that on the *Animal Farm*, some pigs were more equal than others.

Nor was Ho’s butchery limited to North Vietnam. In 1947, “Ho had ordered the murder of Huyen Phu So, the great Hoa Hao religious sect leader renowned for his ability to mobilize the masses. Huynh Phu So was bludgeoned to death then chopped to pieces that were scattered across the country to prevent his remains from being enshrined to further inspire his followers.”¹ Ho then ordered Viet Minh forces in Southern Vietnam to execute the hierarchy and loyal followers of both the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religions. At political revolutionary kangaroo court trials organized in the outskirts of Saigon, they were portrayed as “reactionary” and a mass murder of nearly 900 believers took place.²¹

During the 1954 siege of Điện Biên Phủ, documents show that it was the policy of the communist Vietnamese to send those soldiers who were not thought to be dedicated communists to breach the wire of the French trenches. If they survived, they were killed by “un-friendly fire” from loyal Party cadre who followed them. Also during the siege, ethnic minorities were placed on the forefront as cannon fodder as a means of eradicating the independent-minded tribes people who had been promised autonomy by Ho. Thousands were killed, but it wasn’t enough. After the French were expelled from Vietnam, Ho then ordered further “purification” purges of minorities in which over 50,000 were murdered.

Ho’s policies were also responsible for the murder of over 5,000, men, women and children massacred during the North Vietnamese occupation of Hue during TET-1968.

Ho the Womanizer

Ho was not a celibate saint as he portrayed himself as Uncle Ho (a reputation he achieved by praising himself by writing under a pseudonym), rather he was either a bigamist who had several wives and mistresses; or just *ba mươi lăm* (a randy old goat); a more ample modifier of Ho. Since no documentation has been found that Ho ever married, one must assume that the sources that referred to his “wives” used the term as a synonym for “mistress.” Among Ho’s many conquests are those listed below?

- Reportedly while in France, the alleged Vietnamese nationalist “was seduced by French charm, and from that liaison came

rumors of a French child.”²²

- In 1926, Ho, under the name Nguyen Ai Quoc, allegedly “married” Tang Tuyet Minh in China.²³
- While studying in Moscow Ho, aka Linov, was said to have been given a Russian wife,^{12,24} and it was rumored that she also bore him a child out of this Soviet Union.
- Later, it is said that Ho accrued a second Chinese wife/mistress,” Zeng Xue Ming, who also reportedly bore him a child; a daughter. Another document mentions Ho’s romance with a Chinese doctor¹²; however, no name was given; therefore, it is unclear if this is yet another Chinese mistress, or one of the two mentioned above.
- Nguyen Minh Can relates that “there was a suggestion that Ho needed a wife so that his ‘sex life’ could be regulated, and this would be good for his health. After the 1954 Geneva Agreement, they selected the most ‘cute’ among the young women cadres, Nguyen Thi Phuong Mai, a member of Thanh Hoa Province Party Committee, and brought her from the 4th Region to Hanoi to introduce her to him (i.e., Ho) ... she raised the issue of an official marriage, but her suggestion failed. Later, she was appointed vice minister of the Disabled Veterans Ministry and she settled permanently in Hanoi.”²⁰ Can doesn’t mention if a “relationship” was consummated; nevertheless, one might assume one was, for in those treacherous times one did not get something for nothing, and a promotion from a lowly regional cadre to vice minister would have been a big payment for something.

Duong Thu Huong, a former Communist Party member, “Heroine of the “American War” who served on the front line, and is a widely admired author whose writings are banned in Vietnam, revealed in her book *The Zenith* the following.²⁵

After assuming power in Hanoi, Ho acquired yet another wife/mistress, Nong Thi Xuan, who was brought in to service his needs. She was a young girl, 40 years his junior, from the Nung ethnic group in Cao Bang.. Xuan was accompanied by her younger sister Nong Thi Vang, and a female cousin named Nguyet. Xuan bore Ho “a love child,” a son Nguyen Tat Trung, and it was rumored that she also bore him a girl named Nguyen Thi Trinh.

Fearing that knowledge of Ho’s affair with Nong Thi Xuan and their “love child” (or children) would damage Ho’s saint-like image, Communist Party bosses ordered her murder and Politburo member Tran Quoc Hoan issued the order. It was reportedly carried out by Ho’s bodyguard who clubbed her to death then staged her death as an auto accident.²⁵ He was later rewarded by being appointed to the position of deputy director of the General Department of Gymnastics and Sports. Later Vang received training as a nurse; however, she, Nguyet and “witnesses to the affair, were murdered, as were many from the Thai Nguyen Nursing School to whom Vang had told of Xuan’s fate.”²⁰

Ho’s son Nguyen Tat Trung was hidden and raised in an orphanage “like a street urchin born out of wedlock to a prostitute.” At the age of 13, “Nguyen Tat Trung was adopted by Vu Ky, Ho’s former special secretary, and his name changed to Vu Trung.”²⁰ It is not known what happened to Ho’s “daughter” Nguyen Thi Trinh.

