SAIGON ARTS, CULTURE & EDUCATION INSTITUTE

To Research, Document & Promote Vietnamese-American Culture

NEWSLETTER # 94 AUGUST 2016

SACEI
www.sacei07.org

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.**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Brigadier General William H. Seely III

William H. Seely III, has been promoted Brigadier General—the third Vietnamese-American to receive that honor—on 5/26/2016. The other two were Gen. Viet Xuan Luong and Gen. Flora Lap The Chau.

He is serving as the chief of staff, U.S. Marine Corps Forces Cyberspace Command, Fort Meade, Maryland and is currently deployed as the J-2 Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command-Iraq.

Vietnam: Historians at War *Mark Moyar*

http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1042&context=usarmyresearch

This 2008 article is a U.S. government work and is not subject to copyright in the United States.
Acad. Quest. (2008) 21:37–51 DOI 10.1007/s12129-008-9045-y

By the early 1990s, when I began studying the Vietnam War, the American public had largely lost interest in the history of that conflict. The Civil War and World War II were the wars that historians were advised to cover if they wanted to reach the public. Among government officials, military officers, and political scientists, Vietnam was considered irrelevant, because the United States would never get caught in protracted counterinsurgency warfare again. Iraq changed all that. Ever since the outbreak of insurgency in the former empire of Saddam Hussein, people of all persuasions have been mining the history of Vietnam for information that will support their preferred Iraq policies. Hundreds of thousands of American troops sent to Iraq and Afghanistan have received more instruction on Vietnam than on any other historical subject. Although more than thirty years have passed since the end of the Vietnam War, historians today are as divided on what happened as the American people were during the war itself. During the 1960s and 1970s, huge numbers of antiwar Americans entered academia and the media, while few Vietnam veterans and other supporters of the war obtained jobs in those professions, in many cases because veteran status or pro-war sentiments were considered unacceptable. As a result, most academic and journalistic accounts of the war written during and shortly afterwards depicted Vietnam as a bad war that the United States should not have fought. Antiwar history of the Vietnam War thus acquired the label of “orthodox” history.
A small group of veterans and academic historians who rejected the fundamental tenets of the antiwar movement were, from the beginning, producing works that became known as “revisionist.” Over time, the number of revisionists would increase, but the movement has never made major inroads into academia. Some academics have attempted to explain that fact by arguing that revisionists are irrational or dimwitted. David L. Anderson, the president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations and an orthodox historian of the Vietnam War, stated in his 2005 presidential address that revisionists interpret the war based on an “uncritical acceptance” of American cold war policy rather than analysis of the facts, whereas orthodox historians rely exclusively on “reasoned analysis” in reaching their conclusions. (1) Some orthodox scholars have maintained that

Continue on next page

Disclaimer: The listing in this newsletter of a book title or a film does not mean endorsement or approval by SACEI.

Vietnam: Historians at War...

the revisionists' primary ambition is not to find the truth but to twist the facts of the Vietnam War to justify contemporary wars or other policies. University of Iowa history professor Colin Gordon, for example, said with respect to revisionists and those who based foreign policy decisions on their interpretations, "History is temporarily useful to those who willfully misinterpret it, but genuinely useful only to those who make an effort to understand it. The historical memory of recent American foreign policy is shallow, cynical and selective. It shapes the past for present purposes, retrieving only those historical fragments which reinforce present assumptions." (2) While such comments may hold some truth with respect to a few individuals, they most definitely do not apply to the most prominent of the revisionists. Why, then, do historians keep making them? A leading possibility is the ideological imbalance among today's academic history departments. History faculty tirelessly profess commitment to "diversity," but within their own ranks one finds near uniformity of political sentiment. For example, at the University of Iowa history department, of which Professor Gordon is the chair, Democrats outnumber Republicans 27 to 0. (3) As analysts of group-think have observed, people in such environments are led toward the conclusion that every reasonable person shares their views, and hence any outsider who disagrees is not reasonable. Historians who oppose the orthodoxy on Vietnam, or on other politically-charged subjects like Soviet espionage in America or feminism are likely to be received by these departments as if they were crank propagandists or foolish eccentrics. Another problem that impedes the study of Vietnam is a politically correct contraction of allowable inquiry. Within history departments, there is a generally recognized spectrum of subject matter respectability. At its left end, denoting maximum political correctness, lies the history of race, class, and gender. Between that end and the center lie such fields as cultural history, immigration history, and environmental history. At the other end of the spectrum political history stands at moderate incorrectness, diplomatic history at serious incorrectness, and military history at maximum incorrectness. As a result, military history has suffered more than any other field at the hands of the radicals, with military history jobs disappearing from most history departments as soon as their elderly military historians retire. Political correctness has also banished certain crucial ideas from the academic discussion of Vietnam. When a revisionist contends that the Vietnamese had an authoritarian political culture that allowed strong men like Ho Chi Minh to thrive and made democracy unfeasible, orthodox professors often hurl accusations ranging from insensitivity to racism. The only instance in which authoritarian cultures may be discussed is Iraq—the existence of an authoritarian culture in Iraq can be used to highlight the foolishness of George Bush's invasion of that country. Another weakness of the contemporary university that affects the study of the Vietnam War is excessive compartmentalization. When it became fashionable several decades ago for historians to focus on niche topics, proponents argued that this research would shed new light on big historical questions. That may have been true in certain cases, but the overall effect has been to reduce interest in the big questions and drive historians into compartments that bear little relation to each other except for their political ideology. The diplomatic historians who study the Vietnam War often gravitate toward niche topics, such as the role of American universities in Vietnam, Vietnamese and American ideas of nation building, or the operations of the National Security Council. (4) Those who address the broad policies of the United States or other great powers usually give only cursory treatment to events in Vietnam or the rest of Southeast Asia. (5) Yet one often cannot pass sound judgment on decisions in Washington without knowing the details in Southeast Asia. Historians of Vietnam who cover the war tend to focus on narrow issues of culture and politics and avoid strategy or warfare. (6) Knowing what is most important in culture and politics in wartime is impossible without knowing the strategic and military context. Studies of the American media in Vietnam generally devote little attention to South Vietnamese culture and politics. (7) Yet it is wrong to judge the American press or American press policies without understanding South Vietnamese politics and culture. Some compartmentalized historians would respond to the foregoing by contending that they can get the necessary contextual information from the many wider histories that have already been written about Vietnam. When I began working on a broad history of Vietnam, I was told more than once by publishers and other scholars that there was no need for another broad history because people like David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, and Stanley Karnow had already written everything that needed to be written about the political and military events. Therein lies one of the worst problems concerning the study of the Vietnam War—the uncritical acceptance of the "big picture" presented in dated and dubious writings. Most of what today is considered the conventional wisdom originated with the triumvirate of Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow, journalists who reported on the war as it was happening and afterwards wrote best-selling books. Halberstam began writing books well before the others, publishing The Making of a Quagmire in 1964, Ho in 1971, and The Best and the Brightest, which sold more than a million copies, in 1972. (8) Stanley Karnow's Vietnam: A History, published in 1983, also sold over one million copies and was accompanied by a multivolume PBS documentary that attracted Ken Burns-size audiences. (9) Neil Sheehan's A Bright Shining Lie arrived in 1988 and promptly won the

