



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY™

Fate of Our Allies Sentenced to Reeducation: Forgiveness by Blood

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ABC WNT, 9-11-1984, *Vietnamese Refugees*

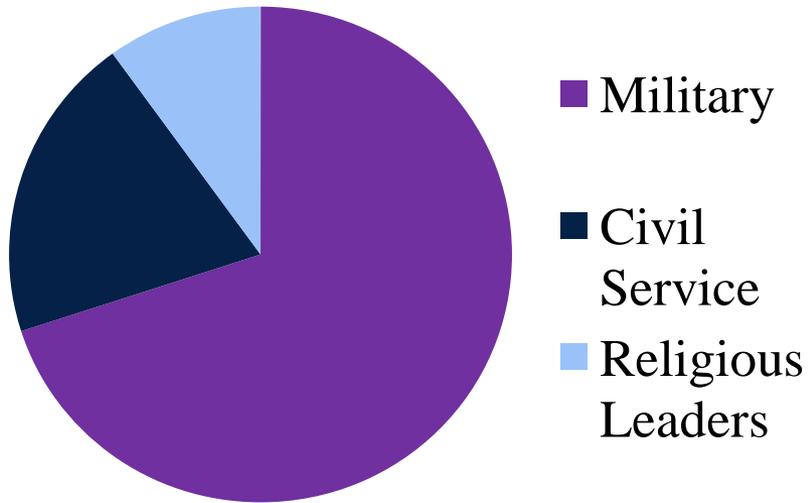




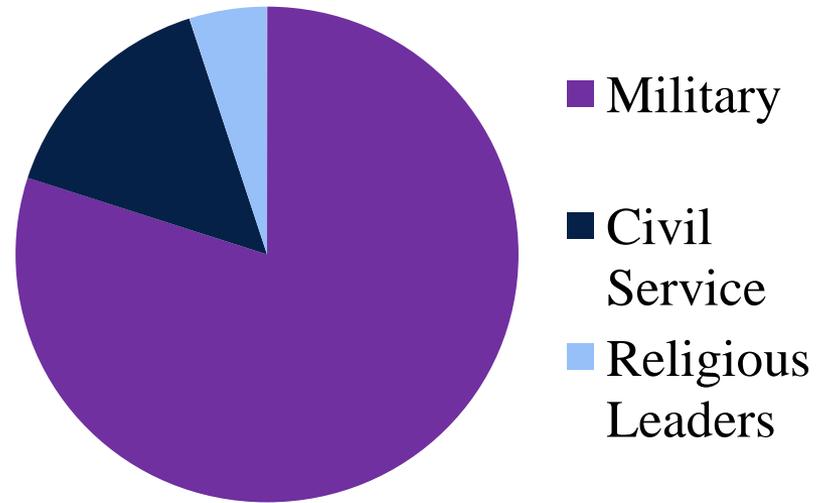
- Who Were in the Reeducation Camps
- Inhumane Camp Conditions
- Khuc Minh Tho & the FVPPA
- ODP
- How Connected



1989



1990





Average Years of Internment

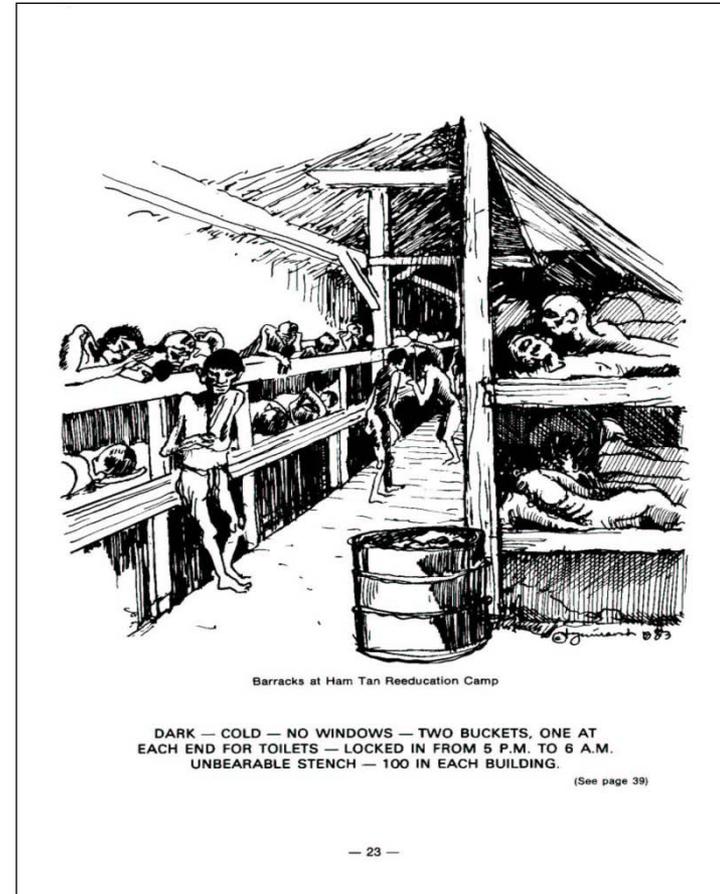
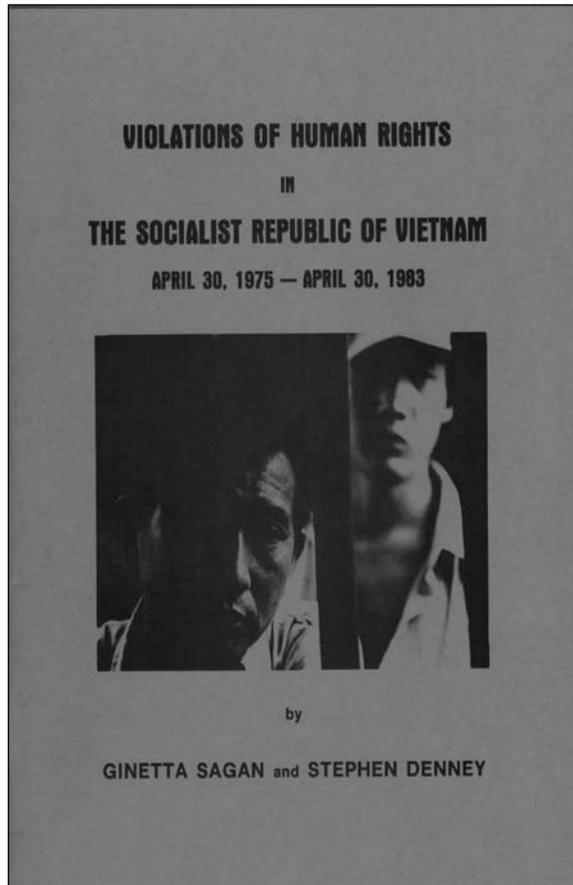
Overall Average	5-14
Major & Up	12-13
Captain & Lieutenant	2-3
Private & Sergeant	3 months



Others Sentenced to Reeducation

- Teachers
- Writers
- Journalists
- Police Officers
- Doctors
- Student Body Presidents
- Anyone with antirevolutionary sentiments or activities

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**My ideal, my glory, my dream, my love,
All these are remote and abstract things!
I confess to you that we, hungry prisoners,
Only dream of being as well fed as animals.
Why? Our dream to be Man, alas,
Has ceased to be a possibility;
That dream has led us to prison.
Now, only four things on the earth are
meaningful:
Rice, manioc roots, potatoes and corn.
These four things bind us, harass us,
torture us,
They never leave us in peace.³⁰**

among prisoner diseases are malaria, beriberi, and dysentery.³¹ Tuberculosis is also widespread in some of the camps. Medical supplies are generally nonexistent in the camps and medical care is very inadequate, usually limited to a poorly trained medic and perhaps a few prisoners who had formerly been medical doctors. The result is a high death rate from disease. A prisoner in Dam Duong camp of Ha Nam Ninh province, for example, witnessed twenty deaths, including three cases of intestinal hemorrhage in which prisoners died because there was no plasma.³² In Tuy Hoa camp, about thirty prisoners (out of a camp population of 5,000) died of illness in the last three or four months of 1978.³³ Some seriously



— 26 —

ill prisoners have been allowed to go to hospitals outside the camp or return to their families. But others have not, and many have died in the camps, without their families ever being notified. It is official government policy, as stated in the 1967 PRG Decree No. 02/CS-76, that terminally ill prisoners be allowed to return to their families. Yet Amnesty International has brought to Hanoi's attention cases of such prisoners not allowed to return. One such prisoner was Truong Van Truoc, who "died in August 1980 of stomach cancer in a detention camp, 90A TD 63/TC, Doi 11, Thanh Hoa." Another prisoner Amnesty mentioned was the writer Ho Huu Tuong, who was sick for several months but not transferred to a hospital until June 2, 1980. "He died only three weeks later, just after he was finally given permission to return to his family."³⁴