It’s unclear just when Ho obtained yet another wife/mistress from the Tay ethnic group who reportedly was his house servant and she too bore him a “love child,” a son named Nong Duc Man.²⁴ For years, he remained in obscurity; however in 2001, Man was resurrected as Communist Party chief; some say his political skill is not the only thing that bears an uncanny resemblance to Uncle Ho.²⁶ So as not to tarnish the image Ho himself created -- the dedicated, priest-like, celibate, saintly Uncle Ho, he never formally recognized any of his children, thus violating Vietnamese traditions, custom and culture. “So far, however, the state media in Vietnam is still keeping mum about these stories of Ho, hiding them as a cat buries its waste.” ¹⁴

In the Xuan case, although Ho was still declared the supreme leader and Chairman of the Party, it seems as though he must have been losing his power to a degree at this time to Truong Chinh, Le Duc Tho, and Hoang Quoc Viet if they could interfere in his romantic life and control Ho in such a way.²⁰ According to Lien-Hang Nguyen, one of the greatest misconceptions of the Vietnam War is that Ho Chi Minh was the uncontested leader of North Vietnam; in reality, Ho was a figurehead while Le Duan was the power behind the throne.²⁷

Throughout his life, Ho seemed to be blessed with the uncanny skill of always being able to pick up a turd by its clean end without soiling his fingers.

Ho, the Khmer Rouge and the Turning of the Worm

Ho’s founding of the Indo-China Communist Party in 1930 was the genesis of the creation of the Khmer Rouge. After the fall of Dien Bien Phu, thousands of Cambodians were taken to North Vietnam and indoctrinated and given military training by the Vietnamese communists. They were then sent south where they became the basis of the Vietnamese-Khmer Rouge. By 1970, they “occupied almost a quarter of the territory of Cambodia”²⁸; that portion referred to as its Eastern Zone.

Aware of Cambodia’s history of wars with Vietnamese invaders, Pol Pot began to suspect Hanoi’s intent, as Ho’s creation, the Indo-China Communist Party, matured according to the strategy laid out by the Communist Party of Vietnam. As a result, Pol Pot declared independence from Hanoi, and he and his Khmer Rouge followers split and largely occupied the Western Zone of Cambodia.²⁸

China knew well of Ho’s close ties to Moscow and his intent to emulate his hero Stalin, by creating a Soviet-style Union of South East Asia. Fearing the prospect of a strong Soviet ally on its soft underbelly, China began training and arming the Pol Pot faction of the Khmer Rouge as a counter-balance to the Vietnamese.

Although he died in 1969, Ho's dream of greater Indo-China dominated by Vietnam lives on in the minds Hanoi's communist party members. The secretary of the Vietnamese Workers Party (VWP) Central Committee, Hoang Anh, in his speech on the twentieth VWP Central Committee plenary meeting held in January 1971, declared, "We should strengthen the revolutionary base in Cambodia and guide this country along the path of socialism. Here is the policy of our party." Moreover, Soviet diplomats working in Hanoi noted, "Vietnamese comrades last year carefully raised one of the clauses of the former Indochina Communist Party program concerning creation of the socialist Federation of Indochina."²⁸

Having a large military force in Laos after defeating the French, the Vietnamese communists, who considered the peoples of Laos as being *Nha que qua* (very backward), began neo-colonizing that country. The Vietnamese communists have extended their influence over Laos and have de facto annexed Laos and now run it as if it was a province of Vietnam. During the Vietnam War, North Vietnam had three divisions in Laos; 37 years later, Hanoi still maintains three divisions of troops there, while many other veterans were demobilized and assigned to live there.

On December 25, 1978, the armed forces of Vietnam launched a full-scale invasion of Cambodia, claiming that the Khmer Rouge first attacked them. Hanoi touted this as a mercy mission to rid Cambodia of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge; however, it was no more than a thinly-disguised excuse to colonize Cambodia.²⁹ Hanoi's provocation was based on their story that the Khmer Rouge first attacked Vietnam; a half-truth at best. It was rumored that Pol Pot was about to purge the Khmer Rouge loyal to the Vietnamese that dominated the Eastern Zone, starting with commanders of the Vietnamese-Khmer Rouge So Phim, Heng Samrin, and his deputy Hun Sen.

However, some evidence suggests that the supposed Khmer Rouge attacks may have been staged by Hanoi on orders to their branch of the Khmer Rouge to attack Tay Ninh Province in Vietnam in a classic joint hammer-and-anvil military operation.²⁹ Eastern Zone forces of So Phim, Heng Samrin, and his deputy Hun Sen were ordered to strike from the East, to coincide with a strike of Vietnamese forces from the West in order to destroy the remnant of ARVN, Montagnard, Cao Dai and Hoa Hao forces who were said to still be conducting guerilla operations against the communist Vietnamese.

