Fate of Our Allies Sentenced to Reeducation: Forgiveness by Blood

Anna Marie Mallett
Vietnamese American Heritage Archivist
The Vietnam Archive, Texas Tech University

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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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average Years of Internment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Overall Average</td>
<td>5-14</td>
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<td>Major &amp; Up</td>
<td>12-13</td>
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<td>Captain &amp; Lieutenant</td>
<td>2-3</td>
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<td>Private &amp; Sergeant</td>
<td>3 months</td>
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Others Sentenced to Reeducation

- Teachers
- Writers
- Journalists
- Police Officers
- Doctors
- Student Body Presidents
- Anyone with antirevolutionary sentiments or activities
VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS
IN
THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
APRIL 30, 1975 — APRIL 30, 1983

by
GINETTA SAGAN and STEPHEN DENNEY

Barracks at Ham Tan Reeducation Camp
DARK — COLD — NO WINDOWS — TWO BUCKETS, ONE AT
EACH END FOR TOILETS — LOCKED IN FROM 5 P.M. TO 6 A.M.
UNBEARABLE STENCH — 100 IN EACH BUILDING.
(See page 39)
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 PEG Decree No. 02/CP-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 Tran Van Truc, who “died in August 1989 of stomach cancer in a detention camp.”[5] Yet the image 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 “suspicious” 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 concrete 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.66

The concrete 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 unbearable hot in the sun that prisoners in them can pass out or die.66

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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.99 Prisoners in such cells in Ham Tan camp (Thai Binh province) lie on the floor with their legs raised and feet locked in wooden stocks.99 In a camp in Nghe Tinh, prisoners confined to these ditches in Ben Gia were fed once daily—a bowl of rice or sorghum and water.100

Other forms of torture were reported by a former prisoner of Dong 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.

2. The Auton: 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.

In his book, The Will of Heaven, Nguyen Ngoc Nhan described a case where "the airplane" method was applied. This case occurred in May of 1977 at Bu Gia Map camp, located in a malaria area near the Cambodian border. Tru, a prisoner, became angry when he was not allowed drinking water. He broke the flag of the former government of South Vietnam as a delirium. He took the flag out of the guard's hand and yelled at him for deserting 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 barefooted 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.101

Hanoi acknowledges that violence has been used against the prisoners in isolated cases but not as a matter of general camp policy.102 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...
Manioc Plant

Manioc Roots
The hidden horror of Vietnam’s camps

By Dennis Rockstroh
Mercy 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

Constant, numbing brutality was the norm

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Thousands still slave in re-education camps

Vietnam’s hidden horror

CAMPS, from Page 1A

they feared could lead to a counter-revolution – lived out their lives in hard labor, humiliation, sadness 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 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 5,000 people were executed in the eight years after the communist victory in 1975. The U.S. State Department reported to Congress that, “execution numbers 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 80 camps throughout Vietnam about a dozen are believed to exist today, most of them near Hanoi or Hu 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 15 years.

☑ Subjected prisoners to intense psychological 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 tortured and beaten by other prisoners for imaginary crimes in order to prove their sincerity.

☑ Tortured prisoners in an attempt to get information about political opposition, military realignment or others’ confessions.

☑ Denied medical care and adequate food.

☑ Left at least 6,000 people — and probably substantially more — languishing 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 in Vietnam.

“The Vietnamese Communists were too clever to kill us all in a blood bath as the Cambodian 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. These are some of the reasons why there are fewer colonels in my camp originally. When we were moved two and a half years later, we set 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 Julie and Karl D. Jacobson said the camps have become a symbolized form of “cruel death.” The Communist regime uses for “liquidating (the) class enemies.”

In an extensive interview at the Vietnamese mission to the United Nations in New York, Vietnamese spokesman Ho Roy Thong called the reports of instability in the camps “distorted” and “fabricated.”

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

By Dennis Rockstroh

“Do 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 camps, gathered to share experiences, and hold them in the memories of others.”

Vu Trong Khanh shows his scars

A metal bar taut beneath three inches long. Other times, a metal case was placed on his head and electricity applied. He said he also was beaten with bare electric wires that scorched his flesh. He fainted often, only to be revived for another session.

No other prisoners

Just how many suffered like Khanh is unclear. He said there were hundreds, if not thousands, of cases like his. Some Vietnamese have estimated that there have been as many as 500,000 people who have been sent to the camps.

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 jostled in the manner of men who have sacrificed their lives in the din of many battles. In the dim light, old war wounds reared their heads, long scars on necks and arms. The former officers gathered the son of Vietnam’s revolutionary leader Ho Chi Minh, asked to autograph his shirt. The smiles of the old war wounds are now in the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry. The continuing agony of thousands of Vietnamese who have been noticed by much of the world because of the control of their information and access imposed by Vietnam.

Access restricted.