RULES AND PUNISHMENT

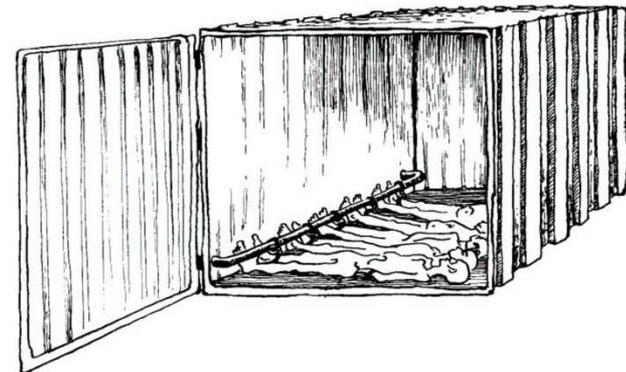
In the appendix of his book *Enfer Rouge, Mon Amour*, Lucien Trong, who was imprisoned in a camp of low-ranking officers because he attempted to escape the country by boat, published a list of rules which he said was posted by the authorities in his camp. Other former prisoners have told us that the same

rules exist in other camps. The authorities seek to maintain strict control over the thoughts of the prisoners, and to this end forbid prisoners from keeping and reading books or magazines of the former regime, reminiscing in conversation about "imperialism and the puppet south," singing old love songs of the former regime, discussing political questions (outside authorized discussions), harboring "reactionary" thoughts, or possessing "superstitious" beliefs. It is also forbidden to be impolite to the cadre of the camp, and this rule has been abused to the point where even the slightest indication of a lack of reverence for the cadre has been interpreted as rudeness and therefore harshly punished.

Violations of these and other rules lead to various forms of punishment, including being

tied up in contorted positions, shackled in connex boxes or dark cells, forced to work extra hours, or having food rations reduced. Many prisoners have been beaten, some to death, or subjected to very harsh forms of punishment due to the cruelty of certain camp officials and guards. Some have been executed, especially for attempting to escape. Some of the most brutal treatment occurs in camps where guards apparently have no fear of any reprimand for mistreating the prisoners.³⁵

The connex boxes vary in size but are generally large enough to accommodate a few prisoners crowded together. Some of the containers are made of wood, some of metal. The metal containers can become so unbearably hot in the sun that prisoners in them can pass out or die.³⁶



— 27 —

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Solitary confinement cells are also common in the camps. In the Gia Rai camp, prisoners can receive ten days' solitary for minor infractions, fifteen for making "reactionary statements," and one year (or the death penalty) for attempting to escape. Prisoners in these dark, narrow cells are forced to eat and sleep on the floor and carry out bodily functions while shackled.³⁷ Prisoners in such cells in Ham Tan camp (Thuan Hai province) lie on the floor with their legs raised and feet locked in wooden stocks.³⁸ In a camp in Nghe Tinh,



"DOUBLE AIRPLANE"

Thanh Chuong district of Nghe Tinh province, some prisoners in these dark solitary-confinement cells had their hands and feet tied so tightly that they became afflicted with gangrene and lost their hands or feet or died.³⁹

Other forms of confinement include placing prisoners in abandoned wells for various lengths of time. A prisoner in Long Khanh camp (a southern camp for low-ranking officers) was put in such a well for five days because he sang "Silent Night" on Christmas Eve.⁴⁰ In some camps, such as Ben Gia, ditches, called "living graves" by the prisoners, are dug around the outer perimeter, away from the main camp but visible from the watchtower.

Prisoners confined to these ditches in Ben Gia were fed once daily—a bowl of rice or sorghum and water.⁴¹

Other forms of torture were reported by a former prisoner of Don Duong camp, composed of about 1,000 prisoners, with 200 Montagnards (tribal highlanders):

1. The Honda: With the prisoner's hands and feet tied together, he is hung and swung to and fro while beaten. Nausea and vomiting often follow.



"AIRPLANE"



2. The Auto: The prisoner is tied "butterfly" style, with thumbs tied together behind the back; one arm over the shoulder and the other pulled around the trunk of the body. In another version of this, the prisoner's outstretched legs are tied by the toes to the two middle fingers of the hands of the outstretched arms. A prisoner might be kept in such positions for weeks or even months.

3. The Airplane: The prisoner is tied to a pole, standing or lying down, or sitting on cement for various periods, a few days or a week, sometimes longer, depending on the prisoner's "mistakes."

As one would expect, prisoners released after such treatment are often unable to walk.⁴²

In his book, *The Will of Heaven*, Nguyen Ngoc Ngan described a case where "the airplane" method was applied. This case occurred in May of 1977 at Bu Gia Map camp, located in a malarial jungle area near the Cambodian border. Tru, a prisoner, became angry when he saw a guard using the flag of the former government of South Vietnam as a dustcloth. He took the flag out of the guard's hand and yelled at him for desecrating it. The next day, Tru was brought before the prisoners in a "people's court," but instead

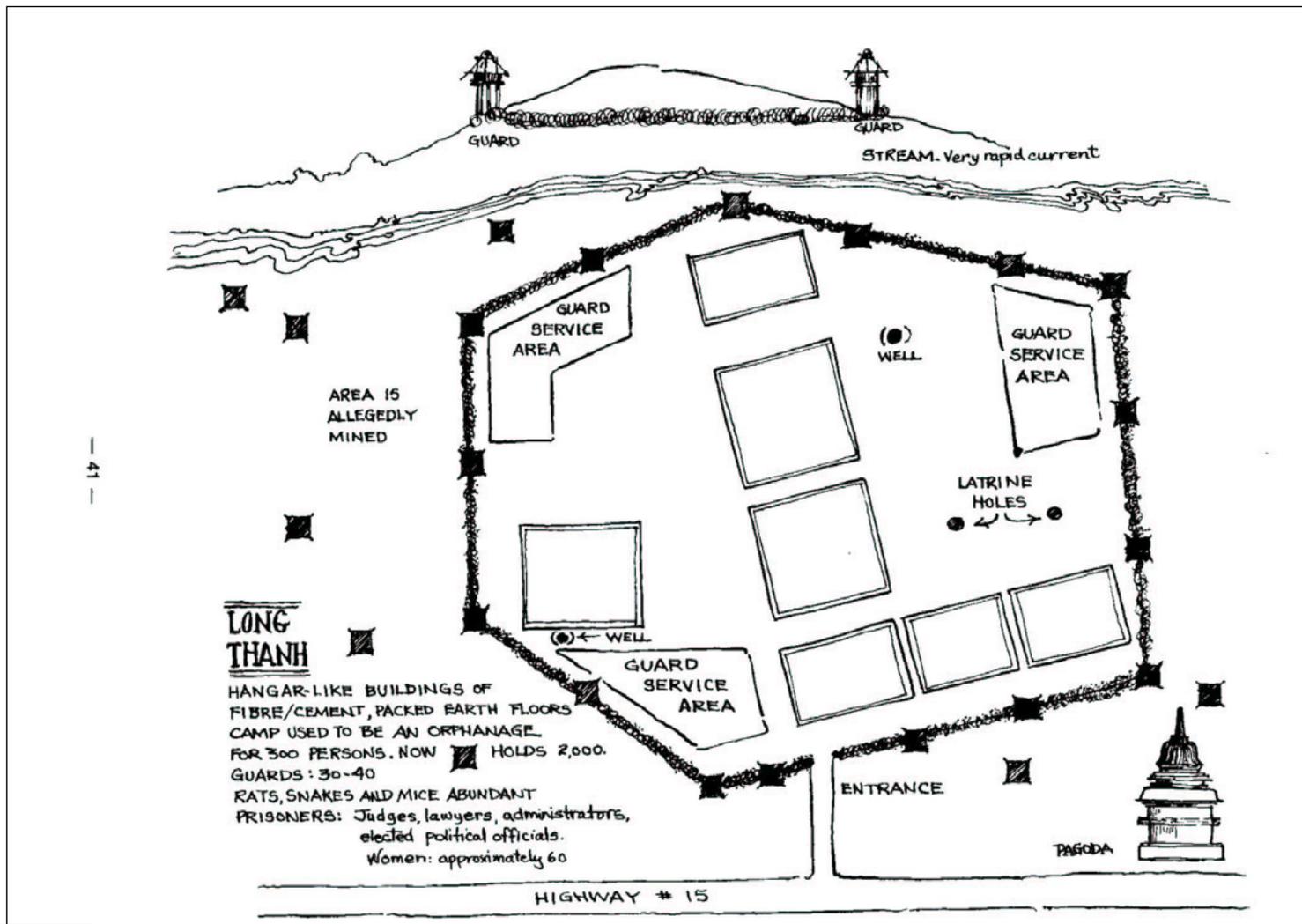
of confessing his "crime," Tru remained unrepentant, praising the flag and criticizing the Communists. The outraged camp commander sentenced Tru to be tied to a wooden column outdoors, standing upright for three months. He was gagged, and his hands were tied behind his back and around the post, his wrists were lashed tightly with telephone wire. The wire cut through his flesh by the end of the first day. Forced to stand bareheaded all day long in the hot sun and through the unusually cool nights, plagued by mosquitoes, Tru contracted malaria by the second week and became seriously ill. After a month of his sentence, Tru was untied and carried to meet the camp commander's superior who was visiting the camp that day. The superior gave Tru one more chance to repent. Tru would not, and was taken out of the camp the next day, never to be seen again.⁴³