Continue on next page

National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. (10) All three of these journalists were entertaining writers, and awful historians. The narrative that emerged from their books is relatively straightforward. The United States was wrong to fight the war, the story goes, for American policymakers mistook Ho Chi Minh for a member of an international Communist conspiracy when in reality he was merely a proud nationalist who disdained his Chinese Communist neighbors. American leaders were completely ignorant of South Vietnam and mindlessly optimistic about progress in the war. America's South Vietnamese allies were corrupt and cowardly, in contrast to the patriotic and dedicated North Vietnamese and Viet Cong. The only real American heroes of the war were the reporters and the few servicemen who recognized that the enterprise was doomed from the start. Some prominent journalists criticized Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow from the early stages of the war. In a September 1963 article, Joseph Alsop likened the American correspondents in Saigon to the American journalists of the 1940s who had denigrated Chiang Kai-Shek and praised Mao TseTung as a "great and humane man," as well as to Herbert Matthews, the reporter who had idealized Fidel Castro during the Cuban revolution. Alsop accused these reporters of portraying the situation in unduly negative terms, asserting that "it is easy enough to paint a dark, indignant picture, without departing from the facts, if you ignore the majority of Americans who admire the Vietnamese as fighters and seek out the one U.S. officer in ten who inevitably thinks all foreigners fight badly." (11) Marguerite Higgins, who had become the first female war correspondent to win the Pulitzer Prize for her reporting on the Korean War, found that Halberstam's articles contained many glaring inaccuracies, most of which were intended to tarnish the image of South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem. After Higgins authored a string of New York Herald Tribune stories eviscerating various claims Halberstam had made in the New York Times, an editor at the Times went so far as to send Halberstam a letter stating: "Some of what she has been writing would tend to balance the material we have been getting from Saigon recently....I am sure that you will take care of this aspect of the Vietnamese story as soon as you can." The letter prompted Halberstam to shoot back, "If you send me one more cable referring to that woman's copy you will have my resignation forthwith by return cable and I mean it repeat mean it." (12) Higgins went on to write a terrific book entitled Our Vietnam Nightmare, which was published in 1965. Unfortunately, Higgins's book did not achieve the popularity of the books by Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow, and within a few years it faded into obscurity. One reason is that she contracted black fever and died shortly after the book was published. Another is that the turn of the American intelligentsia against the war in the late 1960s made Higgins's views into the most dangerous sort of heresy. The orthodox historians of the late 1970s and 1980s largely adhered to the narrative passed down by Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow. Histories covering John F. Kennedy's presidency echoed the journalists in depicting South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem as a hopeless reactionary whose tyranny deprived the South Vietnamese government of legitimacy and whose discrimination against Buddhists brought his government to a much-deserved ruin. (13) Those covering Lyndon Johnson's presidency repeated the view that America's vital interests were not at stake in Vietnam and that the war could not have been won by any means and hence Johnson should not have intervened in 1965. (14) Some of the histories modified the image of Johnson and other top figures as documentary evidence made clear that the media's portrayal of these figures were gross caricatures, but these changes did not alter the main features of the narrative. Rather, they augmented it and were incorporated into the books by Karnow and Sheehan. (15) Historians who addressed American military performance accused the U.S. military of fighting unlawfully and unsuccessfully against a wily adversary that regularly outwitted it, and they alleged that the war inflicted long-term psychological damage on huge numbers of American veterans. (16) These claims made the war appear even more reprehensible, which also made draft dodging appear more sensible. Nothing was said about the psychological impact on the enemy, enhancing the impression that the North Vietnamese did no wrong in sending hundreds of thousands of young men to die in countless military defeats in South Vietnam. A small but strong group of revisionist books emerged during this same period. Although a substantial proportion of their authors had doctorates, few had permanent academic appointments, and the only one of those who worked in a history department was employed in Britain, which has not been as badly afflicted by faculty politicization as the United States. Robert F. Turner, a Vietnam veteran and Hoover Institution fellow who later obtained a non-tenured position at the University of Virginia Law School, disputed the portrayal of the Vietnamese Communists as devoted nationalists in his book Vietnamese Communism: Its Origins and Development. (17) In an international history of the war, distinguished British professor Ralph Smith argued that Vietnamese Communism posed a serious threat to the United States and hence the United States was right in trying to hold the line in South Vietnam. (18) Norman Podhoretz, the American pundit, made the same argument in a work geared more for the public than academia. (19) The works of Ellen Hammer and William Colby, an American scholar living in France and a former CIA director, respectively, charged that South Vietnam was viable under Ngo Dinh Diem and that the United States erred catastrophically in encouraging his overthrow. (20) Reiterating points made during the war by senior U.S. military officers, veterans like Harry Summers and

Continue on next page

Vietnam: Historians at War...

former politicians like Richard Nixon argued that the war could have been won had the United States taken more aggressive military actions, such as severing the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and bombing North Vietnam massively from the start instead of escalating the bombing gradually. (21) A different group, led by a military officer with a Ph.D. named Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., concluded that the war could have been won had the United States been more delicate, rather than more forceful. According to the Krepinevich school, the United States focused on fighting a conventional war in the hinterlands because the U.S. military had been designed to fight such a war, when in fact much greater attention should have been given to securing the populous areas. (22) The most influential of the early revisionist books was Guenter Lewy's America and Vietnam, the only work of its vintage that remains highly important to historians today. (23) Of Lewy's many contributions, his greatest was the refutation of antiwar arguments about the immorality, inhumanity, and illegality of American military actions in Vietnam. A political science professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Lewy never received the open acclaim from academia or the media that he deserved, but he effected great changes to the war's history in quiet ways. After the appearance of his book, countless fashionable antiwar arguments stopped appearing in the articles and books written by those who continued to adhere to the antiwar orthodoxy. Since 1990, the quality of scholarship, both orthodox and revisionist, has improved as more documentation has become available and scholars have been abletomakeuseofpreviousdiscoveries.Theorthodoxhistory,however,hasnot venturedveryfarfromtheHalberstam-Sheehan-Karnownarrative.Muchofthat narrative has continued to evade serious questioning from orthodox historians, who have preferred to remain focused on a fairly narrow set of questions. Orthodox scholars have continued to assert that Vietnam was not strategically important without examining most of the relevant information that has become available. In one of the most celebrated of recent orthodox histories, Cornell University history professor Fredrik Logevall announced that most scholars, himself included, consider it "axiomatic" that the United States erred in deciding to intervene in Vietnam. (24) The United States did not need to fight Ho Chi Minh, proponents of the orthodoxy still maintain, because he would have become an Asian Tito had the Americans not pestered him. (25) Hanoi's dedication to conquering the South, they add, ensured that no American strategy would have succeeded. (26) For orthodox scholars, Ngo Dinh Diem remains a poor leader who senselessly antagonized his people. (27) The portrayal of American veterans as perpetrators of horrible actions during the war and psychological wrecks after the war has continued. (28) The areas that have received the greatest attention recently from orthodox historians possess considerable historical significance but relatively minor import in the orthodox-revisionist debate. Amongst prominent orthodox historians there is an ongoing debate over whether Kennedy would have withdrawn from Vietnam had he not been assassinated. (29) They also disagree about why Johnson intervened. (30) Their biases and lack of knowledge on other aspects of the war, however, have allowed revisionists to overtake them on these topics. The most lasting orthodox contributions since 1990, therefore, are books of even narrower scope. Although largely wrong about the big picture, these books provide some valuable small pictures. Clemson history professor Edwin Moïse unearthed a large amount of new information on the Tonkin Gulf incidents, (31) and George Herring, who recently retired from the University of Kentucky history department, did the same for Lyndon Johnson's relations with the U.S. military. (32) Harold P. Ford, a former CIA officer, incorporated into his history documents that are not normally available to researchers. (33) In a relatively favorable history of Ngo Dinh Diem's nation-building enterprises, Professor Philip Catton of Stephen F. Austin State University went the farthest in challenging conventional views without chopping down the overarching tenets of the orthodox school. (34) Some other valuable books have provided new insights into smaller matters while largely steering clear of the big points of disagreement between orthodox and revisionist historians. Of these, several of the best have incorporated important evidence from Soviet and Chinese archives to illuminate the roles of the Soviet Union and China. (35) Studies of other countries and regions have enhanced understanding of the international dimensions of the war. (36) As Vietnamese and French sources have become more accessible, new publications on Vietnamese Communism have appeared. (37) Recent biographies of American leaders have brought new discoveries on strategic decision-making. (38) The recent revisionist histories, in contrast to some earlier revisionist works, have generally been backed by voluminous research, captured in numerous footnotes. Although not all of their authors are excellent scholars, they are generally more rigorous in their analysis than their orthodox counterparts, because they are so often challenged that they have become adept at anticipating and countering contrary assertions. Because experience has given revisionists a better understanding of the importance of wrestling with differently minded people, they have also been much more willing than orthodox historians to invite the opposing side to conferences they organize. The lengthiest contribution of recent revisionism, coming in at over eleven hundred pages, is Arthur Dommen's The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans: Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. Dommen had worked as a journalist in Vietnam and Laos during the war, but, as the length of his book indicates, he was closer to a scholar than a journalist by temperament,