Few Western journalists have been given access to the camps. It is clear that the new journalists from friendly Communist countries are permitted to visit the prisoners as war criminals, but few report much about them, without formal charges or trials to prove their sincerity.

Locked in boxes

Disciplined prisoners by locking them in metal storage boxes called “cages.” The temperature often soared above 120 degrees. Water was sometimes denied.

Poems of love

Khanh smiled as he spoke of a love poem he wrote: “I’ll write of poems love. Motherly love, love of a brother, love of a wife, love of a people, man and wife. Name any love and I’ll write about it.”

Yet even now, Khanh said, it is only his body that is free.

A new way to keep issue alive

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

Khuê Minh Tho

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Vietnam’s Re-education Camps

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 his neck in a “punishment hole.”

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.

“A Marine called Nam”

Garwood spent 14 years in camps

By Dennis Rickstroh

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. 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 46-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 told him the American guy had been re-educated. He helped outline 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 Americans were an electric cable. “I asked him why he had been removed. 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 came after me.”
Millions were sent away to be 're-educated'.

By Dennis Rockscheiro

Millions were sent away to be 're-educated'.

By Dennis Rockscheiro

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

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 were all in established prisons or military bases. Later the prisoners built new campuses with minimal security. The emphasis was on self-criticism and confession, and two grades of 'reform' camps where the courses were set at three and five years.

A 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 like doing anything wrong. Finally I realized my sins and 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 communists.'

'There were separate wooden and thatch huts for prisoners and guards, mess halls, latrines, torture rooms, men's and women's shower rooms. Large metal boxes held personal effects at the edges of the camps. These boxes were used for punishment and the guards would throw them into the water.'

At Cay Cay and other camps, prisoners were required to perform hard labor in quarries, in the fields or in the jungles, and interviewing other prisoners for expansion of the prisons.

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

'It was always hot, and it was very, very hard work. We were always hungry, always tired, always re-educated, always being punished in San Jose.'

Prisoners typically received two meals a day, consisting of rice mixed with corn, sweet potatoes or sorghum. The average daily ration weighed about 15 ounces, but prisoners were often forced to share their food. Many were killed or imprisoned for attempting to escape.

'Camp Number Five'

'Camp Number Five'

'Toward the end of his imprisonment, Garwood was sent to a new camp near the Chinese border. In the beginning of 1973, he was sent to another camp, called 'Sonc Prison Camp Number Five.'

'It was a valley amid the mountains, near the Chinese border. It was near the village of Tien Yen in the Ha Noi Province.'

A Hanoi official scoffed at the former prisoners' claims of near starvation.

'There were no mountains, there were no mountains,' he said in an interview at the Vietnamese mission to the United Nations in New York. 'There was no food, no water, no shelter, no shelter. There were no mountains, no mountains.'

A year later, he was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to 20 years in prison. He remained in prison, and during the war and worked for the communists. He was released in 1989 and returned to the United States, where he was discharged.
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
Household Registration: Police Department
Prisoner Release Certificates
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 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 Order Departure Program can be established.

1. **APPLICANT IN VIETNAM**
   - Last
   - Middle
   - First
   - Date of Birth:
   - Place of Birth:
   - Previous Occupation (before 1975)
   - (Bank & Position)

2. **TIME SPENT IN RE-EDUCATION CAMP**
   - Dates: From:
   - To:
   - Years:
   - Months:
   - Days:

3. **SPONSOR’S NAME**
   - Name:
   - Address and Telephone Number:

4. **BANK NAME/AFFILIATIONS 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 Form I-130 must do so.

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Accomplishments of the FVPPA

- 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

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Captain Nguyen Tai & Truong Thi Tuyet Huong
Nguyen Phat Loc

• Nguyen Phat Khoi
• Nguyen Phat Khoa
• Nguyen Qui Anh
Colonel Pham The Vinh
Nguyen Van Chinh        Code Name: Dia Hai
Parachute Commando & Spy
Police Sergeant
Nguyen Van Tuan
Judge Chau Tu Phat
Colonel & Congressman Nhan Minh Trang
Journalist Vũ Hải Văn

Giấy chứng nhận đã học tập cải tạo

Họ và tên thật: Vũ Hải Văn
Tên thường gọi: Hải Ông
Ngày sinh: 13 - 06 - 1939
Quê quán: Hà Đông
Chỗ ở hiện tại: 105/10 Cầu Giấy

Số căn cước: 049142699. Cấp bậc: C全资. Lãnh viên
Chức vụ công khai: NV. Lưu Lộc. Binh chủng: C全资. Lãnh viên
Chức vụ bí mật:
Đơn vị: Bộ Thông Tin Bộ Quốc phòng

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Journalist
& Writer
Vu Quoc Chau
Dr. Nguyen Ngoc Chau
Inhumane Treatment of Reeducation Camp Detainees and their Families

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