Hanoi acknowledges that violence has been used against the prisoners in isolated cases but not as a matter of general camp policy.⁴⁴ Former prisoners, on the other hand, report frequent beatings for such minor infractions as missing work because of illness. In some cases, prisoners have been beaten to death. Colonel Pham Ba Ham, accused of aiding an escape attempt, was bludgeoned before his fellow prisoners and left to die without any



THUMBS OR BIG TOES TIED IN THIS WAY MAKE ANY MOVEMENTS EXTREMELY PAINFUL.

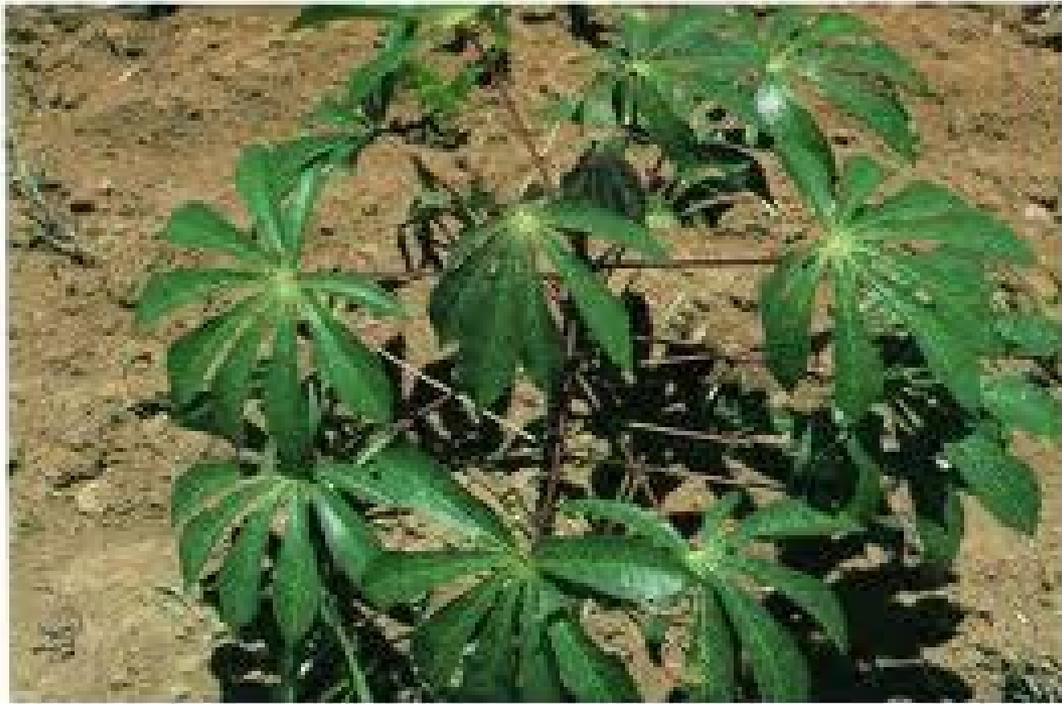
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Manioc Plant



Manioc Roots





The hidden horror of Vietnam's camps

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercury News Staff Writer

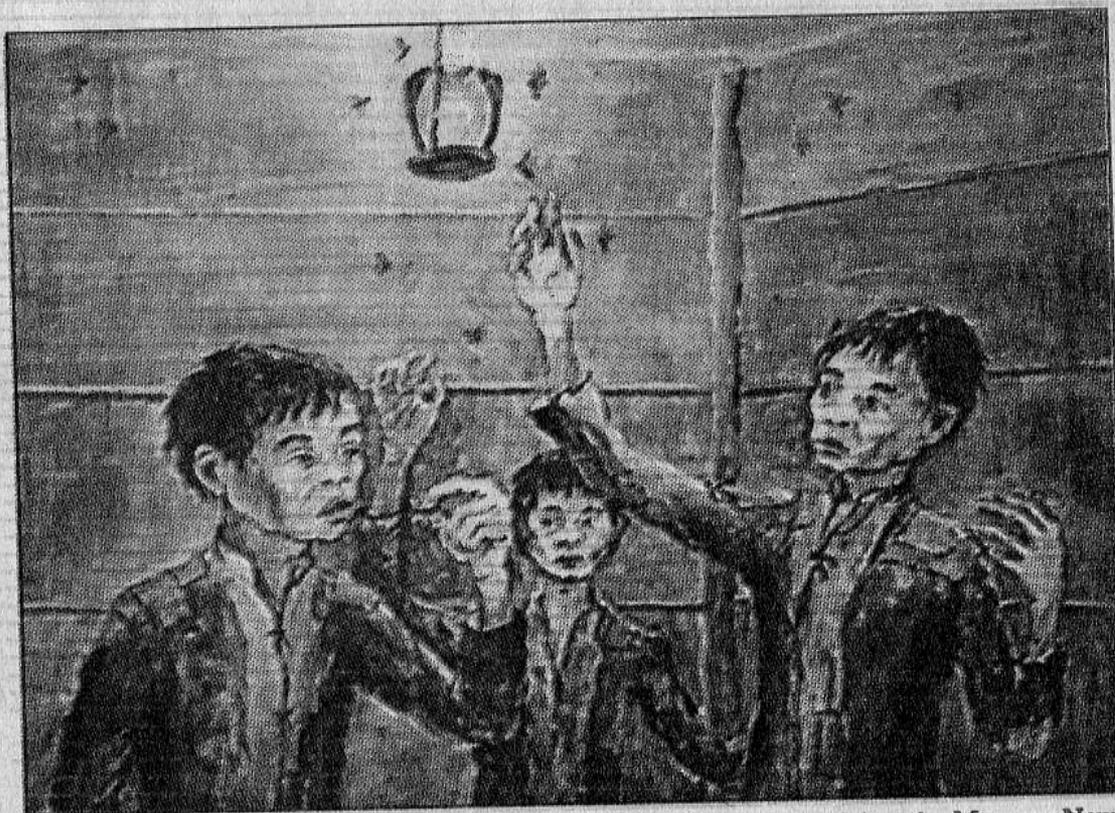
In the 12 years since North Vietnamese troops crushed South Vietnam, the communist regime has exacted a cruel revenge on thousands of its citizens in an extensive network of re-education camps.

Executions, torture and constant, numbing brutality have been cloaked in a veil of secrecy manufactured by Hanoi. But as thousands of Vietnamese refugees congregate in San Jose and other U.S. cities, the story is beginning to emerge.

Nearly 100 survivors of the camps who now live in San Jose, Southern California and the Washington, D.C., area described their ordeals for the first time in interviews with the Mercury News.

They told how military, government, business and religious leaders — people the communists declared guilty of war crimes or who

See CAMPS, Page 14A



Bich Thuy — Special to the Mercury News

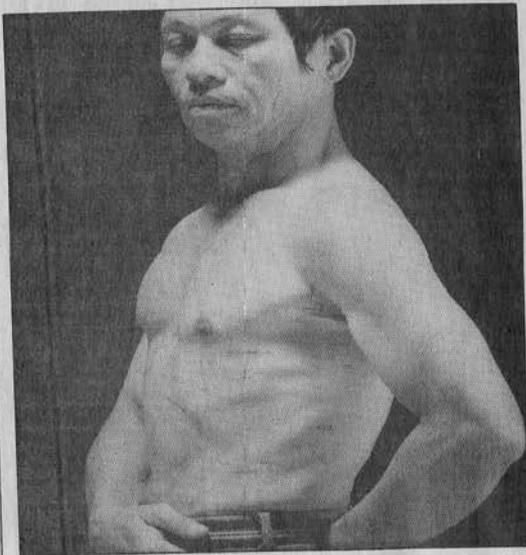
Constant, numbing brutality was the norm



A Mercury News Special Report

‘I will always be afraid. I will never have peace in life again.’