Continue on next page

and after the war obtained a Ph.D. in agricultural economics. Having spent many years gathering information, including a considerable amount on the Vietnamese side, Dommen shot some sizeable holes in the Halberstam-Sheehan-Karnow account. He highlighted nefarious aspects of Vietnamese Communism that orthodox historians had missed or ignored, and concluded that Vietnamese nationalists like Ngo Dinh Diem offered a viable alternative to Communism. He was also among the first to note that the Buddhist protesters, whose charges of religious oppression crippled the South Vietnamese government from 1963 to 1965, had fabricated evidence of oppression and were more concerned with gaining political power than religious freedom. (39) Col. H.R. McMaster, a highly distinguished U.S. Army officer who holds a Ph.D. in history, attracted much attention with his 1997 book Dereliction of Duty, in which he showed that Lyndon Johnson and Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara disregarded and abused the Joint Chiefs of Staff at a time when they had much sounder ideas on American strategy than the civilian leadership did. (40) In the late 1990s, Francis X. Winters, a professor emeritus at the Georgetown University Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, and Geoffrey Shaw, a Canadian with a Ph.D. who has been unable to land a tenure-track position, further advanced the interpretations of Ellen Hammer and William Colby on the Diem government and the 1963 coup. (41) Think tank fellow Michael Lind of the New America Foundation and political scientist C. Dale Walton of the University of Reading offered strong challenges to the conventional wisdom, although they did less historical research than other revisionists because they were policy analysts by background rather than historians. Lind's book was particularly strong on the domino theory, demonstrating that there really was an international Communist conspiracy to take Vietnam and then other countries in succession. (42) Walton concluded that the United States would have done much better had it chosen different strategic options. (43) As with orthodox historians, revisionists have tended to focus on select aspects of the conflict rather than covering the war holistically. In designing my recent book, Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965, I sought to fill the gap by analyzing every significant facet of the war, from military to diplomatic to political to social, and every country that had a significant influence on the war, of which there were many. Because too few reliable histories had been written previously, I relied almost entirely on primary sources for information, which required much more time than the research for the average general history but also yielded many more discoveries than I would otherwise have found. Some of my research produced solid evidence for assertions that other revisionists had made previously but without supporting facts, for instance the commitment of Ho Chi Minh to global Communist revolution or the feasibility of severing the North Vietnamese supply routes through Laos, the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trail. Other parts revealed new facts that have forced alteration of central interpretations, such as the remarkable success of South Vietnam's counterinsurgency initiatives in 1962 and 1963, or the strong support for American intervention in Vietnam among the other nations of Asia and Oceania. (44) Some of the most important discoveries involved the behavior of Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow during the war and its impact on what they later wrote in their best-selling books. In 1963, unlike later, the American journalists in Vietnam generally favored U.S. involvement in Vietnam, but believed that South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem had to be replaced because he was not liberal enough in handling the press and non-Communist oppositionists, especially Buddhist protesters who were calling for huge concessions from the government. They disbelieved Diem's assertion that the Communists had infiltrated the Buddhists, an assertion that the Communists, much later, admitted to be true. In the fall of 1963, Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow publicly derided the Diem government and suggested that South Vietnam would be better off if Diem were removed from power. Both South Vietnamese and American officials, they claimed, desired the ousting of Diem. Their reporting relied heavily upon biased and dishonest sources, including two who, unbeknownst to the reporters, were Vietnamese Communist agents. Translated rapidly into Vietnamese, their anti-Diem stories were read by the Vietnamese elites, who mistakenly thought they were expressions of official U.S. policy. These articles did much to convince both South Vietnamese generals and U.S. ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge that Diem had to go, and that replacing Diem would lead to major improvements in the war effort. Those generals, with Lodge's blessing, overthrew and murdered Diem on November 2, 1963. Instead of improving the war effort, however, the coup resulted in a dramatic downturn, for the new leaders were weak and purged huge numbers of good officers for their past loyalty to Diem. Halberstam, Sheehan, and Karnow now faced accusations that they had helped wreck the South Vietnamese government. They cunningly devised a defense that deflected the criticism and profoundly influenced everything they, and many others, wrote thereafter. They asserted that the South Vietnamese war effort had been ruined before Diem's death, something they had not claimed before the coup, and therefore their support for overthrowing Diem made little difference. Later, they would use this point to argue that the war was hopeless from the beginning, for in the latter stages of the war they backed away from their earlier support of American intervention and, in Halberstam's case, denied that they had ever supported it. By sifting through masses of American and North Vietnamese documents as well as American press reports, I determined that South Vietnam was actually winning the war until Diem's death, and began losing

Continue on next page

Vietnam: Historians at War...

as soon as he was gone. The books by Halberstam, Sheehan, Karnow and nearly every other orthodox author concentrated on the period from the division of Vietnam in 1954 to the Tet Offensive of 1968, providing minimal coverage of the years 1969 to 1975. Revisionists began fixing that problem in the late 1990s with histories arguing that the South Vietnamese government grew much stronger during this period and that by the early 1970s it had, with the help of the United States, wiped out the Viet Cong insurgents. In my first book, Phoenix and the Birds of Prey, I examined how South Vietnamese and American forces destroyed the insurgency at the village level, and showed that the counterinsurgency programs supported by the United States were not the exercises in indiscriminate murder of antiwar legend. (45) Lewis Sorley, a veteran of the U.S. Army and the CIA who also has a Ph.D. but no academic affiliation, addressed both the regular and irregular elements of the war during its latter years in his book A Better War. As American forces gradually withdrew, Sorley showed, South Vietnamese forces improved to such a degree that they were able to defeat a massive offensive by fourteen North Vietnamese divisions in the spring of 1972—an event that orthodox historians have almost completely ignored. (46) These revelations have bolstered the interpretation of some earlier revisionists that South Vietnam was a viable country and could have survived had the United States not cut aid to the South Vietnamese government in the war's final years. B.G. Burkett, a Vietnam veteran and a stockbroker by profession, demolished most of the mythology surrounding Vietnam veterans in one fell swoop. Burkett's book, Stolen Valor, extraordinary for both its detailed research and its nationwide popularity, revealed that several hundred supposed Vietnam veterans in the public spotlight were frauds. Many of these false veterans had appeared on TV and in books to recount stories of atrocities and psychological injuries, providing the evidence desired by antiwar historians. In addition, Burkett used statistics and detective work to disprove long-held generalizations of orthodox historians about Vietnam veterans, such as that these veterans had much higher rates of unemployment, homelessness, and suicide than non-veterans. (47) Slowly but surely, the revisionist view is gaining ground. The official reading lists of the U.S. armed forces are peppered with books by revisionists. In recent speeches, President Bush has invoked some revisionist arguments. Substantial elements of the American media have espoused or provided a forum for revisionism. Only among college faculties are there large blocks of people who still refuse to give serious consideration to revisionists and try to prevent others from hearing what the revisionists have to say. Of course, these faculties have not yet caught up with the rest of humanity in fully accepting the ramifications of Soviet Communism's collapse, so one should expect that a good deal more time must pass before the truth will permeate their corridors.