The Vietnamese communists were dogmatic in waging protracted wars, first against the French and then against the US. What they learned from the French War is that by fighting a protracted war, the enemy politicians and people would turn against the war, helping to defeat their own military forces in Vietnam. However, the Vietnamese communist's theories backfired when they invaded Cambodia. They misjudged their home front as well as both the US and China. In their wildest dreams, Hanoi's communist leaders couldn't imagine that the US would have the heart to reengage them; this time with China as its ally to drive the Vietnamese out of Cambodia. The Vietnamese communists were dumbstruck when the US funded the non-communist element of the Cambodian resistance with China backing the Pol Pot Khmer Rouge. As the Vietnamese communists are fond of saying, "the chickens came home to roost" when the political will of the Vietnamese army, the Vietnamese population as a whole and the international community failed to support the protracted Vietnamese war in Cambodia.

According to PAVN Colonel Bui Tin, the Vietnamese Armed Forces "sacrificed 52,000 dead and over 200,000 wounded – many of whom lost arms and legs,"³⁰ maimed by the prolific Khmer Rouge mines. Others place the toll as high as 50,000 killed. Vietnam's people had been promised peace after the US withdrawal from Vietnam and the communist takeover of South Viet Nam, and the army was told that most soldiers would be demobilized and given parcels of land to farm. Of course the empty promises never materialized. Because of this and the very high casualty rate, the army began rebelling against Hanoi. Vietnam's 10 year attempt to totally colonize Cambodia failed, and Hanoi was forced to withdraw with its dogmatic tail between its legs.

As part of the withdrawal process, Hanoi rewarded Hun Sen's loyalty by appointed him Prime Minister of Cambodia. As sop to the rebelling Vietnamese army, a large contingent was demobilized, assigned residence in Cambodian, and given land. According to Cambodian government circulars, in the mid-80s Hun Sen granted 200,000-300,000 emigrant Vietnamese, with no historical ties Cambodian, citizenship and prudential land holdings. As part of Vietnam's historical strategy of gaining territory, referred to as *đồn điền* (military colonization), the demobilized army units then brought their families, relatives and friends, and are kept as a "ready reserve forces." Hun also agreed to concede lands along the border that had been part of the Ho Chi Minh Trail to the Vietnamese communists, thus moving the border with Vietnam several kilometers inside Cambodia. This concession is still in dispute.

Despite their veiled retreat from Cambodia, Ho's dream lives on, and the Vietnamese communist party hasn't given up. Amoeba-like, Vietnam is in the process of neo-colonizing both Laos and Cambodia, by gobbling up their territories, infusing vast numbers of emigrants, exploiting their natural resources and dominating them economically, commercially, politically and culturally. Vietnam maintains a contingent of Special Forces in a super-spy compound on the outskirts of Phnom Penh, close to Prime Minister Hun Sen's Tuol Krassaing fortress residence near Takhmau, to ensure that he does not stray too far from Hanoi's policies toward Cambodia. Cambodian sources say, "Millions of Vietnamese are now occupying our country." As part of its' neo-colonization process of Cambodia, by August 2004, Communist Vietnam had established chapters of the United Front for National Construction and Defense of Cambodia, a cover for Vietnam's Fatherland Front," in all 23 provinces and cities in the country."³¹ The Vietnamese historical term for this is *tây tiến* (westward movement).

China, again fearing a strong Russian ally on its soft underbelly, has once again waded into Cambodia, as well as Laos, with deep pockets filled with cash in an attempt to counterbalance Vietnam's influence in these countries. As Yogi Berra once said, "It's déjà vu all over again." And the band plays on.

Ho's legacy

Hero, patriot, nationalist, the celibate-benign and priestly Uncle Ho, the George Washington of Vietnam – NOT! Ho Chi Minh's real legacy is that he was a mass murderer who was directly responsible for crimes on a genocidal scale. Since his policies have

been carried on after his death in 1969, Ho also bears responsibility for the death and suffering of millions of Vietnamese after the 1975 communist takeover of South Vietnam, as well as the Khmer Rouge genocide in which over 2 million Cambodians were murdered, and the deaths of countless numbers of Laotians and Hmong. All this has been excused away in the fashion typical of communists and their useful idiots, who rationalize that killing millions was "necessary for the revolution."¹⁷

Michael Benge, the author, is a retired Foreign Service Officer who spent 11 years in Vietnam (five as a POW), is a student of South East Asian Politics, and is very active in advocating for human rights, religious freedom and democracy for the peoples of this region and has written extensively on these subjects. Contact: bengemike@aol.com

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Citations and Resources

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