— Vu Trong Khanh



Len Lahman — Mercury News

Vu Trong Khanh shows his scars

A former prisoner, scarred by torture, now writes of love

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercury News Staff Writer

“You want to see torture?” The speaker was agitated. He paced the Campbell living room, which was filled with former South Vietnamese army officers, alumni of Vietnam’s re-education

with a metal tip about three inches long.

Other times, a metal cage was placed on his head and electricity applied. He said he also was beaten with bare electric wires that seared his flesh. He fainted often, only to be revived for another session.

70 other prisoners

Just how many suffered like Khanh is unclear. He said there

Thousands still slave in re-education camps

Vietnam’s hidden horror

CAMPS, from Page 1A

they fear could lead a counterrevolution — lived out their lives in hard labor, humiliation, sickness and deliberately inflicted pain.

Their stories are backed up by the findings of scholars, government officials and human rights groups across the United States, Europe and Asia.

The Vietnamese government admits that the camps exist and says that it has the right to punish the inmates as war criminals and enemies of the people. But Hanoi denies that prisoners are tortured or otherwise mistreated in the camps.

However, during a three-month investigation, the Mercury News was told that the Hanoi regime:

- Executed thousands of its vanquished opponents. A recently published report by researchers at the University of California at Berkeley estimated that 65,000 people were executed in the eight years after the communist victory in 1975. The U.S. State Department reported to Congress that “executions number in the tens of thousands.”

- Consigned as many as 500,000 people to extended stays in the camps. Scholars believe that at one time there were as many as 300 camps throughout Vietnam; about a dozen are believed to exist today, most of them near Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon).

No charges or trials

- Sent people to the camps for indefinite terms without bringing formal charges against them or conducting judicial proceedings of any kind. Some prisoners have been held in the camps for nearly 13 years.

- Subjected prisoners to intense political harangues and forced them to write detailed confessions of their supposed crimes. Many prisoners said they had to revise their confessions dozens of times before they were deemed acceptable. Some inmates said they were forced to betray other prisoners for imaginary crimes in order to prove their sincerity.

- Tortured prisoners in an attempt to get information about political opposition, military resistances, movements, and conspiracies

nied as punishment, and some former prisoners said they drank their own urine. Others reported that some prisoners were chained so long that maggots grew in the wounds on their wrists or ankles.

- Forced inmates to perform hard labor while providing only the most rudimentary food and medical care. Many prisoners starved to death, while others were left to die a lingering, painful death from disease.

At least 6,000 people — and probably substantially more — languish today in a dozen remaining re-education camps. Conditions in those camps are so bad that discipline for even the most minor infraction “can result in acute suffering, permanent physical impairment and death,” according to the State Department.

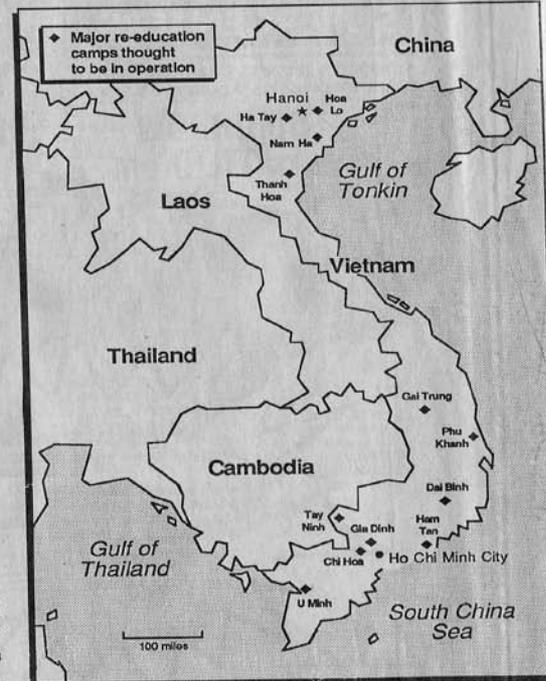
“The Communists practiced a form of genocide,” said one former South Vietnamese army colonel speaking in his Los Angeles home. Like most of the people interviewed by the Mercury News, he asked that his name not be used to protect family members still in Vietnam.

“The Vietnamese Communists were too clever to kill us all in a bloodbath as the Cambodia Communists did,” the colonel said. “They decided who they wanted to kill, worked them very hard, fed them almost nothing and let disease do the rest. There were 300 colonels in my camp originally. When we were moved two and a half years later, we left 37 graves behind.”

“The Communists did not want to re-educate us,” said another former colonel from Garden Grove. “They wanted vengeance.”

In a study published last year in the Indochina Report, Berkeley researchers Jacqueline Desbarats and Karl D. Jackson said the camps have become a sophisticated form of “drip death” that the Communist regime uses for “liquidating (its) class enemies.”

In an extensive interview at the Vietnamese mission to the United Nations in New York, Vietnamese spokesman Ha Huy Thong called the reports of brutality in the camps “distorted” and “fabricated.” Thong answered the allega-



Don Melton — Mercury News

‘I saw two executions. . . . There was a trial, but they brought up the coffins before it started.’

‘I was locked in a (metal box) in the hot sun. . . . I had to drink my urine to survive.’

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South Vietnamese army officers, alumni of Vietnam's re-education camps.

These old warriors, gathered to talk of their grim experiences, shouted and joked loudly in the manner of men who have sacrificed their hearing to the din of many battles. In the dim light, old war wounds — a scar on a cheek, long scars on necks and arms — captured the shadows.

Vu Trong Khanh, 57, poet and onetime chief of a South Vietnamese security unit, shouted above the din for attention and got it.

It was silent as he lifted his shirt. The smiles of the old warriors eased from their faces.

"Take a look," demanded Khanh.

Some moved forward, others craned their necks for a better view. Tongues clicked in chorus.

Burn marks

The long burn marks that covered his torso, like the agitation of his manner and the pained frown on his face, were silent testimony to the horror Khanh had suffered.

Khanh is one of the dozens of Vietnamese immigrants who agreed to step forward in confidential interviews to describe their experiences in Vietnam's re-education camps. Unlike many, Khanh agreed to allow his real name to be used in this story.

"I am not afraid of the communists," he said through an interpreter.

Yet he had good reason to be, particularly when he was arrested shortly after the fall of Saigon in 1975. Not only had he worked as an intelligence officer, he was a member of the fiercely anti-communist Viet Nam Quoc Dan Party and Cao Dai religion. In addition, his father was the well-known author Vu Trong Phung, whose works had been banned by the Hanoi regime.

For all those crimes, Khanh paid dearly.

Seven years in camps

As the other former prisoners listened, he haltingly told of his seven years in re-education camps. Often, he said, he was beaten or locked in small, dark, concrete cells. He did not see others in nearby cells but could tell they were there because he heard their groaning, coughing and vomiting.

Like most prisoners, Khanh was moved from camp to camp. He said his worst days came behind the benign facade of Hanoi's Office of Technical Studies on Tran Nhat Duat Street near the capital's bus station.

Khanh said he was hung from the ceiling with his arms out-

stretched. He fainted often, only to be revived for another session.

70 other prisoners

Just how many suffered like Khanh is unclear. He said there were about 70 prisoners in the building with him. "Most people tortured like me died," he said.

Roughly 5 percent of the former prisoners interviewed by the Mercury News reported some form of torture using electricity.

"I've lost a lot of memory," Khanh said. "My mind is not sharp. Excuse me, but I often get suspicious of everyone, even you. I'm actually afraid of you. I'm afraid that you might hurt me. I will always be afraid. I will never have peace in life again."

Memory and peace of mind are not the only things Khanh lost. He is blind in one eye and has only 80 percent of his sight in the other — the result, he said, of repeated blows to the head.

Khanh also lost his wife during his time in the re-education camps. She was sent off to a collective farm, he said. "She was weak and she died."

Finally, Khanh did what the communists wanted him to do.

"I told them whatever they wanted to hear," he said. He confessed to killing over 5,000 communist soldiers.

Freed in 1982

In 1982, he convinced his captors that he was a reformed man. "I got out of jail in Saigon," he said. "My family was gone. I did not have any gold to buy a ride on a boat, so I just walked alone through Cambodia to Thailand, living off the land." After walking for 16 days, he was free.

Today, Khanh spends much of his time in his Campbell apartment at his favorite task — writing poetry on an Apple Macintosh. But he never writes of his suffering.

"I write only of love," he said. Khanh, who also teaches Tai Chi Chuan, a form of martial arts, said he often writes poetry until 2 a.m. Then he takes a pill to ease his transition into sleep.

His love poems have been widely circulated among Santa Clara County's large Vietnamese community.

Poems of love

Khanh smiled as he spoke of the joy he finds in writing.