References

1. David L. Anderson, "One Vietnam War Should Be Enough and Other Reflections on Diplomatic History and the Making of Foreign Policy" (address, annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, College Park, MD, June 24, 2005); reprinted in Diplomatic History, 30, no. 1 (2006): 1–21. See also Robert Buzzanco, "Fear and (Self) Loathing in Lubbock: How I Learned to Quit Worrying and Love Vietnam and Iraq," Counterpunch, 16 –17 April 2005.
2. Colin Gordon, "The Cloak of Power," New Internationalist (September 1993), http://www.newint.org/ issue247/ cloak.htm.
3. Mark Bauerlein, "History Department at U of I Flunks Test of Political Diversity," Des Moines Register, 10 October 2007.
4. John Ernst, Forging a Fateful Alliance: Michigan State University and the Vietnam War (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1998); Edward Miller, "Grand Designs: Vision, Power and Nation Building in America's Alliance with Ngo Dinh Diem, 1954–1960" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2004); Andrew Preston, The War Council: McGeorge Bundy, the NSC, and Vietnam (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). This note and most of the other notes contain only a representative sample of sources, for the great volume of Vietnam books renders a comprehensive listing impractical in an article of this size.
5. Robert D. Schulzinger, A Time for War: The United States and Vietnam, 1941–1975 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Fredrik Logevall, Choosing War: The Lost Chance for Peace and the Escalation of War in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); David E. Kaiser, American Tragedy: Kennedy, Johnson, and the Origins of the Vietnam War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000).
6. Kim N. B. Ninh, A World Transformed: The Politics of Culture in Revolutionary Vietnam, 1945–1965 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002); Shawn Frederick McHale, Print and Power: Confucianism, Communism, and Buddhism in the Making of Modern Vietnam (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003).

Continue on next page

7. William M. Hammond, Public Affairs: The Military and the Media, 1962–1968 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1988); William Prochnau, Once Upon a Distant War: David Halberstam, Neil Sheehan, Peter Arnett—Young War Correspondents and Their Early Vietnam Battles (New York: Times Books, 1995).
8. David Halberstam, The Making of a Quagmire: An Uncomplimentary Account of Our Precarious Commitment in South Vietnam (New York: Random House, 1965); Ho (New York: Random House, 1971); The Best and the Brightest (New York: Random House, 1972).
9. Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York: Penguin Books, 1983).
10. Neil Sheehan, A Bright Shining Lie: John Paul Vann and America in Vietnam (New York: Random House, 1988).
11. Joseph Alsop, "The Crusaders," Washington Post, 23 September 1963.
12. Prochnau, Once Upon a Distant War, 397–98.
13. George C. Herring, America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950–1975 (New York: Wiley, 1979); William J. Rust, Kennedy in Vietnam (New York: Scribner, 1985); William C. Gibbons, The U.S. Government and the Vietnam War: Executive and Legislative Roles and Relationships, vol. 2 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).
14. William Turley, The Second Indochina War: A Short Political and Military History (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986); Herring, America's Longest War.
15. Larry Berman, Planning a Tragedy: The Americanization of the War in Vietnam (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982); George McT. Kahin, Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam (New York: Knopf, 1986).
16. Loren Baritz, Backfire: A History of How American Culture Led Us into Vietnam and Made Us Fight the Way We Did (New York: William Morrow, 1985); James William Gibson, The Perfect War: Technowar in Vietnam (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986).
17. Robert Turner, Vietnamese Communism: Its Origins and Development (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1975).
18. Ralph B. Smith, An International History of the Vietnam War, vol. 2 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986).
19. Norman Podhoretz, Why We Were in Vietnam (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1982).
20. Ellen J. Hammer, A Death in November: America in Vietnam, 1963 (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1987); William Colby with James McCargar, Lost Victory: A Firsthand Account of America's Sixteen-Year Involvement in Vietnam (Chicago: Contemporary Books, 1989).
21. Harry G. Summers, Jr., On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1982); Richard Nixon, No More Vietnams (New York: Arbor House, 1985); Norman B. Hannah, The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam War (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1987); Phillip B. Davidson, Vietnam At War: The History, 1945–1975 (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988).
22. Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., The Army and Vietnam (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).
23. Guenter Lewy, America and Vietnam (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).
24. Logevall, Choosing War, xiii.
25. James R. Arnold, The First Domino: Eisenhower, the Military, and America's Intervention in Vietnam (New York: Morrow, 1991); Arnold R. Isaacs, Vietnam Shadows: The War, Its Ghosts, and Its Legacy (Baltimore; Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Robert Mann, A Grand Delusion: America's Descent into Vietnam (New York: Basic Books, 2001).
26. Robert Buzzanco, Masters of War: Military Dissent and Politics in the Vietnam Era (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Schulzinger, A Time for War; Jeffrey Record, The Wrong War: Why We Lost in Vietnam (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1998).
27. David L. Anderson, Trapped By Success: The Eisenhower Administration and Vietnam, 1953–1961 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991); Timothy J. Lomperis, From People's War to People's Rule: Insurgency, Intervention, and the Lessons of Vietnam (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Howard Jones, The Death of A Generation: How the Assassinations of Diem and JFK Prolonged the Vietnam War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
28. Christian G. Appy, Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993); Jonathan Shays, Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character (New York: Atheneum, 1994).
29. Recent histories alleging that Kennedy was planning to withdraw from Vietnam include John M. Newman, JFK and Vietnam: Deception, Intrigue, and the Struggle for Power (New York: Warner Books, 1992); Jones, Death of a Generation; Gareth Porter, Perils of Dominance: Imbalance of Power and the Road to War in Vietnam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). Opponents of the withdrawal thesis include Larry Berman, "NSAM 263 and NSAM 273:

Continue on next page

Manipulating History," in Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted Gittinger, eds., Vietnam: The Early Decisions (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1997), 177–203; Noam Chomsky, Rethinking Camelot: JFK, the Vietnam War, and US Political Culture (Boston: South End Press, 1993); Logevall, Choosing War.

30. Compare, for example, Lloyd C. Gardner, Pay Any Price: Lyndon Johnson and the Wars for Vietnam (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995); Robert Dallek, Flawed Giant: Lyndon Johnson and His Times, 1961–1973 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Logevall, Choosing War; Kaiser,American Tragedy.
31. Edwin Moïse, Tonkin Gulf and the Escalation of the Vietnam War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
32. George C. Herring, LBJ and Vietnam: A Different Kind of War (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994).
33. Harold P. Ford, CIA and the Vietnam Policymakers: Three Episodes, 1962–1968 (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 1998).
34. Philip E. Catton, Diem's Final Failure: Prelude to America's War in Vietnam (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002).
35. Qiang Zhai, China and the Vietnam Wars, 1950–1975 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Chen Jian, Mao's China and the Cold War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Ilya V. Gaiduk, Confronting Vietnam: Soviet Policy toward the Indochina Conflict, 1954–1963 (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
36. Lloyd C. Gardner and Ted. Gittinger, eds., International Perspectives on Vietnam (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1999); Ronald Bruce Frankum, The United States and Australia in Vietnam, 1954–1968: Silent Partners (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001); Christopher Goscha and Maurice Vaïsse, La guerre du Vietnam et l'Europe, 1963–1973 (Bruxelles: Bruylant, 2003); Thomas Alan Schwartz, LBJ and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
37. William J. Duiker, The Sacred War: Nationalism and Revolution in a Divided Vietnam (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1994); Ang Cheng Guan, The Vietnam War from the Other Side: The Vietnamese Communists' Perspective (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); Sophie Quinn-Judge, Ho Chi Minh: The Missing Years, 1919–1941 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).
38. Richard Reeves, President Kennedy: Profile of Power (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993); Anne Blair, Lodge in Vietnam: A Patriot Abroad (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995); Lewis Sorley, Honorable Warrior: General Harold K. Johnson and the Ethics of Command (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998).
39. Arthur J. Dommen, The Indochinese Experience of the French and the Americans: Nationalism and Communism in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
40. H. R. McMaster, Dereliction of Duty: Lyndon Johnson, Robert McNamara, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Lies that Led to Vietnam (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).
41. Francis X. Winters, The Year of the Hare: America in Vietnam, January 25, 1963–February 15, 1964 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); Geoffrey Shaw, "Ambassador Frederick Nolting's Role in American Diplomatic and Military Policy toward the Government of South Vietnam" (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1999).
42. Michael Lind, Vietnam, The Necessary War: A Reinterpretation of America's Most Disastrous Military Conflict (New York: Free Press, 1999).
43. C. Dale Walton, The Myth of Inevitable U.S. Defeat in Vietnam (London: Frank Cass, 2002).
44. Mark Moyar, Triumph Forsaken: The Vietnam War, 1954–1965 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
45. Mark Moyar, Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: The CIA's Secret Campaign to Destroy the Viet Cong (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1997); Mark Moyar, Phoenix and the Birds of Prey: Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism in Vietnam, new ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007).
46. Lewis Sorley, A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999).
47. B.G. Burkett, Stolen Valor (Dallas: Verity Press, 1998).

Yes We Fought! *Nguyen Phuc Hau*

I was the vice chairman of the supervisory board of the city of Nha Trang and Khanh Hoa Province. I was elected to that position in 1970 for four years and then was reelected in 1974 for four more years.

Politics is in my blood. I wanted to go into politics to try to help my people. I was born in 1931, so my generation is a generation of war. When I was a boy it was the Second World War. We fought against the Japanese. When I got older we Vietnamese were fighting the Chinese, the French, the United States, and each other. Always fighting.

I would really someday like to talk to Mike Mansfield. After Saigon collapsed I was hiding in the Saigon and I listened to the radio, to the Voice of America, and I heard Mike Mansfield say, "Vietnam is not worth a single American life." It made me feel very, very sad, because I was hiding out at the time from the communists and I remembered the courage of my American advisors during the war and I loved them very much. I think the Americans that I knew that participated in the Vietnam War thought they were fighting for a noble cause -- to preserve freedom is noble. Mike Mansfield didn't know about how many people died in Vietnam fighting against the communists and he did not watch television to see how many thousands of people ran away from the towns when the communists came. He should have known what they were running from. In 1954 more than a million Vietnamese fled from the North to the South. Mike Mansfield must have known why.

I was there the day Nha Trang collapsed. I told my wife she should go to her sister in Phan Rang for safety and I'd stay in my city because of my job. I was the organizer of assistance for the refugees arriving from the other cities. Two days before Nha Trang fell, we sent a letter to the general who commanded troops around the city and we asked to have a meeting with him in order to organize a defense for the city. Then at 9 o'clock on the day that it fell, I came to the office and had a meeting with the people in the organization for assistance of the refugees from the other cities and waited for a general to come in. But at 11 o'clock nobody called and then we called to Province headquarters and nobody was there. I called other officers. Nobody there. And then someone came to tell me they left all already. They left without saying anything.

We had many military academies for the air force, for the navy, for the army in my area, but the generals stationed there left without saying anything to their people.

I couldn't believe it. One week before that I went with my boss and the province chief to Khanh Duong on the border between Ban Me Thuot and Khanh Hoa province. The parachutists were over there. And we brought them food and supplies to uplift their spirits and we talked to them and told them that all the people in the province were behind them and their mission was to keep fighting, to stand, to block and keep the area out of the hands of communists. We are proud they were doing a very good job. And we believed we could fight again, but that day, it was very sad.

After that I heard that they almost all died. The day the communists attacked them, they did not know the rear was leaving, so they called and called for assistance from the air force and they called for assistance from the supply department, and nobody answered. They kept fighting and they were surrounded by the communists and killed. They didn't want to surrender. The Airborne is very good. The best.

I was very stubborn. My wife came to me and said, "Hey, I heard about the Americans going to leave and we are losing the war." And she asked me what my plan was for the family: to escape or not? I said, "I don't believe it. That's stupid." That was in early 1975 and I said we can fight against the communists. And she said many families were moving already to the Saigon. And I said, "Let them move. We stay here."

I believed that even if they lost other provinces, they could keep Nha Trang and we would be safe.

After the commanders and province chiefs left, then we had turmoil in the city and prisoners got out and looted broke in the stores and burned the market.

I drove south to Phan Rang and then made my way to Vung Tau and was reunited with my family there. Vung Tau was calm, no chaos, very peaceful.

The way we lose the war is very strange. The janitor at the parochial school in Nha Trang was a communist. He used the school for stocking the arms for the communists and led the communists in the city. Later he told us that the communists of Nha Trang didn't know the ARVN commander was leaving the city. If they had known that they could take over that day and the city would not have been in chaos. He said he went to Thuy Hoa, he and his friend, and talked to the commander of the Gold Star regiment and said, "Okay, the city is empty now. The people are leaving, the commanders are leaving. So we should come take over." And the commander of the regiment did not believe him.

He said the commander of the communists did not believe him, thought he was telling a lie or something like that. He con-

Continue on next page

Yes We Fought...

vinced him to send some people with him to come back to Nha Trang to look at the situation. And that group came back to report the ARVN was leaving and then they came and took over the city. We just quit.

We just quit Vietnam like we quit Nha Trang city. The same situation. We didn't lose the war. We could have won the war. But we just quit, we just ran away. The collapse and takeover of the communists of Nha Trang city was typical for the Vietnam War. We just quit and ran away.

I don't know why. When I was in Vung Tau I came to Saigon for a supervisors meeting and we recalled the situation of every province and I had contact with some political people and then we decided, myself and my friend and some others, we wanted to organize and come back. An organization to keep South Vietnam. What did it matter if we won or not? We had a plan to move the government to Can Tho and leave Saigon empty so the communists can take over there and we would fight and save the government so we would have a legal voice to talk to the world outside.

I felt very good about this. I said, "We want to send a message to all of the people who want to fight the communists. They can go to Can Tho and we will organize our front line over there to fight against them and keep the government safe."

One week before the total collapse of Saigon I came back to look at the situation and my friend told me, "No more! The Americans don't want it."

I had very many opportunities to get out in 1975. I had many friends coming from Nha Trang with boats, but I was very disappointed with the Americans. I said, "I will stay." My mistake. That mistake will be with me for the rest of my life because of the death of my first son.

The battle came closer and closer to Vung Tau. And the Viet Cong sent rockets into the city. We had Vietnamese Marines there and they were fighting and fighting. On the day Vung Tau fell I saw two American soldiers with the Marines and they were captured by the Viet Cong. I don't know what happened to them. But I saw it.

My wife and I and our children got together and prayed and cried. The whole nation was collapsing. The worst things were about to happen to us, we thought. The communists kill the people. I had one friend who was very scared. He was with me in my city and he went to that center for refugees in Vung Tau. He went to the bathroom and locked it and stayed there the whole day. He was scared of the communists because he said he was nearly buried alive by the communists in the Tet Offensive in Hue. So he was very scared. I called him to come out and take a little food. He finally came out and ran away and I don't know what happened to him after that.

There were some machine guns firing from the hotel near us on the morning of April 30th. There was still fighting. So we listened to the radio and the people in Saigon handed over the power to the communists.

I want you to tell this story to the American people. After noontime on April 30th, after the government handed over the power to the communists, one location in Vung Tau city fought until two-thirty. It was children. The children went to the military academy, only little kids, the children of veterans, a junior military academy. They kept fighting after everyone else surrendered! They were students at the Truong Thieu Sinh Quan Vung Tau.

Many of them were killed. One day later I met one of them in the chaos of the city. I did not know him but I could recognize him because of his special style of haircut that all of the students at the academy had. I said, "What happened? Did you keep fighting over there?" He said, "Yes. We fought." He was very proud of fighting the Communists. I asked him what happened, and he said that the day before the Viet Cong got into the town, the American advisor came to the center and took the colonel of that center on the helicopter with him. And so the captain at the center then gathered all the people and he said, "Okay, now we will go to somewhere." And they left with the captain but they didn't know where they were going. The captain did not have formal orders from his colonel so he did not know what to do. So he finally stopped the students and said he wanted to lead them somewhere to get them out of the city, but didn't know where to go. So everybody now had to disperse and go away. The children did not know where to go either, though. Some were from Vung Tau, some from Da Nang, some were from Can Tho, and they don't have money to go.