"I write poems of love. Motherly love, love of country, between people, man and wife. Name any kind of love and I write about it."

Yet even now, Khanh said, it is only his body that is free. "I've been out of Vietnam five years now, but I still dream that I'm back in jail. I see the communist police questioning me. I see myself lying in a jail cell and sometimes I wake up and feel a chain on my leg."

able. Some inmates said they were forced to betray other prisoners for imaginary crimes in order to prove their sincerity.

Tortured prisoners in an attempt to get information about political opposition, military resistance movements and conspiracies to escape. According to the former prisoners, the list of torture techniques included ripping out fingernails with pliers, whipping prisoners with live electric wires, hanging inmates from the ceiling and beating them, and forcing prisoners to drink water and then jumping on their bloated stomachs.

Locked in boxes

Disciplined prisoners by locking them in metal storage boxes called connextes, where the temperature often soared above 120 degrees. Water was sometimes de-

lating (its) class enemies."

In an extensive interview at the Vietnamese mission to the United Nations in New York, Vietnamese spokesman Ha Huy Thong called the reports of brutality in the camps "distorted" and "fabricated." Thong answered the allegations of torture with a statement from Justice Minister Phan Hien.

'Very humane policy'

"We pursue a benevolent and very humane policy toward the prisoners," the statement said. "There are, of course, regulations in any camp. If they are violated, it is necessary to ensure they are respected. But we are against torture. We punish torture. But, on the other hand, prisoners must be punished who try to escape or destroy discipline in the camp."

Hanoi said it could have tried

up the coffins before it started."

my urine to survive."

the prisoners as war criminals, but chose to punish most of them without formal charges or trials "to save them from a dirty stain (that) might be brought to bear on their families and themselves."

"To re-educate them is to help them to realize their crimes, to offer them an opportunity to listen to reason and to reform themselves into honest-minded people, thus contributing to the common cause of national reconstruction," according to a statement issued by

the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry. The continuing agony of thousands of Vietnamese has gone unnoticed by much of the world because of the tight control over information and access imposed by Vietnam.

Access restricted

Few Western journalists have been given access to the camps. Former prisoners said that even journalists from friendly Communist countries are permitted to vis-

A few work to keep issue alive

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercury News Staff Writer

When the Vietnam War ended, most of the world just wanted to forget. But for a handful of human rights advocates and the families of those who were sent to Vietnam's re-education camps, the past dozen years have been a constant struggle to make the world remember.

Tirelessly, they have pressured Congress, the president and the Hanoi regime with letters, telephone calls and petitions on the prisoners' behalf.

Their work may be paying off. In Sept. 2, Vietnam announced that the Council of Ministers had ordered the release of 6,685 prisoners, including 480 military and civilian personnel of the toppled South Vietnamese regime.

At the forefront of the effort to free the prisoners are people such as human rights activist Ginetta Sagan of Atherton, former South Vietnamese Sen. Jack Tran of Hayward and Virginia mental health worker Khuc Minh Tho, the wife of a Vietnamese colonel who has been held in the re-education camps for almost 13 years.

Aurora Foundation

Sagan, a 40-year veteran of Amnesty International, is the executive director of the Aurora Foundation, established a decade ago to document abuses in the re-education camps. A small, stout, energetic woman, Sagan works out of her Atherton home with a volunteer pool of about 15 people. The association's bills for travel, research, telephone and office expenses are roughly \$30,000 a year. They are paid through donations and grants.

Aurora obtained most of its in-

formation from confidential interviews with more than 800 former re-education camp prisoners. Sagan said she has personally interviewed more than 600. The foundation published some of its findings in 1983 and plans to release an updated report in December.

Lawrence Kerr, the U.S. State Department's Vietnam specialist, praised Sagan's work highly. "She does very careful research. I don't know anyone in government who knows more on the issue than she does."

Tran, a former South Vietnamese colonel as well as a senator, is head of the Federation of Vietnamese and Allied Veterans.

"I operate out of my Hayward home. The executive board is in San Jose," Tran said. "We have about 22,000 members in 66 organizations around the world. We have no budget, no money. Each person pays his own expenses."

Telephone grapevine

The federation gathers information from former prisoners, "Washington sources" and a vigorous Vietnamese telephone grapevine in the United States.

The energetic Tran still plays the senator — planning, lobbying and spending hours on the phone discussing the federation's latest moves. Tran said he has been working closely with Sens. Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., and Bob Dole, R-Kan., to free the prisoners.

Dole and Kennedy were among the leading sponsors of a resolution, passed by Congress this year, urging the Vietnamese government to release the prisoners and allow them and their immediate families to emigrate to the



Sagan

Tran

Tho

"The prisoners are now in their late 50s and 60s . . . and are sick."

— Khuc Minh Tho

United States.

Once its lobbying is successful, Tran's group plans to sponsor the latest refugees.

"The federation and its 66 organizations around the world are willing to receive all of these prisoners, to provide them food and shelter, and to help them reunite with their relatives now living in the United States," Tran said.

Works out of home

Tho, the soft-spoken president of the Families of Political Prisoners Association, works out of her Falls Church, Va., home. She operates on dues and donations that fund an annual budget of about \$2,000. The association has 150 dues-paying members and 100 "friends and supporters."

With the help of a new comput-

er, Tho's group keeps case records on individual re-education camp prisoners and their immediate relatives. Tho gets her information in letters from Vietnam as well as from released prisoners — which one State Department official said generally supplies better information than the U.S. government.

"We do not know why the Vietnamese government still keeps the political prisoners while these prisoners are no longer of danger," Tho said. Her face turned sad as she thought of her imprisoned husband. "The prisoners are now in their late 50s and 60s or even older and are sick and in poor health. (They) would be unable to take up arms against the Vietnamese government."



Vietnam's Re-education Camps



Bich Thuy — Special to the Mercury News

These drawings illustrate the brutal treatment of inmates at the re-education camps. The painting above is an artist's depiction of a work detail, based on former prisoners' descriptions. At left, a survivor's sketch shows a man shackled around a post in a "punishment hole."

cutions. It was in 1976. . . . They shot a Ranger captain and a lieutenant by the name of Luong Thanh Tu. There was a trial, but they brought up the coffins before it started."

"I was a prisoner at Kim Son for five years. I almost died," said a former Qui Nhon police officer who lives in Santa Ana. "I was locked in a conch in the hot sun. They gave me rice but no water, and I had to drink my urine to survive."

"In 1980 at Thanh Cam I saw about 30 Buddhist and Catholic monks and priests chained in a special cell," said a 45-year-old former army major living in San Jose. "Some of them were kept in chains so long maggots hatched where the shackles rubbed their wrists and ankles."

"They went out of their way to degrade us in the camps," said a 46-year-old former political warfare captain living in Garden Grove. "I had to carry human waste to the rice fields to use as fertilizer. We could have used tools, but they made us use our hands."

"My arm was tied over my shoulder and behind my back during questioning," said a 50-year-old former non-commissioned officer from San Jose. "There is no way to describe the pain. I wanted to die."

"They ignored sick people and let them die," said a former helicopter pilot who lives in Los Angeles. "When I was in An Duong I slept near this guy whose whole body was infected. A million ants were swarming all over him, and he didn't appear to feel a thing. Later he died."

Driven insane

"I saw a man in 1976 at An Duong put in a barrel," said a 50-

Americans and the Saigon regime may explain why the Vietnamese, who never left *en masse* during centuries of occupation by the Chinese, French and Japanese, today are pouring out of their homeland by the thousands.

Although the U.S. government knows of the suffering of the people who were its staunchest supporters during the war, it has done little to spotlight the problem, relying on little-publicized reports, low-key, unproductive talks and occasional congressional resolutions.

Issue unresolved

Five years ago, the Vietnamese agreed to release the political prisoners. But Hanoi changed its mind, and sporadic negotiations with the United States have failed to resolve the issue. The State Department said it stands ready today to accept all political prisoners and their immediate families.

"We know about the problem. We issue an annual report on it," said Lawrence Kerr, the State Department's desk officer for Vietnam. "The answer to that problem is not in the U.S. We are not part of that problem. We would like to be part of the solution. We'll take them all. We are prepared to do it now."

On Sept. 2 the Hanoi government announced the release of 480 of the former leaders of the defeated Saigon government who had agreed "to mend their ways." But it has not agreed to allow them to immigrate to the United States. And the Western analysts most familiar with the camps believe thousands of political prisoners remain imprisoned there.