So the oldest students gathered all of the other students together in the street and decided that the oldest ones would come back to the center and organize a line for fighting the communists. And they asked the little kids to run away and maybe find some families to keep them. Then about fifty of these oldest guys, who were in age from 12 to 13, broke into the storage rooms at the center and took out a machine gun and organized a defense line and a fortress for fighting when the communists came. And when the communists came in, they fought. The communists could not get into that center. They were very proud as they told this story. At noon the government handed over the power in Saigon and the cadets kept fighting. At two-thirty in the afternoon, the communists told them if they did not stop fighting, they would send a rocket into the center and kill everybody.

Continue on next page

Yes We Fought...

I asked what happened when the communists came to take over. They said they were gathered in the yard and were told to go home.
I didn't know where to go with my family. So we decided finally to take a truck and go into Saigon. And, as you know from my daughter, on the way into Saigon we had an accident and my oldest son was killed. Our truck ran into the hole made by the explosion of a rocket. The front wheel was broken. It was a pickup truck with an open back. The truck turned over. My boy was killed.
In Saigon the situation was chaos. Everybody looked like they did not understand anything. And they did not believe anything. Just like you get a shock and you don't feel anything or believe anything.
We buried my boy and the war was over.
http://lde421.blogspot.com/2012/12/yes-we-fought-nguyen-phuc-hau-remembers.html

2015 Black April: Stanford Vietnamese Student Association

http://svsa.stanford.edu/blackapril.html
(Courtesy of Bill Laurie)

Although I am happy with Culture Night 2015 because of its meaningful theme and great performance, and impressed with many other activities of Stanford Vietnamese Student Association (SVSA), I'm especially proud and fond of SVSA because they get together to commemorate the Black April every year. This year, thanks to an opportunity that they described as "extremely fortunate," Major General Lê Minh Đảo of the former Army of The Republic of Vietnam accepted SVSA's invitation to give a talk on April 30th, 2015, during the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the fall of South Vietnam.
The commemoration took place ten days after the Culture Night. In spite of the overwhelmed schedule, a group of SVSA members, including Ivy Nguyễn, Lillian Vũ, Emily Nguyễn, Kevin Trần, and Nora Nguyễn, went to admirable lengths to thoroughly prepare for this historically important event. Many SVSA members shared their thoughts and introduced the event on their Facebook front page. Ivy Nguyễn, co-president of SVSA, wrote: *"I am here and being who I am today because of my parents' and millions of Vietnamese's fight for freedom. Please join us on Thursday, April 30th 6-8PM at Kehillah Hall to commemorate the date that we lost our homeland and the lives that were sacrificed.*

This year, we have the honor of hosting General Le Minh Dao, the Major General who led the last major battle of the Vietnam War. He will share his experiences and reflections, a once in a lifetime opportunity and something you will never get from a textbook."
Anna Lê shared:
"With parents who were forced to live in a reeducation camp for ten years and who grew up during the times of struggle of post-war Vietnam, I was always reminded of what life in Vietnam meant. The stories told by my family have defined how I view myself and my culture. I am very proud to be a Vietnamese American and am grateful for all

Continue on next page

2015 Black April...

the efforts of those who have come before me. In honor of the sacrifices and bravery made by the people of Vietnam, please join Stanford Vietnamese Student Association (SVSA) and me in commemorating the 40th anniversary of the fall of Saigon."

The event was slated for 6pm to accommodate students and working people. At that time, traffic was heavy on all freeways leading to Stanford; however, people departed early in order to come on time. SVSA members came to the curbside in front of the Kehillah building to greet guests, and they also brought larger American and Vietnamese flags to the front lawn, a very smart and thoughtful gesture that helped attendees find meeting room easily.

The commemoration this year was especially meaningful due to the 40th anniversary and the appearance of General Lê Minh Đảo. Beside the SVSA members, there were many parents and a few non-Vietnamese guests.

Kehilla Hall was cozy with around seventy seats. Along the back wall of the room, a long table stood lined with drinks and trays of delicious Vietnamese foods. I felt amused, realizing that the young organizers are very practical and open-minded: working hard for a good cause, but not overlooking people's need to fuel the body. Another small detail that stood out was the organizers' appearance. Their simple yet elegant attire for the meeting with the respected guest on a solemn historical day reflected their maturity and sophistication. As with any important event, the commemoration opened with the poignant salutation of the American and Vietnamese flags. A minute of silence followed. Then a guest speaker presented a summary of the Vietnam War that focused on many facts that were well-known by all southern Vietnamese who'd lived through the war, but that had been largely underdocumented by the American media.

The overhead screen displayed the image of the Xuân Lộc battlefield in early April 1975. Columns of gushing black smoke covered the sky. Red fire from burning tanks glared amidst the dark surroundings. Guns blasted in the background as the commentator spoke: *The name of Xuan Loc has become synonymous with hope and heroism. General Le Minh Dao defies the Communist…*

The general appeared. An iron helmet cast a shadow on his forehead. His face was tense but fiercely determined. He announced, *"I will keep Long Khánh, I will knock them down here even if they bring two divisions or three divisions!"*

The video stopped. The program introducer continued:

"That was General Lê Minh Đảo forty years ago. Recently, I've seen more video of him on YouTube. During an interview in April, 2000, he mentioned the death of a soldier and his voice shook as he was on the brink of tears. From that I realized that a hero is not only someone who isn't afraid to die for his belief, but also isn't afraid to cry for others' suffering. With that, please welcome Major General Lê Minh Đảo."

The eighty-two-year-old General came to the podium, to the admiring applause of everyone.

"Today, I'm very happy to have an opportunity to meet the Stanford students…" he started modestly.

After going through a brief biography, General Lê shared his thoughts by answering questions that were sent to him in advance. He spoke in Vietnamese, and two parents took turns to translate his talk to English.

The questions ranged from asking about historical events (*"What is the biggest lesson you want to share with others from your experiences before, during, and after the war? What do you think the younger generations should learn from the Vietnam War?"* and *"What is the meaning of the Xuan Loc's defense?"*) to inquiring about current actions (*"What should my generation remember about Black April and why is that important?"*). There was also a short question with an endearing hint of youthful curiosity: *"What was your biggest fear when you were in prison?"*

General Lê answered with the heart of an army leader, of a witness who survived decades of devastating war, of a POW who had suffered seventeen years of revenge in captivity, and of a Vietnamese political refugee still fully devoted to his motherland.

He clearly pointed out that at the end of the Vietnam War, the people of both North and South Vietnam lost, and the sole winner was the international Communist power.

Continue on next page

He talked about all the tragic suffering that the Communist regime brought upon the Vietnamese people.

He shared his difficult experiences being a member of a country that was an American ally, but that was ultimately traded as a pawn by the world powers.

And he spoke from the heart about his constant worry for the survival of Vietnam as long as the Vietnamese government continues to act submissively to China instead of putting Vietnam's sovereignty above all else.

Responding to the question about his fear in prison, he said, *"Several times before, I was ready to sacrifice my life in battles. So I had nothing to fear in prison. I also relied on my trust in God, it helped me feel more at peace. However, I was often troubled by the fact that my fellow soldiers and officers had obeyed my order to stay and fight; as the result, they were slowly perishing in prison and their families were also suffering tremendously."*

However, he continued, when reunited after almost twenty years in prison, his comrades assured him that they'd never harbored any hard feelings toward him, because he had fought shoulder-to-shoulder with them, sacrificed together with them until the last moment. Forty years later, Xuan Loc was still the pride of many South Vietnamese, was still the answer to the world, and forever stood as the symbol for the relentless spirit and combat capabilities of the Army of Republic South Vietnam.
General Lê also talked to the young SVSA members with the compassion of a parent, a grandfather. When asked *"What can young Vietnamese American do to support the sovereignty of Vietnam?"* his loud, clear response was: *"First of all, you should do well in school."* This brought a burst of laughter from the students, because no matter how much Vietnamese they knew, they all understood that very familiar saying, a statement that they'd heard countless times from the elders in their families since childhood.

General Lê continued that he strongly believed that many in the audience would acquire the ability and credit to hold important positions in the American government or army. He said, *"When you deal with the world on behalf of the US, the first thing you should remember is: always keep your word, do not betray."* The young, inexperienced students probably didn't catch all of his feelings, but the parents like myself could see a trace of bitterness in his *"do not betray"* advice. In my opinion, even if the youngsters couldn't fully understand the emotions of a combat general who had been abandoned by his ally, his heartfelt counsel about integrity, loyalty, and putting one's comrade over one's personal gratification was the most valuable lesson to remember for anyone in any position.
The talk lasted one and a half hours and was followed by a questions-and-answers session. Until the last minute, the students participated fully and listened attentively during both the Vietnamese talk and the English translation. To make this occasion even more memorable, two parents and the Vietnamese language lecturer at Stanford dedicated two songs in Vietnamese and English. The first song was "Nhớ Mẹ," (Missing You, Mother) which was composed by General Lê and a friend in the concentration camp, and the second song was "Có Những Người Anh" ("There Were People") to pay tribute to the soldiers who had sacrificed their lives defending South Vietnam for over twenty years. After that, SVSA representatives came up to express their appreciation and share their thoughts. They talked about their family experiences and their feelings as part of a younger generation raised in a peaceful country, but not oblivious to the painful past and continuing struggles of the older generations.
Ivy Nguyễn said:
" … For the first eighteen years of my life, I struggled to process how my two parents could have had so many life-altering and traumatic experiences in only the first thirty years of their lives yet still be the loving and caring supports they are today.

Continue on next page

2015 Black April...

However, during the past few years away from home, maybe because of my maturation into adulthood, I have noticed that my parents are not the superheroes that I had thought them to be; they are human and they bleed just like you and me. They struggle with reconciling the loss of their homeland with the opportunities a foreign and sometimes unwelcoming land can bring. This trauma has trickled into all of our lives, silently pulling puppet strings on our families. It's time for us to acknowledge now how past trauma affects all of us today. And it's time for us to support and strengthen our multi-generational and thriving community…"

They also talked about understanding of their responsibility, as in the speech of Lillian Vũ, co-president of SVSA: *"… We have no medicine to heal us, only memories to guide us. Through these memories, through the sharing of stories between parents and children and wise mentors, we can see how far we've come and why we're here today. We can't shy away from the things that discomfort us, that challenge us to feel sorrow for those we don't know and things we haven't experienced. In many ways, it's our responsibility to continue sharing these stories and to find opportunities to have these moments in which we come together to reflect upon our history, our culture, and ourselves. In these ways, we, as a community, can grow stronger and take the next step forward."*

The event ended with a candlelight vigil. Standing next to each other in the soft, cool spring evening, three generations of Vietnamese Americans commemorated the loss of three million Northern and Southern Vietnamese soldiers, sixty-five thousand American and Alliance soldiers, and those who perished in prison or died during the escape to freedom. We also expressed gratitude for our health and the destiny that allowed us to make it to America, so that we could come together on this special day. Then we prayed for peace and the sovereignty of Vietnam. Afterwards, we arranged the candles into the number 40. The light flickering in the gentle night breeze seemed to wave to the people who were still lingering around, not yet ready to part. Although I felt happy to participate in a meaningful event with the young people, the number 40 reminded me of how fleeting time was; and a longing, somber feeling was once again heavy on my heart.

If Culture Night 2015 brought me nostalgia as well as hope for the young Vietnamese American community at Stanford, then what happened on April 30th, 2015 helped me clearly see their sophistication and raised my hope to a belief.

General Lê Minh Đảo had the same thoughts. He repeatedly said that after meeting the students at Stanford, he felt happy because his hopes and expectations for young Vietnamese Americans had been well-placed. Moreover, seeing their actions proved to him that his two-decade-long effort to share his experiences and to encourage younger generations had been fruitful.

Before going back to his home in Connecticut, General Lê showed me his favorite souvenir of the trip to the West Coast. It was the Thank You card from SVSA with a handwritten message in Vietnamese.

The message started with *"Chúng con xin trân thành cám ơn ông … "* (*We sincerely thank you…*) We both laughed and agreed that the spelling mistake in the word "chân thành" made the card cuter and the occasion even more memorable. To me, the card was a reflection of the SVSA members: pure, admirably close to the distant motherland, but needing a little more guidance. That guiding responsibility rested on the shoulders of the War's first adult generation – that of the General--and the generation bridging the gap between the motherland and the new country--parents like me.

However, we must always remember that for our advice to be effective, it should be realistic. In all his talks, General Lê often affirmed that he never forgets that the young generation is, first and foremost, American. He urged them to devote effort to accumulating strength and credibility for themselves and for the Vietnamese community in this new homeland. He reminded them not to forget about Vietnam, the place that contributed four thousand years of civilization and culture to their uniquely beautiful souls today.

He has strong convictions that many SVSA members will hold positions of great influence on US policy in the future. At that time, he hopes that they remember the lessons of Black April, so that they promote decent and considerate action toward Vietnam and toward all smaller countries. He believes that this would be the most effective diplomatic tactic to rebuild the world's trust in the US.

Continue on next page

I fully agree with General Lê. Hence, I wish to have more opportunities to remind the young Vietnamese Americans that their roots will be always important. A deep understanding and appreciation for their roots empowers them to grow higher.

I also hope that future generations will never forget Vietnam, a tiny country occupying a strategically important position on the Asia's Pacific shore. That country has always been the protecting frontier for the whole Indochinese Peninsula. It has often been used as a political cushion to absorb the suffering in conflict between big world powers.

I hope that in the future Vietnamese Americans will support Vietnam's sovereignty and help its citizens to fight back against oppression. The Vietnamese people have suffered tremendously throughout Vietnam's history. To this day, forty years after the end of the war, the country of Vietnam and its people haven't stopped bleeding.