Hanoi's position, according to its spokesman in New York, is that those remaining in the re-education camps are war criminals and

A Marine called Nam

Garwood spent 14 years in camps

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercury News Staff Writer

One of the most intriguing sidelights to the Vietnam War was the saga of U.S. Marine Robert Garwood, who spent 14 years in communist prison camps and was later convicted of collaborating with the enemy. Ten of the former prisoners interviewed by the Mercury News had their own memories of Garwood, whom they had seen in a prison near the Chinese border between 1976 and 1978.



Garwood

They all called him Nam, and variously said his name was Nguyen Viet Nam or Nguyen Van Nam.

"I saw him at Hoang Lien Son," said a 50-year-old former South Vietnamese army major living in San Jose. "I heard he was captured but later he followed the Viet Cong and made propaganda."

"He was given a lot of freedom," remembered a 44-year-old former intelligence captain living in Campbell. "They said this American guy had been re-educated. He helped in the re-education classes. He was in charge of the electricity and never talked to anyone. I guessed he was a prisoner like me and did what he had to do to survive."

A former colonel recalled approaching Nam as the American strung an electric cable. "I asked him why he hadn't returned. He said he liked Vietnam and had a Vietnamese wife."

Chased with a stick

A 46-year-old former captain in political warfare now living in Garden Grove said Nam once chased him with a stick.

"He was working on the electricity, and I walked over and said in English, 'Hello, how are you?' That's when he chased me."

“I slept near this guy whose whole body was infected. A million ants were swarming all over him, and he didn't appear to feel a thing.”

“I saw a man in 1976 at An Duong put in a barrel. The guards beat on it and drove him crazy by doing this every day for two weeks.”

The Vietnam Center and Archive



him, and he didn't appear to feel a thing."

this every day for two weeks."

only after the camps have been transformed into showpieces in which guards sometimes masquerade as prisoners and props are brought in to create a brighter — but false — picture.

As a condition of release, prisoners are required to swear that they will never reveal what they experienced or saw.

However, scores of refugees who have come to the United States over the past 12 years told the Mercury News that conditions

in the camps were so brutal that some prisoners taunted guards to shoot them to end their misery. In some cases, the guards complied.

"Often I wished I could die to end the pain," said one torture victim struggling to build a new life and erase old memories in San Jose, the second-largest enclave of Vietnamese in the country after the Los Angeles-Orange County area. He winced at the memory. "It was so bad, so horrible. I don't think I will forget it even after I

am dead."

Even sleep was not an escape. "They would beat prisoners at night. They made noise to keep us awake," said a former Special Forces operative who worked for the CIA and lives today in San Jose. "We all knew they could come for us at any time, and our sleep was always uneasy."

"The camp at Tay Ninh was very cruel," said a 54-year-old former Special Forces colonel who lives in Campbell. "I saw two exe-

were swarming all over him, and he didn't appear to feel a thing. Later he died."

Driven insane

"I saw a man in 1976 at An Duong put in a barrel," said a 50-year-old former colonel in Falls Church, Va. "The guards beat on it and drove him crazy by doing this every day for two weeks."

"I think the mental torture was the worst," said another former colonel living in Falls Church. "They would humiliate us, forcing us to bow to them while they insulted us. They would wake us up in the middle of the night for this. This went on for years and it was very painful."

The residual brutality against the Vietnamese who supported the

miliar with the camps believe thousands of political prisoners remain imprisoned there.

Hanoi's position, according to its spokesman in New York, is that those remaining in the re-education camps are war criminals and not political prisoners.

"In the talks with Vietnam, the U.S. side considered these criminals as political prisoners and urged Vietnam to free them unconditionally," the spokesman said. "These are unreasonable attitudes and demands which Vietnam has repeatedly rejected. It is Vietnam's right to punish these criminals as the European countries did with the elements who had cooperated with Hitler. It is the legitimate right of all states to protect their national rights."

Nam once chased him with a stick.

"He was working on the electricity, and I walked over and said in English, 'Hello, how are you?' That's when he chased me."

Marine Pfc. Garwood of Greensburg, Ind., was 19 when he was captured in 1965 by the Viet Cong north of Marble Mountain near Da Nang. He was 33 when he returned home.

In the book on his experience, "Conversations With the Enemy," Garwood described himself as a prisoner who was just trying to survive.

"Bobby Garwood was not perfect," wrote authors Winston Groom and Duncan Spenser. "At times he was wavering, fearful, devious. As his fellow prisoners died around him, Garwood lived by his wits, doing minor favors for the enemy in exchange for a few paltry items of survival — a banana, or a shred of clothing — but his goal was always escape."

Garwood said he was tortured early in his captivity. He said he was beaten, caged in the ground and forced to watch Vietnamese prisoners play Russian roulette. The Vietnamese, he said, also were fond of poking his genitals with sharp sticks. As a result, he said, he decided to cooperate.

'Camp Number Five'

Toward the end of his imprisonment, Garwood was sent to a re-education camp near the Chinese border. In the book, he called the Hoang Lien Son camp "Prison Camp Number Five."

"It stood in a valley amid the woody hills, a very large place. It was the prison in which the captured French of Dien Bien Phu had languished for years," he said.

Garwood said that one of his jobs was to install and operate a new electric system. The camp commander told him he had to work alone and was to have no contact with the other prisoners.

In 1979, after slipping a note to a foreigner in a rare visit to Hanoi, Garwood was returned to the United States to face charges that he had defected during the war and worked for the communists.

A year later, he was found guilty of collaboration with the enemy and striking a fellow POW during a fight over eating a camp cat. He was reduced in rank to private and dishonorably discharged.

Millions were sent away to be 're-educated'

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercury News Staff Writer

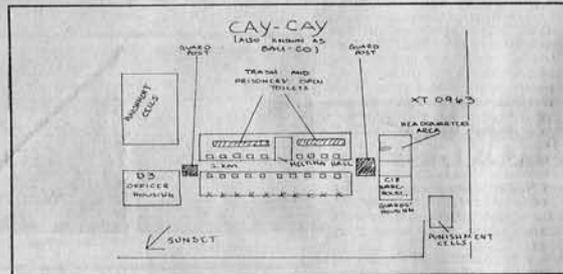
Just days after the fall of Saigon to the North Vietnamese army on April 30, 1975, radio announcements across the country ordered the 2.5 million Vietnamese who had worked for the South Vietnamese government or the U.S. forces to report to local high schools for "re-education."

The "students" — from generals and ministers down to soldiers and clerks — were to receive instruction in the new socialist order. The instruction included lectures on communism and the history of the struggle for liberation, as well as self-criticism and confessions, according to journalists and professional Vietnam-watchers.

The re-education program, which had been used in North Vietnam on prisoners of war, "counters revolutionary elements and professional scoundrels" since 1961, was redesigned in 1975 to emphasize the communist victory. It was designed to consolidate that victory by rapidly establishing control over the vanquished South Vietnamese.

"Only if they are closely managed and profoundly educated and reformed can they rapidly have correct understanding of the revolution and of the people," wrote the official army publication Quan Doi Nhan Dan. "And only then will they be determined to completely abandon their mistaken thoughts and ugly way of life in order to rebuild their lives under the new social system."

Enlisted men and low-ranking government workers were told to plan for a three-day stay, while higher-ranking military and civilian officials were told to bring



An ex-prisoner's sketch of the Cay Cay camp

30 days, depending on their rank or status.

Most people went home in the allotted time, but thousands of others were transferred to re-education camps or prisons. These camps, at first, were located in established prisons or military bases. Later the prisoners built new camps, some of which held more than 30,000 people. At their height in 1976, there were about 300 re-education camps, according to Douglas Pike, head of the Indochina Studies Program at the University of California at Berkeley and a veteran of 15 years with the U.S. Foreign Service in Vietnam.

There were five kinds of camps, according to Pike: day study centers near the cities, where the course was under 30 days; boarding schools with minimal security; "collective reformatories," where the emphasis was on self-criticism and confessions; and two grades of "reform" camps where

the courses were set at three and five years.

Each prisoner was required to write a detailed autobiography, emphasizing where his life had taken a wrong turn and how he ended up working for the Saigon government or the Americans.

Most of the former prisoners interviewed by the Mercury News wrote their confessions dozens of times before they were accepted. Some were grilled and punished for inconsistencies.

"I had to do my paper over and over again until I caught on," said a doctor living today in San Jose. "I didn't feel I had done anything wrong. Finally I realized my sins, so I told them that I was wrong in treating wounded ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) soldiers because they could then return to battle and kill more communists. I was wrong in treating their families because they could give more support to the soldier so he could

kill communists. It was stupid."

Even after an autobiography showed the right attitude, several former prisoners reported that camp was often required to prove his conversion by turning in someone who was not showing a proper attitude or who had not adequately confessed his past.

In the long-term camps, the prisoners were grouped together according to rank, with most of the higher-ranking prisoners shipped off to the north near the Chinese border, where they could have no influence outside the camps.

Inmates were moved often to prevent them from making friends and hatching escape plans. The moves also made it more difficult for outside resistance groups to help prisoners escape.

The long-term camps looked more like prisons than schools. One typical camp — described to the Mercury News by several former inmates — was Cay Cay in Tay Ninh province, west of Ho Chi Minh City. It was also known as Bau Co, Tan Hiep and Suoi Mau.

The camp, which held 3,000 to 4,000 prisoners, was divided into five sub-camps, all circled with barbed wire fences and, beyond the outer fence, a mine field approximately 10 feet wide. Armed guards were stationed in towers at the corners of the camps and searchlights swept the grounds at night.

There were separate wood and thatch living quarters for prisoners and guards, mess halls, latrine areas, lecture halls and interrogation rooms. Large metal boxes called conner containers sat at the edges of the camps. These boxes were used as punishment cells.

At Cay Cay and other camps, prisoners were required to per-

form hard labor in quarries, in the fields or in the jungles felling bamboo for expansion of the prisons.

Although the hours varied, it was not uncommon for prisoners to work 10 hours a day, six days a week.

"It was always hot, and it was very hard work. We were always thirsty, always hungry, always weak," said a former colonel living in San Jose.

Sometimes, prisoners were required to work in old mine fields. Many were killed or maimed when the mines exploded, former inmates said.

Prisoners typically received two meals a day, consisting of rice combined with corn, sweet potatoes or sorghum. The average daily ration weighed about 15 ounces, according to interviews collected by the Aurora Foundation, a group based in Atherton that documents abuses in the camps. Fish and fish sauce were occasionally provided, according to former prisoners. Prisoners also grew some of their own vegetables.

However, food rations were so small that starvation was a real threat.

"There was never enough food, except on holidays," said a former major in Garden Grove.

A Hanoi spokesman scoffed at the former prisoners' complaints of near starvation.

"We are a poor country," he said in an interview at the Vietnamese mission to the United Nations in New York. "These people were used to living in luxury. They received billions of dollars from the Americans. We have had trouble feeding our people and we have had trouble feeding the prisoners, too."



Hardship Endured by Former Detainee and Family

- Loss of employment, property, health care, and right to education.
- Trouble obtaining and keeping jobs.
- Paying of Bribes
- Report to and register family with local police department.
- Required to sleep nightly or on a weekly basis at police department.
- Rearrested.
- Under surveillance 6 months to 1 year.
- Harassment.
- Moved to New Economic Zones.
- Limited ability to exchange old South Vietnamese money



The Vietnam Center and Archive

Prisoner Release Certificates

BỘ NỘI VỤ
Trợ lý **XUÂN LỘC**
Số 417/CL

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Mã số 001-0270, ban hành theo công văn số 2303 ngày 27 tháng 11 năm 1972

0 0 0 8 7 B 0 7 7 5 2

GIẤY RA TRẠI 31-2550/1002

Theo thông tư số 96-BCA/TT ngày 3-5-1975 của Bộ Nội vụ
Thị khâm án văn, quyết định của số 100/QĐ ngày 26 tháng 06 năm 1984 của **BỘ NỘI VỤ**

Nay cấp giấy thả cho anh, chị có tên sau đây:

Họ, tên khai sinh: [redacted] Sinh năm: [redacted]
Cấp cho gọi khác: [redacted]
Nơi sinh: **Hàm Hòa**

Nơi đăng ký nhân khẩu thường trú trước khi bị bắt: **457/31 Đường Trần Hưng Đạo - Quận 1 TP/HCM**
Can tội: **Thiếu tá trưởng trung tâm chuẩn chỉ quân khí**
Bị bắt ngày: **01/05/1975** An phí: **TT02**
Theo quyết định, án văn số [redacted] ngày [redacted] tháng [redacted] năm [redacted] của [redacted]

Đã bị công an [redacted] lần, công thành [redacted] năm [redacted] tháng [redacted]
Đã được giảm án [redacted] lần, công thành [redacted] năm [redacted] tháng [redacted]
Nay về cư trú tại **457/33 Trần Hưng Đạo - Quận 1 - TP/HỒ CHÍ MINH**

Nhân sự quá trình chỉ tạo

TRẦN VĂN ĐIỀN (Quản chế: 12 tháng)

Ngày 10 tháng 08 năm 1984

Lưu sự trước mặt [redacted] Họ tên, chỉ bị người được cấp giấy [redacted]
Cấp [redacted] Giám thị [redacted]
Lập tại [redacted] Thượng tá: **Trịnh Văn Thích**
An Văn Diên

BỘ NỘI VỤ
CỤC QUẢN LÝ TRẠI GIẢI THƯỞI 2000 LỘC
Số 2802/QT

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

GIẤY RA TRẠI

Căn cứ chỉ thị số 210/TT ngày 22-08-1977 của Thủ tướng Chính phủ và Quyết định số 181/CT ngày 14-10-1978 của Bộ trưởng Bộ Nội vụ về việc cấp giấy ra trại cho các tù nhân chính phủ và các tù nhân chính phủ đã được giảm án và được thả trước hạn định bị Bộ trưởng Bộ Nội vụ

Căn cứ Thông tư số 96-BCA/TT ngày 3-5-1975 của Bộ Nội vụ và Quyết định của Bộ Nội vụ số 100/QĐ ngày 26-06-1977 của Thủ tướng Chính phủ

Thị khâm quyết định số **91/80** ngày **11-07-1980** của Bộ trưởng Bộ Nội vụ

CẤP GIẤY RA TRẠI

Họ và tên: [redacted]
Ngày, tháng, năm sinh: [redacted]
Cấp giam: [redacted]
Số lần công án: [redacted]
Số lần được giảm án: [redacted]
Số lần được thả trước hạn định: [redacted]
Số lần được thả trước hạn định: [redacted]

— Khi về phải trực tiếp trình báo ngay gia đình nơi Ủy ban Nhân dân xã phường công an, Quận [redacted] Tỉnh, Thành phố [redacted] được Huyện, Quận [redacted] Tỉnh, Thành phố [redacted] và phải tuân thủ các quy định của Ủy ban Nhân dân Tỉnh, Thành phố về việc quản chế và nơi cư trú và các nội quy khác:
— Thời hạn quản chế: [redacted]
— Thời hạn đi đường: [redacted] ngày kể từ ngày kết thúc quản chế.
— Tiền về lương thực đi đường do cấp: [redacted]

Lưu sự trước mặt [redacted] Họ tên, chỉ bị [redacted] cấp [redacted] người được cấp giấy [redacted]

Ngày 10 tháng 07 năm 1980
CÁM THỊ TRẠI [redacted]

Chung tá: **Trịnh Văn Thích**

BỘ NỘI VỤ
Trợ lý **XUÂN LỘC**
Số 238/CL

CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM
Độc lập - Tự do - Hạnh phúc

Mã số: 001-0270, ban hành theo công văn số 2303 ngày 27 tháng 11 năm 1972

GIẤY RA TRẠI

Theo thông tư số 96-BCA/TT ngày 3-5-1975 của Bộ Nội vụ

Thị khâm án văn, quyết định của số **02/QĐ** ngày **26-06-1975** của **BỘ NỘI VỤ**

Nay cấp giấy thả cho anh, chị có tên sau đây:

Họ, tên khai sinh: [redacted] Sinh năm: [redacted]
Cấp cho gọi khác: [redacted]
Nơi sinh: **Quảng Trị 4, xã Vĩnh Thịnh**

Nơi đăng ký nhân khẩu thường trú trước khi bị bắt: **133/A/1 Hồ Chí Minh Thành phố 3 Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh**
Can tội: **Thiếu tá trưởng kho vận trại Trường Tăng 4 quân trại**
Bị bắt ngày: **15/06/1975** An phí: **03 Tam tá - Trung tá**
Theo quyết định **XXXXX** số **XXXX** ngày **08** tháng **12** năm **1970** của **BỘ NỘI VỤ**

Đã bị công an [redacted] lần, công thành [redacted] năm [redacted] tháng [redacted]
Đã được giảm án [redacted] lần, công thành [redacted] năm [redacted] tháng [redacted]
Nay về cư trú **133/A/1 Hồ Chí Minh Thành phố 3 Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh**

Nhân sự quá trình chỉ tạo

Trần Trung Chế

Ngày 10 tháng 08 năm 1984

Lưu sự trước mặt [redacted] Họ tên, chỉ bị người được cấp giấy [redacted]

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The Vietnam Center and Archive

Khuc Minh Tho



Nguyen Dinh Phuc





The Vietnam Center and Archive





History of FVPPA

- Founded in 1977 by Khuc Minh Tho, Trinh Ngoc Dung, and other wives and daughters of Vietnamese Political Prisoners.
- Officially Founded in 1984 in State of VA.
- A group of 5-20 volunteers met and worked at Mrs. Tho's house at night after their day jobs, sometimes till 2 or 3 in the morning.