Khôi An

http://svsa.stanford.edu/

STANFORD VIETNAMESE STUDENT ASSOCIATION

STANFORD

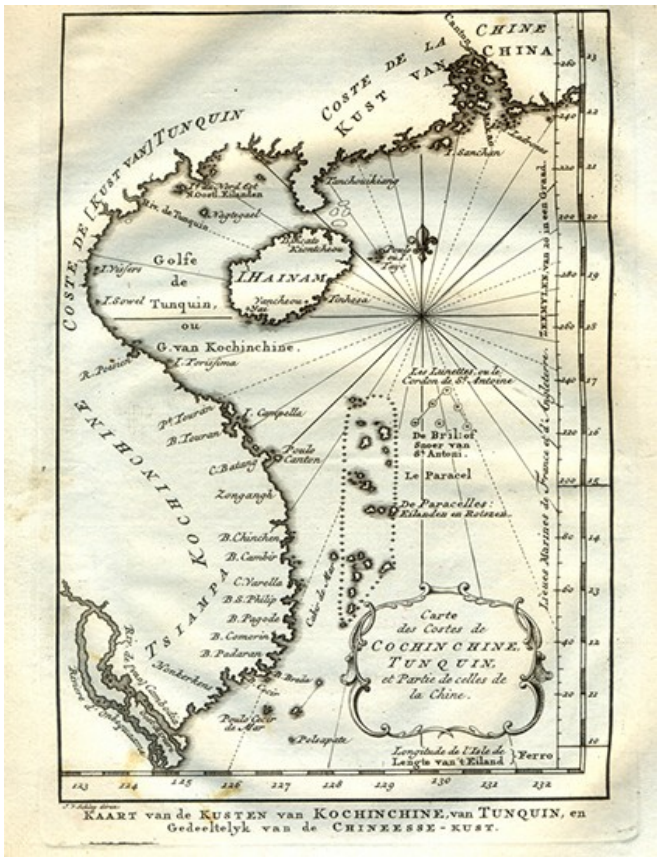
MỘT GIA ĐÌNH MỘT VIỆT NAM

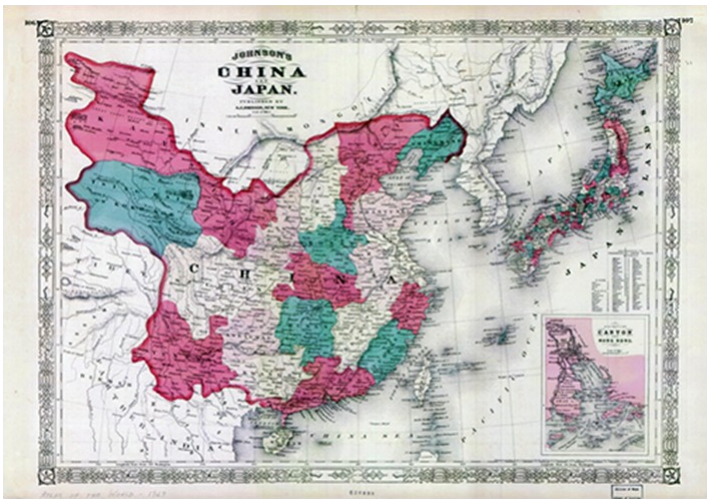
VSA

Tran Dinh Thang and the Spratley Islands

http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Making-a-difference/2013/0208/Thang-Dinh-Tran-loves-maps-and-Vietnam.-That-may-put-him-in-the-eye-of-a-storm

Tran arrived in America with his parents in 1991 under a humanitarian program established between Hanoi and Washington that allowed former Vietnamese political detainees to immigrate to the US.
After settling in West Hartford, Tran continued his studies in mechanical engineering at UConn. He received a second degree in management and engineering before working first for Electric Boat and then Pratt & Whitney.
Tran has collected 150 ancient Chinese maps and three ancient atlases that indicate that the Paracel and Spratly Islands in the South China Sea have never been part of China, as it has long claimed, but instead belong to Vietnam.
The Paracel and Spratly Islands (known as Xisha and Nansha in Chinese, and Hoang Sa and Truong Sa in Vietnamese) are now at the center of a diplomatic row between the two Asian neighbors; both have claimed the potentially oil-rich region.
Experts on the South China Sea say that if the dispute over the islands were taken to the International Court of Justice, Tran's map collection might be used as historical evidence to disprove China's claim.
Tran's collection shows contradictions to China's claim to "indisputable sovereignty" over the islands, adds Carl Thayer, a professor emeritus at the University of New South Wales in Australia and an expert on the South China Sea.
Backed by several high-profile overseas Vietnamese scholars, including Khe, he founded the Institute for Vietnamese Culture & Education (IVCE). Besides presenting cultural programs, his nonprofit group travels to Vietnam to offer workshops on how to participate in student exchanges in the US and assistance with exchange program applications.





http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/07/12/world/asia/hague-south-china-sea.html

Hague Announces Decision on South

An international tribunal in The Hague decided that China's expansive claim to sovereignty over the waters had no legal basis.
In its decision, the tribunal said any historic rights to the sea that China had previously enjoyed "were extinguished" by the treaty, which lays out rules for drawing zones of control over the world's oceans based on distances to coast-lines. The panel added that while China had used islands in the sea in the past, it had never exercised exclusive au-thority over the waters.
The panel also concluded that several disputed rocks and reefs in the South China Sea were too small for China to claim control of economic activities in the waters around them. As a result, it found, China was engaged in unlawful behavior in Philippine waters, including activities that had aggravated the dispute.
The tribunal cited China's construction of a large artificial island on an atoll known as Mischief Reef. China has built a military airstrip, naval berths and sports fields on the island, but the tribunal ruled that it was in Philippine waters.

Suppressing Religious Rights in Vietnam

Communist authorities in Hue, Thua Thien Province continued their oppression of religions in Vietnam. Unhappy to just send priests like Father Nguyen Van Ly to jails for opposing them, 200 communist officials on June 26, 2016, stormed the Catholic bish-opry of Thien An and used bulldozers to tear down a cross and figurines to prevent Catholics from building a road inside their compound. Some then stepped on the fallen Cross to show their "power."

This brought to mind a similar act by King Minh Mang in the nineteenth century who forced Vietnamese Catholics to renege on their religion by stepping on the cross. Those who refused were killed. The Church eventually won when the Nguyen dynasty fell a few decades later and Vietnam got its first 118 Catholic martyrs.

As the late President Nguyen Van Thieu said:
"Look at what the communists do
Don't listen to what they say."

In **other incidents** unrelated to the above, the Cong An continue to harass and beat its citizens. Here are some of the photos:

Transnationalizing Vietnam

Kieu Linh Valverde

Vietnamese diasporic relations affect-and are directly affected by-events in Viet Nam. In Transnationalizing Viet Nam, Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde explores these connections, providing a nuanced understanding of this globalized community. Valverde draws on 250 interviews and almost two decades of research to show the complex relationship between Vietnamese in the diaspora and those back at the homeland.

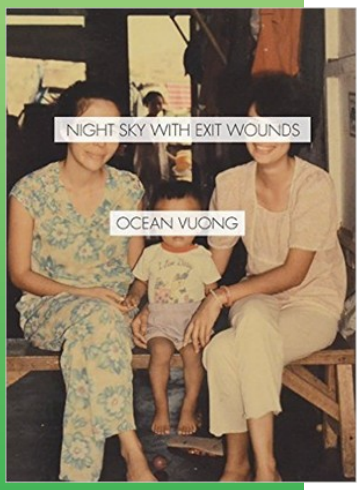
Available on Amazon

https://www.amazon.com/Transnationalizing-Viet-Nam-Community-Politics/dp/1439906793/

Vietnamese diasporic relations affect-and are directly affected by-events in Viet Nam. In Transnationalizing Viet Nam, Kieu-Linh Caroline Valverde explores these connections, providing a nuanced understanding of this globalized community. Valverde draws on 250 interviews and almost two decades of research to show the complex relationship between Vietnamese in the diaspora and those back at the homeland. In the series Asian American History and Culture, edited by Sucheng Chan, David Palumbo-Liu, Michael Omi, K. Scott Wong, and Linda Trinh V\u00f5

Night Sky with Exit Wounds

Ocean Vuong



"Reading Vuong is like watching a fish move: he manages the varied currents of English with muscled intuition....His lines are both long and short, his pose narrative and lyric, his diction formal and insouciant. From the outside, Vuong has fashioned a poetry of inclusion."***--The New Yorker***

Available on Amazon

https://www.amazon.com/Night-Exit-Wounds-Ocean-Vuong/dp/155659495X/

Winner of the 2016 Whiting Award
One of Publishers Weekly's "Most Anticipated Books of Spring 2016"
One of Lit Hub's "10 must-read poetry collections for April"

Michiko Kakutani in The New York Times writes: "The poems in Mr. Vuong's new collection, Night Sky With Exit Wounds…possess a tensile precision reminiscent of Emily Dickinson's work, combined with a Gerard Manley Hopkins-like appreciation for the sound and rhythms of words. Mr. Vuong can create startling images (a black piano in a field, a wedding-cake couple preserved under glass, a shepherd stepping out of a Caravaggio painting) and make the silences and elisions in his verse speak as potently as his words…There is a powerful emotional undertow to these poems that springs from Mr. Vuong's sincerity and candor, and from his ability to capture specific moments in time with both photographic clarity and a sense of the evanescence of all earthly things."