FVPPA's Three Goals

- The release of all Vietnamese Political Prisoners from the reeducation camps.
- To publicize the inhumane conditions of the reeducation camps.
- To assist former reeducation camp prisoners and their families in the resettlement process.



Orderly Departure Program

- 1975: Saigon falls
- 1978-mid 1980's: Approximately 2 million flee Vietnam by boat
- May 1979 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) creates the Orderly Departure Program (ODP)

The Vietnam Center and Archive



ODP Application Files



HỘI GIA ĐÌNH TÙ NHÂN CHÍNH TRỊ VIỆT NAM
 FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION
 P.O. BOX 5435, ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0635 IV#: _____
 TELEPHONE: 703-560-0058 VEWL.#: _____

POLITICAL PRISONER REGISTRATION FORM
(Two Copies)

I-171#: Y NO
 EXIT VISA#: _____

The purpose of this form is to identify persons who are or were formerly interned in re-education camps in Vietnam, so that eligibility for U.S. admission via the Orderly Departure Program can be established.

- APPLICANT IN VIETNAM
 Last _____ Middle _____ First _____
 Current Address: _____
 Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____
 Previous Occupation (before 1975) _____
 (Rank & Position)
- TIME SPENT IN RE-EDUCATION CAMP Dates: From _____ To _____
 Years: _____ Months: _____ Days: _____
- SPONSOR'S NAME: _____
 Name _____
 Address and Telephone Number _____
- NAMES OF RELATIVES/ACQUAINTANCES IN THE U.S.

Name, Address & Telephone Number	Relationship

If you are eligible to file for the applicant under Category I of the ODP criteria and have not filed an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR), you are encouraged to do so. Also, persons in the U.S. who are eligible to petition for relatives in Vietnam on INS Form I-130 must do so.

DATE PREPARED: _____



HỘI GIA ĐÌNH TÙ NHÂN CHÍNH TRỊ VIỆT NAM
 FAMILIES OF VIETNAMESE POLITICAL PRISONERS ASSOCIATION
 P.O. BOX 5435, ARLINGTON, VA 22205-0635
 TELEPHONE: 703-560-0058

REGISTRATION FORM
(Two Copies)

IV # _____
 VEWL.# _____
 I-171: Yes, No

The purpose of this form is to identify WIDOWS AND UNMARRIED CHILDREN of former re-education camp prisoners who died while being detained in the camps in Vietnam, so that eligibility for U.S. admission via the Orderly Departure Program can be established.

- WIDOW APPLICANT IN VIETNAM
 Last _____ Middle _____ First _____
 Current Address _____
 Date of Birth _____ Place of Birth _____
- NAME OF FORMER RE-EDUCATION CAMP PRISONER WHO DIED IN THE CAMP (HUSBAND/FATHER)

 Previous Occupation (before 1975) _____
 (Rank & Position)
 TIME SPENT IN RE-EDUCATION CAMP -- Dates: From _____ To DEATH DATE: _____
- SPONSOR'S NAME: _____
 Name _____
 Address & Telephone _____
- NAMES OF RELATIVES/ACQUAINTANCES IN THE U.S.

Name, Address & Telephone	Relationship

If you are eligible to file for the applicant under Category I of the ODP criteria and have not filed an Affidavit of Relationship (AOR), you are encouraged to do so. Also, persons in the U.S. who are eligible to petition for relatives in Vietnam on INS Form I-130 must do so.

DATE PREPARED: _____

Page 2

5. NAME OF PRINCIPAL APPLICANT (PA) : _____
 (Listed on page 1)

NAME OF DEPENDENT/ACCOMPANYING RELATIVES	DATE OF BIRTH	RELATIONSHIP TO PA.

DEPENDENT'S ADDRESS : (if different from above)

6. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION :



The Vietnam Center and Archive



To Minh Thio Khuc
With best wishes,
Ronald Reagan





The Vietnam Center and Archive





Accomplishments of the FVPPA

- July 30, 1989: signing of the American-Vietnamese agreement.
- Release of 100 Longest Held Prisoners.
- July 26, 1996: McCain Amendment (Section 595 H.R. 3540)
- Abolished mandatory 6 months trade and English training in Philippines.



Colonel Tran Van Man



The Vietnam Center and Archive





Captain Nguyen Tai & Truong Thi Tuyet Huong





The Vietnam Center and Archive





The Vietnam Center and Archive



... three orphaned children of [redacted] who
... es with their 87 years old grandfather in Saigon.
... ne of the children in front of their father's alt

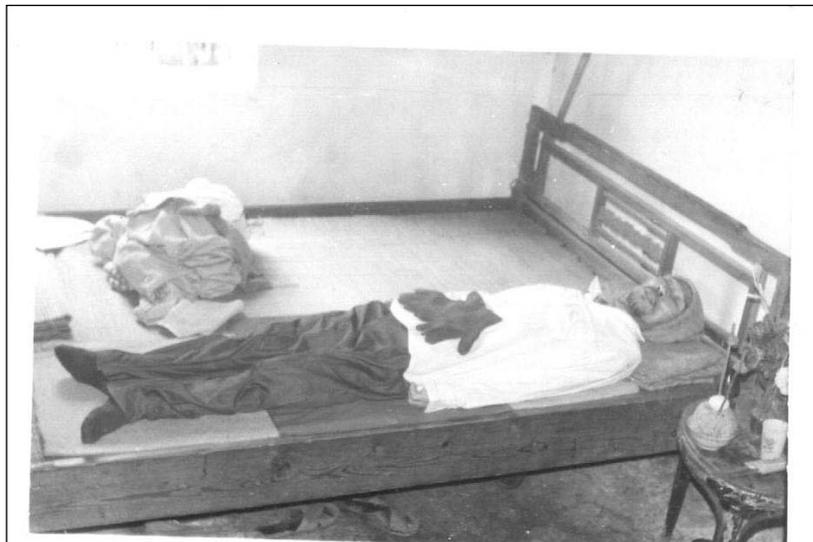


Nguyen Phat Loc

- Nguyen Phat Khoi
- Nguyen Phat Khoa
- Nguyen Qui Anh



The Vietnam Center and Archive





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Colonel Pham The Vinh





Nguyen Van Chinh Code Name: Dia Hai
Parachute Commando & Spy





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Police Sergeant
Nguyen Van Tuan





Judge Chau Tu Phat





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Colonel & Congressman Nhan Minh Trang





Journalist Vu Hai Van

Ủy Ban Quân Quản
Thành Phố Sài Gòn - Gia Định

CỘNG HÒA MIỀN NAM VIỆT NAM
Độc Lập — Dân Chủ — Hòa Bình — Trung Lập

Số 008276 /CN

**GIẤY CHỨNG NHẬN
ĐÃ HỌC TẬP CẢI TẠO**

Họ và tên thật Vũ Hải Vân
Tên thường gọi
Ngày sinh 13-06-1939
Quê quán Hà Đông
Chỗ ở hiện tại 105 Võ Chí Công

Số căn cước 04 914 269 Cấp bậc Cảnh sát Viên
Chức vụ công khai NV an ninh Binh chủng Cảnh sát
Chức vụ bí mật Đơn vị Bộ Thông Tin (Bộ Quốc Vụ)

ĐÃ HỌC TẬP 26 NGÀY TẠI Trường Cải tạo

The Vietnam Center and Archive



Journalist

& Writer

Vu Quoc Chau

International Catholic Migration Commission / Joint Voluntary Agency
- ORDERLY DEPARTURE PROGRAM

PERMISSION FOR ENTRY

PRINCIPAL APPLICANT:

DATE: 24 SEP 1998

Vu Quoc Chau

INTERVIEW LIST NUMBER:

R10-390 (4)

REASON FOR ENTRY:

24 SEP 1998 PHOTO DATE

24 SEP 1998 FORM FILLING DATE

PRESCREENING DATE

1:00

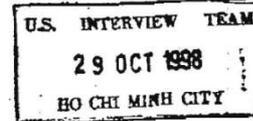
29 SEP 1998 INTERVIEW DATE

6-11-98 APPOINTMENT TO SEE FOUR/OVR
CASEWORKER

APM - MAR

(INITIAL)

NOTES



MAR requesting
agent to fax in
a copy of refusal
form



The Vietnam Center and Archive



Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Chau



The Vietnam Center and Archive





Inhumane Treatment of Reeducation Camp Detainees and their Families

- Role in Mass Exodus-“Boat People”
- ODP Inclusion
- Creation FVPPA



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY™