

# AGENT ORANGE

AND GUATEMALA AND YOU AND VIETNAM  
JUST LIKE 'NAM THE SETTLEMENT 1ST HAND REPORT  
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## THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

50¢

Vol. 19, No. 1

Spring, 1989

# THE PHILIPPINES, THE FIRST VIETNAM AND THE NEXT VIETNAM

## REPORTS FROM VVAW DELEGATION ON VIETNAM

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VVAW members exchanging soil from the US War Memorial with Vietnamese soil. Trading earth and friendship toward reconciliation.

by David Curry  
Chicago Chapter  
National Staff  
VVAW

"REBELLION!", shouted the headlines of newspapers around the world. The dictator Ferdinand Marcos, whose reign seemed infinite, had been replaced by a comparatively diminutive female leader whose aristocratic charm was cloaked in democratic rhetoric. There was just enough hesitation in supporting her from the Reagan administration to make all of us who had opposed Marcos feel that some degree of victory had been won. I clipped my copy of the "REBELLION" headline from the Chicago Sun Times, tacked it on my bulletin board, and breathed a sigh of relief that what had seemed an inevitable Vietnam-like military involvement for the United States had been avoided.

As the months passed, my earlier uneasiness returned. News from the Philippines revealed an Aquino balancing act of increasing civil unrest and rightist coup attempts. While I was getting a routine blood test, a Filipino hospital technician, who noticed my VVAW pin, told me that he had served in Vietnam, too. After a brief conversational "feeling out", he told me that he had recently left the Philippines out of fear for his life. His teenage brother had been tortured and murdered by government soldiers. I naively suggested that the situation had probably changed since the fall of Marcos. He told me that these events had transpired since Aquino had come to power. This fall, *The World*, the church magazine of Unitarian-Universalists reported that head of the Unitarian Church in the Philippines, a critic of

Marcos and later Aquino, had been murdered. The suspected perpetrators were right-wing death squads.

My old fears have returned. The Philippines were the first Vietnam. The Philippines can be the next Vietnam. The Philippines may be the last Vietnam.

### The First Vietnam

The Spanish began their conquest of the Philippines in 1565. Spain's total destruction of the indigenous Filipino culture was so absolute that little is known of the pre-Spanish era. One description says, "Filipinos ... lived in many separate communities, linked by a well-developed system of trade and some loose political compacts, with widespread literacy." As with the French conversion of the pre-colonial languages of Vietnam into a Roman character script, the Spanish destruction of the "old" literature served as an important component of the total and brutal destruction of a culture in order to facilitate colonization. Almost unending violent uprisings of the peoples of the Philippines testify to the need for Spanish concern. Spanish dominion was fundamentally tied to the tyrant's ability to divide the Filipino people into two classes: one class who benefited from Spanish rule and one class whose suffering and laboring made Spanish rule profitable for both the Spanish and the Filipino upper class.

The first of the popular uprisings to merit the Western designation of "revolution" occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. Perhaps, the difference in this case was that the sons of wealthy Filipino landowners educated in Europe provided an ideological base for the rebellion. They had realized

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# GUATEMALA

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# FRAGGIN'

Sp 5 Willy(Ret.)

**A.K.A.  
Bill Shunas**



I suppose many of you are disappointed that you've got George Bush for president now. You think you're going to have four more years like the last eight under Reagan. I know that's a depressing thought, but maybe it won't be as bad.

Look at the bright side. You won't have a president who falls off to sleep during meetings and lets wacko aides make policy. You'll be rid of an administration which probably set the record for having the most sleazeballs out to use their government positions for personal gain. Maybe this new guy will have at least some intelligence. What did Iron Lady Maggie Thatcher say about Ronnie Boy? Something about how she's fond of the dear boy, but he doesn't have too much upstairs. Then again, maybe that's better than having a smart reactionary who might do a better job of screwing us.

But, on the bright side again, we get rid of the Iron Lady Nancy Reagan. I don't know much about Barbara Bush but That Nancy chick was weird, man. I mean, like she had the old boy running the country according to the dictates of her astrologer. And her clothes--she collected clothes like Imelda Marcos collected shoes. Some fashion experts quoted by *Time* Magazine made a guess as to the value of dresses she wore at public events: they figured that the cost of all different dresses draping her anorexic body was over a million dollars.

The borrowed earrings Nancy wore overseas were supposed to be worth \$800,000. Her dresses were borrowed, also, since there is a law against elected officials and their families accepting such opulent gifts. Supposedly, she has even more dresses hidden away. They say she turned Amy Carter's bedroom into a walk-in closet for all the dresses

she "borrowed" from fashion designers.

Well, I'm clad weird Nancy is gone. Maybe now that she's out of the White House she could get together with Imelda Marcos and go shopping. Imelda, famous for her three-thousand pair of shoes, also liked dresses. She bought them by the rack just like she bought diamonds by the case.

Maybe they could bright their husbands along on a double date. These guys should like each other.

when it comes to story-telling. Much of his political career was based on his image as a heroic guerilla fighter against the Japanese during World War II. But thanks to the U.S. Army (bless its little stone heart) we find out different. The Army released a report on Marcos' military career which exposes the lies he told about his military career. It seems that his unit was not controlled adequately during the war "because of the desertion of its

one I can think of is Richard Nixon when he gave his famous Checkers speech.

Danny Quayle cried because those nasty media people found out he dodged military service in Vietnam which was not a cool thing to do when one is a hawk. But at least he can say that during his service in the Indiana National Guard, there was not one VC attack on Indianapolis. Even so, he'll never measure up to the standards that what's-his-name set during the Reagan years.

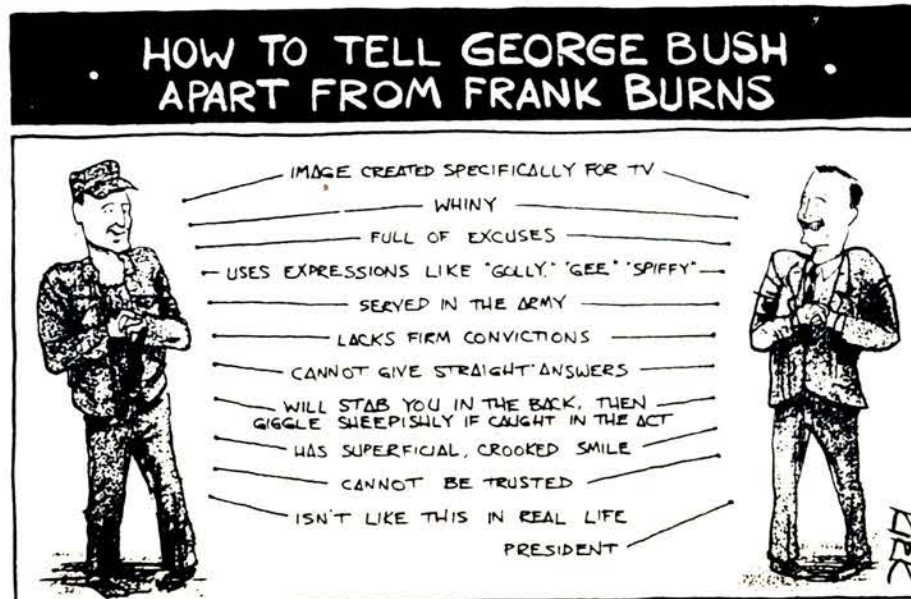
So Bush can't be as bad, can he? They say an optimist sees a half glass of water as half full. A pessimist sees it as half empty. Reagan is gone now, and so is his weird wife. That's reason for optimism. We might have some plain old normal closet fascists in the White House now. So maybe the glass looks one-eighth full instead of seven-eighths empty.

## GRENADE

### GRENADE

Dr John Fronvall, the Veterans Administration's Chief medical officer is the recipient of our grenade of the month. A survey of VA hospitals revealed that they had an abnormally high death rate. Dr John ordered another survey which was to be restructured so as not to have a result with such a large number of hospitals with an abnormally high death rate.

Now maybe the good doctor didn't want such a high rate made public because he's a friend of veterans and didn't want to scare us about VA hospitals. But I doubt it. More likely he didn't want to deal with the problem. Better to cover up the statistics, cover up his ass, and cover the VA's ass while vets die.



After all, it was President Reagan who gave high praise and support to dictator Ferdinand until the Philippine people put him out on his ass. And they could swap war stories while their wives are tearing through the racks at Christian Dior or ogling diamonds at Tiffany's.

We all heard Ronnie's stories about liberating Nazi concentration camps and his naval aviator adventures during World War II. So what if it was all on some Hollywood set. The stories were good. And Ferdinand is no slouch

commanding officer." And who was the commanding officer? Why, it was Ferdinand the Hero, now famous for being the husband of a woman with 3,000 pairs of shoes.

I imagine a shrink could have fun with the Reagans and the Marcoses. But let's get back to today. We've got a new President now. He can't be as bad as Reagan, can he? His vice-president, on the other hand, is a real loser. How many vice-presidents have we had who were crybabies? The only

# WHO SAYS WE'VE GROWN UP AMERICA'S GREAT SATANS

Last October 6th, armed agents of the U.S. Treasury Department raided the office of a travel agent in Westport, Connecticut. They confiscated some of his records and \$200,000 from one of his bank accounts. A spectacular drug bust, you think? A travel agent using his connections to bring cocaine in from Columbia? Well, no. It was nothing so spectacular.

The travel agent involved is Lars-Eric Lindblad of Lindblad travel--an agent highly respected by his peers in the travel business. He was even voted to the Travel Hall of Fame by the American Society of Travel Agents. So what was this elderly gentleman's crime? He was going to operate tours to Cambodia and Vietnam.

The justification the Treasury Department used to go after Lindblad was the "Trading with the Enemy Act." Damn! I thought the Vietnam War was over. This is bad news for a lot of stressed-out vets. I know they've been trying to re-write what happened in Vietnam. Maybe next they're gonna

say that the Paris Peace Treaty was never signed.

The attack on Lindblad was an example of what happens when these fanatical right wingers gain a bit of power. The U.S. lost in Vietnam. Period. Korea ended in a tie game. Before that there were eight or ten victories. When your war record is eight or ten wins and one tie, it really deflates the ego to lose one--like in Vietnam. These macho right wingers equate what they see as the greatness of their country with military victory. That's one of the reasons why they try to re-write the Vietnam War history and look for ways to keep fighting that war.

But there's also another dynamic at work here. They need to keep fighting Vietnam and pick on people like Lindblad because they need enemies. Americans laugh self-righteously at the Ayatollah Khoumeni when Khoumeni talks about how his country needs to fight the Great Satan which is America. We all know we aren't that bad, so the

Ayatollah must be an old fool. But what about our own macho men of the right? They don't use silly words like "Great Satan" but they talk about their enemies in the same way Khoumeni talks about his--short on fact and long on the beating of the breast.

The Russians have really been a big let-down for our right-wing friends. They were such a good enemy--so easy to hate. The "Evil Empire." Then, the Soviet Central Committee chose a man of peace to lead them. Gorbachev said he wants peace with the U.S. Our Ayatollahs said he was lying. Gorbachev reduced his missiles in Europe. Our Ayatollahs said it was a smokescreen. Gorbachev began troop withdrawals from Afghanistan. The Ayatollahs didn't believe it. They won't be satisfied until Forby buys stock in IBM, masterminds a leveraged buyout and does a line of coke at a Park Avenue party.

Our macho Ayatollahs are losing their credibility by constantly attacking the Russians when the Russians

obviously want Peace. So our Ayatollahs try to pick fights with Vietnam or Cuba or various countries in the Middle East. And you have to wonder why they keep doing this.

Maybe there are economic reasons why the American Ayatollahs do what they do. There's big money in the arms trade, and that's the kind of business that would appeal to these people. Maybe they need to expand their arms business or their oil business or their computer business. They need customers and resources. Or maybe they just don't like foreigners. Or maybe they need to keep creating enemies to retain their own following and keep what power they have.

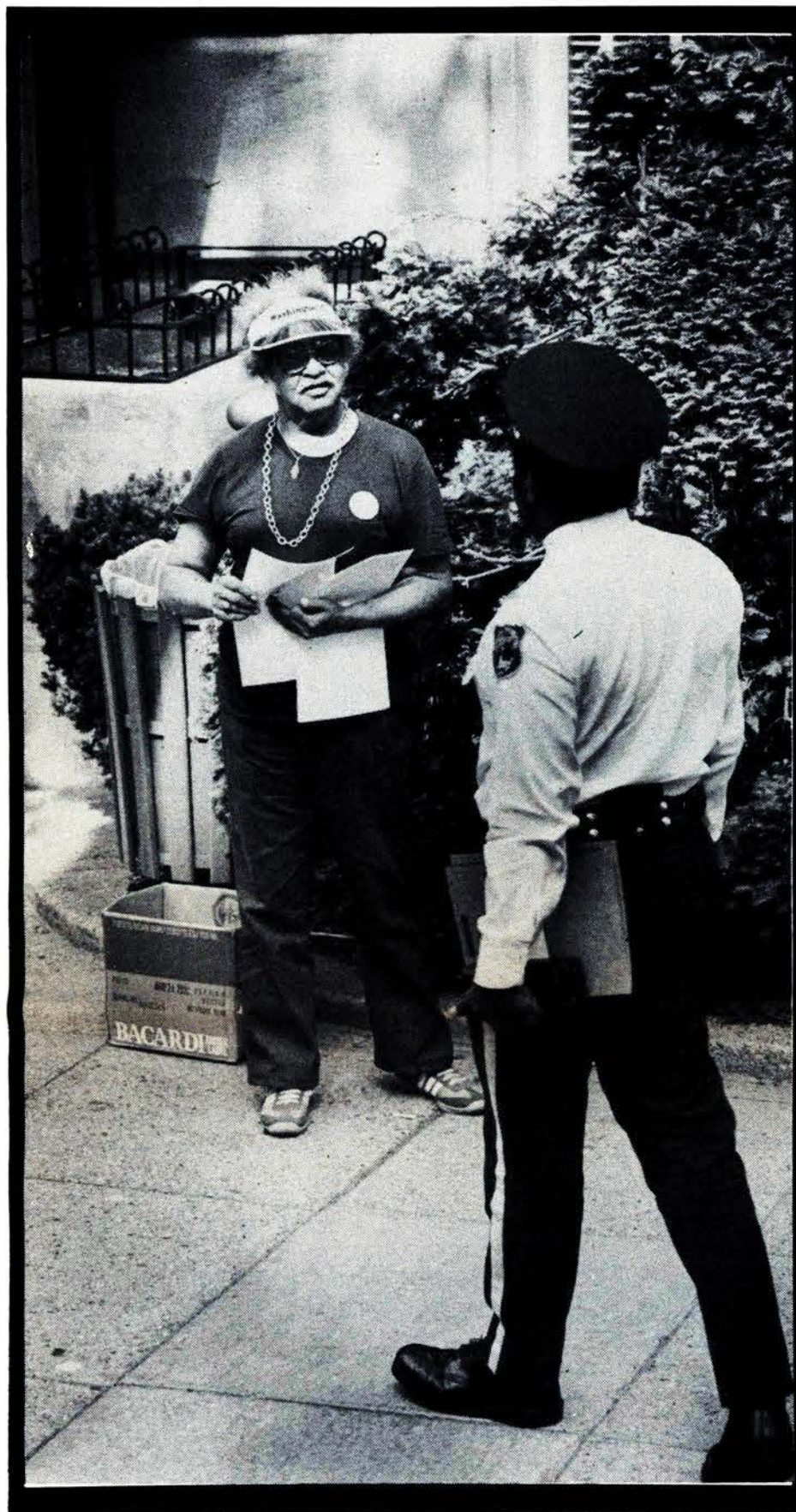
All the above reasons are possible. Me? I'm partial to the psychosexual theory. I think our Ayatollahs get their spiritual guidance from people like Jimmy Swaggert. As a result, they experience sexual frustration. So they attack places like Genada and

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# OBITUARIES

## FOUR MORE CASUALTIES



Harold Davis

VVAW lost three long time activists-out friends and fellow fighters.

Mike Carrmindy, one of the founders of the Kent State, Ohio, VVAW Chapter, died of cancer this year. He moved to Chicago in the '70s and continued to stay in touch personally and politically. During Washington's first mayoral campaign, Mike was working in Bridgeport. He sat in a bar wearing a "Irish for Washington" T-shirt. After a drink or three someone hit him in the head with a bottle from behind, calling him a nigger lover." He turned on the stool, looked his assailant in the face and said, "If that's your best shot, your in trouble." The asshole left. Mike played his cards well--he was blind for 15 more minutes and he'd only guessed where his enemy's face was.

His death appears to be tied to Dioxin poisoning from Agent Orange.

David Stroup, former President of the APWU local and member of VVAW died after more than a year's illness. A former Lieutenant with the 1st Infantry Division, he won the Distinguished Service Cross. He was proud to have voted for Jackson and prouder still that he had gotten some of his "hillbilly" relatives to do the same. Even after he could no longer walk, he returned to the post office and wheeled around the workroom saying, "I always wanted to say this, 'Want to make a dying man real happy?'"

His death from cancer appears to be tied to dioxin poisoning from Agent Orange.

Wayne Field's execution by the state of Louisiana ended a 10 year involvement by VVAW to have his sentence commuted because of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In 12978, Wayne tried to kill himself. Police became involved and a ricochet hit and killed an officer.

His last statement before execution: "You and kill the messenger, but you can't kill the message [of what the Vietnam war did to its vets]. Someday you will all have to recognize this problem for what it is, not for what you want it to be."

Harold Davis, 66, veteran of World War II Navy and Korean Air Force, died on December 7, 1988 of

complications from a kidney transplant.

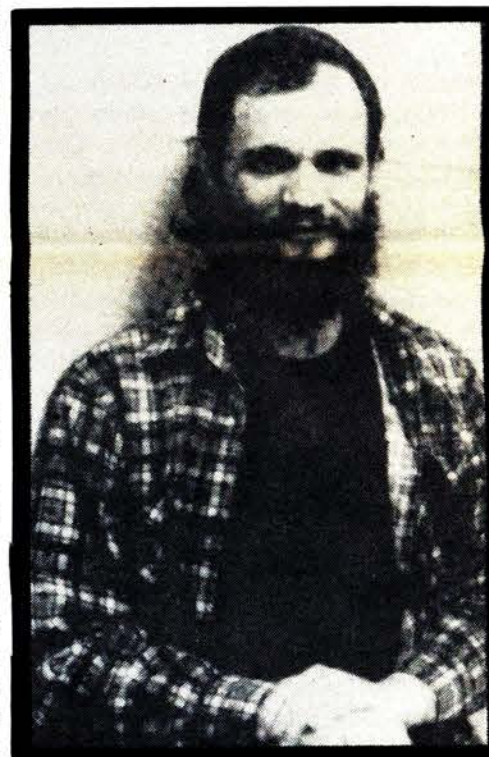
Harold will be missed. He was one of the oldest active members of VVAW in Milwaukee. Despite living with the pain of diabetes and other complications from a kidney transplant, he was active. He camped on the mall and marched and leafleted with VVAW at Dewey Canyon IV, did outreach at all our activities, helped out at the VA hospital. We say him at every camp-out at the Otts. His life was immersed in music and art. As a young man, he was a vocalist in various bands, and later in life, he was an artist.

Brother Mike, we will remember you for the early work in forming VVAW, for your work for Harold in Bridgeport, for a United Ireland and for your friendship.

Brother Dave, you could make even Scrooge laugh, drink us all under the table and appreciate living. You served Vets, the working class and your family well.

Brother Wayne, we should have done more but you kept fighting and educating even from your jail cell.

Their memory lives in our struggle:



Wayne Robert Felde

CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

## Enemies

Libya and Nicaragua. This is all a way to have a giant public masturbation without having to pull their pants down. And the preacher says it's okay. And they're proud of themselves. Damn the innocent people who get caught in the middle. They've found a real, live, big, bad Enemy.

I have to say a word about poor Libya. Now, the dude who runs Libya is not wrapped too tight. And I'm sure he's involved in some things--maybe many things--that are not very nice. But p[ity] the poor Libyan people. They've become punching bags for the United States whenever something goes wrong.

The U.S. never proves anything on Libya. There are a lot of charges, but no proof. Remember the Libyan assassination team roaming around America a couple of years ago? What happened to them? The U.S. never

proved it was Libya that did the Disco bombing in Germany, or anything else.

But we shoot their planes out of the sky and bomb their country. That's because our Ayatollahs need to masturbate once in awhile.

Libya shows how the Ayatollahs are simple bullies as well as fanatics. They pick on Libya because Libya is a hapless, out-of-the-way place. If they attacked some of the other countries who play terrorist games, there might be a major war or a shortage of oil. So, they take it out on the poor Libyans.

Our Ayatollahs like to use the word "conservative" to describe themselves, but they're not even that. The trial of Oliver North serves as an example of this fanaticism that goes beyond old-time conservatism. The old conservative may have stood in the way of progress and used too narrow interpretations of the Constitution, but he upheld the law. The new breed gets self-righteous and asks, "Since when do you p[ro]secute a man for fighting

Communism?" They feel that the laws are theirs to break. And the coverup goes on, and they won't release documents in the name of National Security! Give us a break--it ain't national security but cover-your-ass.

While so much of U.S. foreign policy is dictated by the military and confrontational desires of our right-wing fanatics, during the 1970's, the number of people with inadequate diets around the world increased from 650 million to 730 million. And since 1980, it's gotten worse because economic growth has slowed in developing countries, and spending on social services has decreased. And while this is going on, more and more of the dollars of U.S. aid to foreign countries are going there as security assistance (military and police) rather than needed developmental aid. Or to put it another way, here's a quote from an editorial in the Washington Times, a mouthpiece of the new Ayatollahs. "Any aid directed at overthrowing communism is humanitarian aid." And

so, while the bloodlust appetites of our Ayatollahs are satisfied, things become worse for people around the world as well as at home.

There are economic and political reasons why countries go to war or promote wars among their allies. These reasons may always be with us. But sometimes wars are started or promoted by fanatics. The recent Iran-Iraq War seems like one. These kinds of wars are the saddest kind because they aren't criven by economic or political necessities. They could have been prevented. They are driven only by people with little minds in powerful positions who need to find an enemy to fight because such an enemy justifies their own being. And we've got a lot of these kind of people running around this country. And they don't wear religious robes. They wear Brooks Brothers suits and Rolex watches, and instead of chanting mantras, they go around chanting, "We're number one, We're number one!"



# OBSERVATIONS IN GUATEMALA MASSACRES, POVERTY AND DOW

by Evan B. Douthit

[Evan Douthit, a VVAW member in Chicago and editor of Central America News Update, recently spent ten days in Guatemala. The following are his impressions.]

The first impression one has when flying into Guatemala City is how familiar everything seems. I had not expected to find Guatemala City to be so "American". I found out soon enough that this was one-sided. Once away from the more modern, built-up sections of Guatemala City, one could see the differences between the city and the countryside, between the rich part of the city and the poor areas, between the Indian and non-Indian populations. (50% of the population is made up of Mayan Indians.)

Four out of five Guatemalans live in with poverty, or extreme poverty, according to UN figures. Three out of five cannot read. Two out of five are unemployed or underemployed. The infant mortality rate is one of the highest in Latin America. 75% of the land is owned by 10% of the farmers while 60% of peasant families lack any land at all. The country is deep in a terrible economic crisis caused by the world collapse of commodity prices and heavy foreign debt.

We saw results of this crisis and desperation as we drove along the roads. Small peasant plots were being pushed up mountain slopes, almost up cliffs, in an attempt to grow corn, so that peasants would be able to have something to eat, in reckless disregard for the environmental consequence. Signs of deforestation could be seen almost everywhere. (One ultra-rightist analyst even admitted to us that parts of the east near the Atlantic coast have been turned into desert!)

An article in the Mexican press recently told how peasants have been fined hundreds of dollars for cutting wood for their cooking fires while the army often burns down entire mountains and dumps large amounts of herbicides on the forests in pursuit of guerrillas. Meanwhile, industrial loggers often destroy entire forests of immature trees in order to reach the few stands of mature, marketable wood.

Everywhere we went there were soldiers, often teenagers, carrying galil assault rifles. The guerrilla war in Guatemala is healing up again. The army says they won the war, but they are asking for more US military aid. One million peasants are forced by the army to take part in "civil self-defense" patrols. Peasant organizers told us that the peasants want out of the patrols,

because they cannot afford to lose so much time from trying to earn money. But when they try to stop patrolling they are threatened by the army. People still remember the genocide of the early years of the eighties, when 200 villages were wiped off the map by the army, and tens of thousands killed. Since 1960 some 100,000 Guatemalans have been killed and 38,000

Though the scale of the killing has declined, massacres are still carried out. Twenty-two peasants were murdered near the town of Augucate days before we arrived. People still disappear frequently, and bodies are found with marks of torture.

Trade unionists, peasant organizers, and political analysts told us that there has been a significant change since a

pointed out that whenever Americans came to visit people in his position that it helps to protest such people. "Reports are now going out everywhere that you have come here," Father Giron told us in perfect English, which he learned while studying the US in the 60's. He worked with Dr. Martin Luther King then and had been deeply moved and inspired by King's non-violence and civil disobedience.

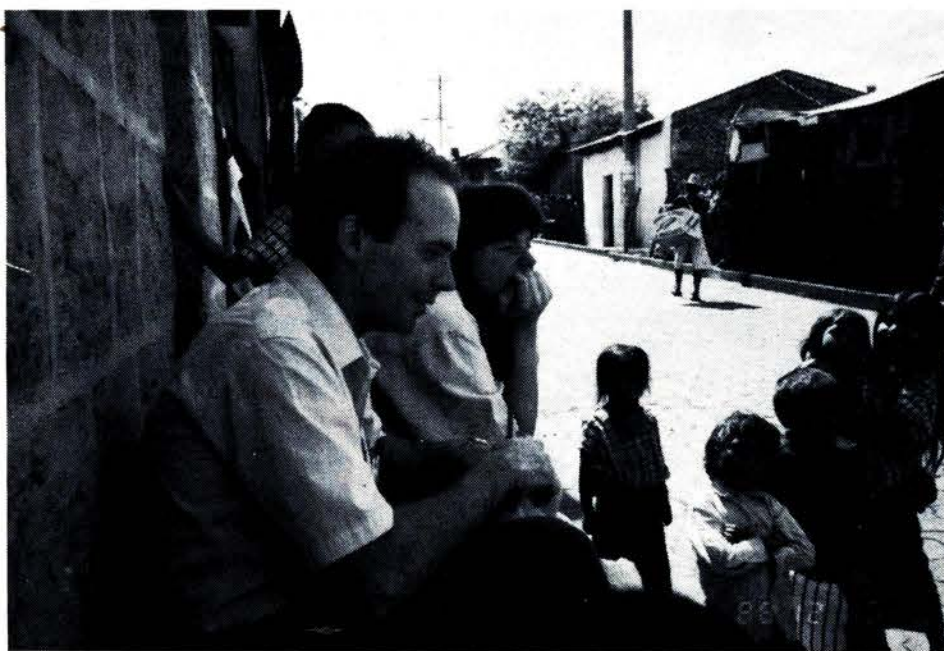
The next day we drove down to the ocean and passed thousands of cotton workers walking to work. Simply looking at the migrant workers we understood why a government official told several of our group that they would like to get rid of the cotton plantations "since they only bring misery." Among the workers were hundreds of children. There was no doubt in our minds that they were not going with their parents into the field just to keep them company, that it was just another manifestation of the child labor that we saw everywhere.

Guatemala City, as noted, at first seemed to be very American. The streets are crowded with vehicles, including diesel buses producing some of the worst pollution I had ever seen. Half a mile from our hotel in downtown there was a ravine. In this ravine was a shanty town where thousands lived in shacks. Even in the downtown area one would occasionally pass homes thrown together out of scrap wood and metal by squatters.

We visited one of the "colonias" on the outskirts later on. It was one of the better colonias. It had water available, and people had some electricity. There, packed in, thousands lived in shacks with dirt floors and tried to survive. There was a small school built by the residents, which was supposed to serve thousands of school age children. At the local "church" the community organizer told us some of their needs: clean water, sewage systems, family planning so that single women unable to afford even the most basic housing would not have to try to raise eight or more children. The government was nowhere to be seen in this barrio.

We visited the Petrosteel factory, which had been occupied for a month by striking workers. The company had refused to negotiate, and since then we learned that the strike had been declared "illegal" by the government, which strips the strikers of even the little protection they have under the law. As we walked through the factory we saw bags of vinyl from DOW, Union Carbide and EXXON.

We also visited Nineth de Garcia Montenegro, the leader of the Mutual Support Group, GAM. Her husband, a trade union organizer, was



Top--Author with friends in Guatemala. Bottom--Army memorial.



disappeared. 40,000 Indians took refuge in camps in Mexico to escape.

The guerrillas say there can be no military solution to the problems of Guatemala, and have called again and again for negotiations, and in 1987 they met with the government in Madrid, and recently they met in Costa Rica with the National Reconciliation Commission. But the army has ordered the government to break off talks.

"technical coup" was "failed" on May 11 of 1988. Since then there has been a narrowing of the political space afforded to legal dissent and opposition, and violence has increased. No one thought that President Cerezo has any power now, or that things have reached bottom. The question seemed to be whether the killing would get as bad as it was in the early eighties.

Father Andre Giron, a priest who heads an organization of 200,000 landless peasants on the southern coast, had received more than threats. In October the army attempted to kill him. One of his bodyguards was killed after 30 soldiers blocked the road he was driving down and opened fire on him. Afterwards the military claimed it had not been them that it had been guerrillas to try to kill Father Giron. Furthermore, the army claimed that the guerrillas had attacked Giron. Furthermore, the army claimed that the guerrillas had attacked Giron by "mistake" because Giron is an ally of the guerrillas!

Meeting with Giron in his parish near the coast, the father scoffed at the army claim. "I know who tried to kill me. I saw them with my own eyes," he told us. He thanked us for coming,

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# IN ANOTHER "VIETNAM" AGENT ORANGE

By Barry Romo

With much fanfare, Vietnam veterans and their families in 1984 supposedly won \$180 million in compensation from the six chemical companies who produced Agent Orange, the poisonous defoliant, for military use in Vietnam.

More than 20,000 vets are affected. So far they have yet to see a penny, even though the pretrial settlement was the largest class action settlement at that time and was seen as tacit admission about the defoliant's dreadful human consequences. Only the lawyers have been paid--to the tune of \$50 million.

Why the nearly four-year delay? One explanation for the official footdragging is that the military wants to use this poison again. According to the Feb. 25 Wisconsin State Journal, the Air Force announced on the day of the settlement that use of Agent Orange and other defoliants would not be affected by the chemical companies' concession. Air Force Deputy Surgeon General Murphy A. Chesney said he "would be confident about using Agent Orange in another war." Thus not only was there nothing wrong in using dioxin-based chemicals in Vietnam, this suggests that defoliants have a great military future for operations in Central America.

Lest it be forgot: Agent Orange is one of the most deadly of all man-made chemicals. The side effects are spontaneous abortions, miscarriages, birth defects, cancer, liver damage and more. Agent Orange was not primarily a "weedkiller" used for jungle "deforestation." Rather its purpose was to destroy crops in guerrilla-controlled provinces. This denied "the enemy" food and forced the civilian population into government-controlled camps. I visited Vietnam last year and saw how Agent Orange continues taking a toll on

ordinary people through rare cancers, birth defects and other diseases.

Most veterans here merely saw the Air Force statements as clap-trap evading responsibility for GI disabilities. Unfortunately, there seems to be a lot more to the story. Word is now reaching the U.S. from refugee camps in Mexico of aerial spraying in Guatemala. While the U.S. says it is destroying marijuana, the defoliation is taking place in zones with rebel activity and over the protests of Guatemala's congress. The Mexican newspaper Excelsior carries a June 24, 1987 Infoprensa report claiming U.S. aerial spraying in Guatemala killed 14 peasants and inflicted wide crop damage. Long one of the most brutal guerrilla wars in Central America, Guatemalan Indians must now apparently suffer chemical warfare as well as massacres. In El Salvador, too, the military is reported to be using chemicals killing crops and cattle in rebel-controlled areas, according to May, 1987 reports in Excelsior.

We know the carte blanche for covert wars given to Reagan's CIA. Still even the thought that the president has resurrected the use of defoliants banned since Nixon is abhorrent.

The rashes leading to deformed children are all too familiar to those of us acquainted with Agent Orange. As a Vietnam veteran with minimal problems due to dioxin poisoning, the thought of any child dying or suffering defects because of its reintroduction in a "Second Vietnam" holds only shame for all Americans. Let's not worry so much about building pretty monuments to Vietnam veterans, but work to solve real problems and prevent new outrages in the potential Vietnams of the future. That would be the best monument of all.



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disappeared eight years ago. She organized the relatives of other disappeareds into GAM to demand justice and an accounting. There were preparing a demonstration for that weekend to protest the massacre at Aguacate and to demand that it be investigated and the real killers be punished.

The Guatemalan army security forces claim to be representing Western values and civilization in the fight against anarchy, but days before the army

formally turned over power to Cerezo in January 1986, they passed a law giving all soldier amnesty from prosecution for any acts they had committed. There have been almost no prosecutions of human rights violations.

And that is where the situation remains today. A powerless civilian government, an army and death squads that kill and disappear with impunity, a desperately poor and terrorized population, and a smoldering guerrilla war that threatens to engulf the entire country, while US corporations are everywhere.

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# AGENT ORANGE LAWSUIT THIS SETTLEMENT WASN'T MADE FOR ME AND YOU

by John Lindquist  
VVAW National Office

The longest struggle in VVAW history began in March, 1978--the battle for testing, treatment and compensation for those exposed to the chemical defoliants used by the U.S. government in Southeast Asia. We fought longer on the issue of the class-action lawsuit filed against the manufacturers of Agent Orange than we did to end the war in Vietnam. And, unlike the final victory in Vietnam, bringing our brothers and sisters home, we never did win the Agent Orange lawsuit. Even today we are still fighting against the continued use of the same chemicals, and for the just medical care and treatment for our affected children.

In March, 1978, the Maude DeVicor story, "Deadly Fog" broke in Chicago. The Agent Orange story was picked up by veterans groups around the country. VVAW at its national meeting in Chicago in 1978 started our battle for testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims. At the same time, Paul Reutersham was dying of cancer from exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. With the help of Victor Yannacone, a class action lawsuit against the chemical companies which manufactured the herbicides was filed in federal court. This lawsuit and the need to educate veterans and the world about Agent Orange formed the main thrust in organizing veterans to fight for testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange poisoning.

VVAW was one of the leaders in this fight. 1978 saw demonstrations and takeovers at VA offices and medical centers demanding action and medical care for exposed veterans. In 1979 the organization joined with other groups which had already formed the national task force on Agent Orange. Our main goal was education, a national meeting, agitation and signing up as many vets as possible for the class action lawsuit against the chemical companies. One of the high points of that year was "Operation Triad" which included camping out on the lawn of the capitol building in Madison, Wisconsin.

The early 1980's saw vets organizations popping up around the country to fight around the Agent Orange issue. A National Association of Concerned Veterans (NACV) pigroast in Missouri, a national task force on Agent Orange meeting, teach-ins, and an Arlington Cemetery protest in Washington, DC all went on in 1980 and '81. A movement was growing around the country, and finally, even the traditional veterans organizations called for the government to stop dragging its feet.

1982 saw VVAW once again occupying land on the Mall in Washington, DC. "Operation Dewey Canyon IV" had 300 people, but we spoke for thousands of Vietnam veterans around the country. Our day in court was coming and the veterans of America had gotten the whole world talking about Agent Orange. Just maybe--veterans, our children who were affected and the Vietnamese would get some justice!

This brings us almost up to date.



NYC/NJ VVAW members give blankets and warm clothing to the homeless at the "Homeward Bound" encampment as part of the Veterans Day activities. Photo Dennis Lund.

During early 1984, a group of money-hungry lawyers took over control of the class-action suit by forcing Victor Yannacone out of the case. Thirty minutes before the start of the Agent Orange trial, an "out-of-court settlement" was reached. Even though over 85% of the veterans who gave testimony were against the settlement, the lawyers and the court rammed it down our throats. In 1988 the settlement was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Relevant portions of the letter from the court follow:

"For the over 280,000 veterans who had already signed up for the 'Agent Orange' suit, you should have received in the mail from the court your certificate of enrollment along with cover letters. The \$180 million is now \$240 million and the court's plan for distributing the settlement fund creates two programs. The first program, the Agent Orange Veteran Payment Program will distribute cash payments to certain disabled Vietnam veterans and to survivors of certain deceased Vietnam veterans. The second program, The Agent Orange Class Assistance Program, will use a portion of the settlement (\$52 million) for the class members--that is, Vietnam veterans."

"To be eligible to receive money from the payment program, you must be:

- \* A Vietnam veterans who is long-term totally disabled, or
- \* A surviving spouse or dependent child of a deceased Vietnam veteran.

In addition, to receive a payment, both veterans and survivors of veterans must show that the veteran was exposed to Agent Orange using an exposure test adopted by the court and must show that the death or disability did not result from an accidental, traumatic or self-inflicted injury."

"Whether you already filed a preliminary claim form or are signing up for the first time, you must submit an application for payment. Either detach and mail the lower portion of the certificate the court sent you or call 1-800-225-4712 and they will mail you one."

"The goal of the payment program is to distribute these (tiny) funds quickly to those class members with the greatest needs."

The summary of the court's form letter continues with questions and answers.

Q: Who may apply for this program?

A: Nam vets who were exposed to Agent Orange while serving in or near Vietnam at any time between January 1, 1962 and December 31, 1971, and who became totally disabled before their 60th birthday.

Surviving spouses or dependent children of deceased Vietnam veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange....

It is very important that if you are not a member of a group described, please do not request an application for payment kit right now. Your cooperation will keep the administrative costs of the program down, and help ensure that your fellow veterans or their families will receive their payments as quickly as possible. You may request an application kit in the future in you become eligible before the program ends on December 31, 1994.

Q: What kind of evidence must I submit to show that the veterans was exposed to Agent Orange?

A: To meet the courts test of exposure, you will have to supply information about the veterans activity, locations and movements within Vietnam. You may submit other evidence of exposure if you wish. You will not be required to prove that the veterans death or disability was caused by Agent Orange.

Q: How will payments be made under this program?

A: Veterans who are eligible to receive disability payments will receive a payment for each year they are disabled during the life of the program. The size of each payment will depend

on the number of eligible applicants, the veteran's age, and length of time he or she has been disabled. Survivors of deceased veterans will receive one lump payment. The amount of payment will depend on the number of eligible applicants, the year of death and the veteran's age at the time of death.

Q: If I become totally disabled at some time in the future, may I apply for benefits?

A: Yes, veterans who are not now totally disabled but who become totally disabled before December 31, 1994, and apply for payments within 120 days of becoming totally disabled will be covered. Survivors of a veterans who dies while this program is still in effect must apply for payments within 120 days of the veteran's death. To request an application for a payment kit call 1-800-225-4712 even if you did not file a preliminary claim form. All veterans who previously signed up for the Agent

Orange Suit must apply for this kit."

Well, as you can see from the above summary of the court mailing, the settlement is lacking in true compensation, it is restrictive with nothing awarded to children born with birth defects, and is practically a military secret. VVAW fought against this settlement along with thousands of other Vietnam vets and our families. It is now, unfortunately, a fact of law until December 11, 1994.

We will save the explanation of the actual form to be filled out until the next issue of THE VETERAN, but I would like to summarize a letter from Ashcraft and Gerel about their loss of the suit.

"The Supreme Court, on June 30, 1988, denied petition for appeal. The Supreme Court ruled in the case that government contractors, which the chemical companies were at the time of the production of Agent Orange, are immune from suit when they manufacture products for the government. The same government that betrayed us in Vietnam won't accept responsibility for the decision to use Agent Orange in Vietnam. It would have been too burdensome for the courts to accept such cases and too expensive for the government to pay compensation. Because of these pragmatic reasons they have turned their backs on the Vietnam veterans. We are back to square one and must begin to fight the battle on another front.

"All deceased veterans families will be entitled to between \$5,700 to \$72,800. Second, all veterans who are now permanently and totally disabled based on the social security definition of total disability will be entitled to between \$1,800 to \$3,400."

History and the future will prove that Agent Orange caused countless human misery. Maybe action through Congress is the answer. We in VVAW know that having normal diplomatic relations with Vietnam--where research into Agent Orange continues in a country most affected by the herbicides--is a must for veterans and their families, for our country and the people of Vietnam. This would help further the fight for testing, treatment and compensation for Agent Orange victims.

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# AGENT ORANGE STILL KILLS

## VVAW Delegation Returns to Vietnam

From November 30 to December 8, a delegation representing Vietnam Veterans Against the War went back to Vietnam. This is the second VVAW delegation to return in recent years.

The group was made up of David Cline from Jersey City, NJ; Stanley Campbell from Rockford, IL; Greg Payton from East Orange, NJ; and John Zutz from Milwaukee, WI.

We met in Bangkok and from there we obtained our visas and flew to Hanoi, the capital of reunified Vietnam. During our five days there we met with heads or representatives of the 10-80 Committee (Agent Orange), Bach Mai Hospital, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Invalids and Social Affairs and the Vietnam-US Society. We also visited the War Museum, Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum and the Hanoi Circus.

After this we flew to Ho Chi Minh City where we visited Tu Dy Gynecological hospital, several orphanages, an industrial exhibit and attended a concert of Vietnamese traditional music. One day we drove to Cu Chi where we saw the tunnels and Tay Ninh where we met with a number of Vietnamese veterans.

Throughout the trip we pretty much did what we wanted when we had the time and got to see a lot of things and meet a lot of people we would have missed otherwise. We met people from various western embassies, business people and foreign teachers. In Hanoi, we talked with a team from the Joint Casualties Resolution Committee searching for MIA remains. In Ho Chi Minh City we talked with former ARVNS and bar girls as well as numerous Amerasians.

While we were only in the country a short while, we felt we got a glimpse of Vietnam today--a much different place than we had seen before. We urge all Vietnam veterans to make this journey. And we hope that we will see the day soon when there is friendship and normalization of relation between our two countries.



David Cline, Greg Payton, Stanley Campbell, John Zutz and Mr. Quat.

by John Zutz  
VVAW Milwaukee

The Vietnam Veterans Against the War Friendship Delegation to Vietnam in December of 1988 found that some questions about the effects of Agent Orange and related chemicals used during the war are starting to be answered.

The Vietnamese, pursuing basic research on herbicides and dioxin, have developed statistics showing birth defects caused through both male and female vectors, and have discovered why dioxin is toxic. They have also investigated the ecological effects on the forests, and possible recovery methods. The U.S. meanwhile has waffled and fumbled even the simplest research, spending years arguing which questions to ask, and when the answers don't please them, denying the results of their own research.

Tetrachloro Dibenzo para Dioxin (TCDD), the most toxic known man-made chemical, is one of a family of over 80 related chemicals called "dioxins." It is the inevitable by-product of the production of chlorinated

phenols which were widely used by the U.S. and our allies in Vietnam to kill food crops and other vegetation. The herbicides, known as Agent Orange and Agent Purple, were made from chlorinated phenols, and contained dioxins. Millions of gallons of these herbicides were sprayed over Vietnam. Accordingly, the Vietnamese have the largest known amount of dioxin in their environment, many times more than Seveso, Italy where an industrial accident spread more than a pound of dioxin over the city with devastating results.

The recent VVAW delegation to Vietnam learned directly from researcher Dr Nguyen Van Tri how he used electro-magnetic resonance to detect dioxin in blood, fat, and liver tissue. He then showed how the symmetrical structure of TCDD acted to resonate the magnetic fields generated by its free electrons. He explained that when the magnetic fields resonated, they actually amplified each other causing the molecule to be attracted to iron atoms, particularly in hemoglobin. The dioxin deforms the molecules preventing them from functioning. Hemoglobin carries oxygen throughout the body; if it can't perform this function, the body dies.

In the U.S., the National Cancer Institute (NCI) found that 2-4D causes cancer in Kansas farmers; when their findings were questioned by the EPA, they reconfirmed their study. 2-4D composed 50% of Agent Orange; the other half was 2-4-5T which has been effectively banned in the U.S. for causing birth defects. No action has followed the NCI studies.

In Hanoi a recent publication by the National Committee for Investigation of the Consequences of Chemicals used in the Vietnam War (the "10-80 Committee") details the results of 26 separate research programs. The Vietnamese had to use relatively limited resources and primitive equipment to gain their results.

For some U.S. scientists, the first

reaction is to question the data--it comes from a Communist country, you know. But those who do should have their own scientific credibility questioned. All data is questionable; but, until you do research to disprove it, it must be accepted.

The Long-Term Effects of Herbicides and Defoliants Used in the Vietnam War, the 10-80 Committee publication, includes studies of:

--40,064 couples in the North with 154,062 pregnancies and 140,497 live births, which divides the couples into two groups: one in which both parties stayed in the North, and the other where the husband served in the South. The second group had higher rates of spontaneous abortion and higher rates of birth defects.

--1309 women, some from the North and some from the South showing higher rates of spontaneous abortions and still births in the group from the South.

--Monstrous birth defects to children of men who had served in the South, some of which have never been described in world medical literature. Comparisons between those defects and those caused by Thalidomide, and those caused by Dioxin in experimental animals (Thalidomide has been shown to cause birth defects if taken by the male as well as by the female).

--Environmental effects of herbicides on various types of forests and soils, and methods of reforestation.

--Degradation of Dioxin.

--Measures to overcome consequences of toxic chemicals used in the war.





# TOUR REPORT

## "It's time to recognize that...Vietnam's problems are caused by us."

by John Zutz  
VVAW Milwaukee

The recent "Friendship Tour" made by four VVAW members must be judged a success. In fact, if asked to describe the trip in one word, "friendly" would have to be the word. The people were very friendly until they found out we were Americans--then, they were in love with us.

Though only in Vietnam a little over a week, we saw and met a wide variety of people and encountered many new aspects of the country. We learned more about the country in a week than we had in a year on our first trip. Of course, we were discouraged from associating with the natives on our first trip.

We spent five days in Hanoi and three in Ho Chi Minh City. They are like two different worlds. The people of Hanoi still seem very naive, unspoiled and spontaneous with very high morale. The city is very colonial both in architecture and in attitude. Almost all foreigners work in embassies.

Ho Chi Minh City is much more cosmopolitan in attitude and architecture. But, the population was less joyful exhibiting a defeated outlook. Everything was measured by the watershed of 1975; there were many homeless and jobless.

Wherever we went we were curiosities. In the North, people would spontaneously break out laughing as they passed us on the street. In the South, if we stood still for three minutes there would be a crowd gathered around us five deep. They would all be gazing up at us with their mouths hanging open. Hundreds would gather to stare if we stopped in a cafe for a cold drink.

While there, we met government representatives, Amerasian children and their mothers, recent releasees from re-education camps, and hundreds of ordinary people. We also met a number of other Americans and Europeans, particularly in Hanoi. The Russians and East Germans were numerous in Ho Chi Minh City.

Vietnam is changing. Our initial reactions were confirmed by Mr Dang Nghiem Bai, head of the North American Desk of the Foreign Ministry (equivalent to a Deputy Secretary of State). They are changing from the strictly controlled socialist economy to what he called a "market economy." The government will no longer attempt to control prices. This allows merchants to set their own prices according to the market; effectively, it eliminates the black market, a long-standing problem for Vietnam. And it sounds much like capitalism. Local goods seemed to be readily available in one or the other of thousands of stands in hundreds of marketplaces, if you had the cash. Imported goods were harder to find but were available: we bought Marlboros in Ho Chi Minh City.

Services are also a matter of having the cash. Cyclos, three-wheel cycles



which act as taxis, staked out the hotels and embassies hoping for a foreign fare. Restaurants and cafes were frequent and by U.S. standards, very inexpensive; some had women available. Every corner had someone who would fix your flat bicycle tire.

The Vietnamese have made strides technologically. They have determined why dioxin is toxic. They are doing gene-splicing experiments. They are building dams and irrigation projects. A nuclear reactor left by the U.S. is being brought on line.

At the same time there is great need for health facilities and medicines. Much of the technological work is done with primitive equipment and methods due to lack of foreign exchange.

There is no doubt that Vietnam is one of the poorest countries in the world. Mr Xuan Oahn of the Vietnam-U.S. Friendship Society told us that living conditions are crowded, sanitation is primitive at best, unemployment is increasing, transportation is unreliable, the population is growing, and the government is stagnant and unable to address those problems. He told us that though the government has changed recently, it must become more responsive to the needs of the people.

Our government also has contributed to their problems. The massive destruction caused by the war has been

largely repaired, but the cost must have been enormous. Our current shunning of the Vietnamese government includes actively discouraging other countries from trading with them. Though they recently changed their investment laws so that a foreign investor retains 100% ownership of his company, our lobbying keeps many possible investors away.

The Vietnamese have come a long way in an attempt to get closer to us, to meet many of the conditions set forth by the U.S. government for improved relations. The Vietnamese are withdrawing their troops from Kampuchea--troops will be out completely this year whether there is a political settlement or not.

The Vietnamese are cooperating with our request for the return of MIA's. We talked to the search team in Hanoi. Shortly after we returned home, over 300 bodies were returned with the search team. One of the most obvious signs of change is the fact that the Vietnamese are teaching their children English; we were told that the Russian language teachers were switching to English since there is no demand for Russian: everyone wants to learn English.

It is time to recognize that many of Vietnam's problems are caused by us. It is time to begin at least limited humanitarian aid. It is time to normalize relations.



# IT W BUT

by David Cline  
East Coast Coordinator  
VVAW

December 20, 1967 was my last battle. That night I received a gunshot wound that got me med-evaced out of Vietnam. On New Years Day, I found myself on a plane headed for Japan and all I could think was "Goodbye Vietnam, this is the last time you'll ever see my ass."

But 21 years later, almost to the day, I was back in Nam. Only this time I wasn't part of a military operation, instead I was part of a veterans delegation for reconciliation and friendship. For me the trip was important personally as well as politically. Personally I wanted to go back and come to terms with those who I had fought against. Politically I hoped to play a part in getting our country to face up to its responsibility for the war and its after effects.



Greg Payton and Dave

Since 1975, Vietnam has been virtually ignored in America. Before that it was nightly news. Then it became a place that politicians could denounce to prove that ours was a "noble cause". In this barrage of rhetoric, the people were forgotten. But for myself and many others, Vietnam could not be forgotten.

In preparing for the trip, I had heard that we would receive a friendly welcome and would encounter little hostility. But as our flight approached the Hanoi Airpost, I began to feel tense. Here we were flying right into Ho Chi Minh's headquarters. As the plane came in for a landing, the site of bomb craters at the end of the runway didn't help to reassure me.

But once we stepped off the plane, I found the people seemed glad that American veterans were coming back to their country. Throughout our stay there, we talked to people from different walks of life--government officials, directors of hospitals, soldiers, workers, people on the street. Surprisingly, many people spoke a little



# WAS OUR WAR THEY PAID THE PRICE

English well enough to translate. Also English classes in schools and on television led many children to use us for practice. Many people were surprised to see My (Americans) and many expressed a desire for friendship and moral relations between our two countries. Several times we asked why there was no anger directed at us as Americans and were told that the Vietnamese government had always explained that the war was caused by the U.S. Government, not the American people and that U.S. soldiers were victims of the war also.

It's not that the war has been forgotten. It would be impossible to do that. Much of the poverty and economic difficulties today are a direct result of the war although the Vietnamese made a point of telling us that they have made many mistakes after the war in reconstructing the economy.

During a meeting with members of

Bangkok, we went to the U.S. Embassy and had a meeting with Naval Captain John Cooke. He told us that Vietnam is cooperating on the MIA issue and that there is no substantial evidence of any live POWs in Vietnam. Regarding Kampuchea, he only condemned the Vietnamese troops there and when we pointed out that they had overthrown the genocidal Pol Pot regime, his only response was to say contemptuously, "they invade and look like good guys."

We discussed the MIA issue with Vietnamese on several occasions. They say there are no live POWs in Vietnam and that they see the MIA issue as a humanitarian one but that our government uses it politically. It was pointed out that after World War II and Korea there were many more MIAs yet it was never a major problem. On Kampuchea, they stated that they intend to withdraw their troops totally by 1990 even without a political settlement and they think it should be separated from humanitarian issues left from the war.

The results of the American military occupation are apparent throughout Vietnam and especially in the south. Former military bases are easily spotted by the eucalyptus trees, only of the few plants that will grow on dioxin contaminated soil. Cripples can be seen on the streets. Many children suffer from birth defects caused by their parents exposure to Agent Orange. Orphanages are overcrowded. Unexploded mines and shells still take lives and limbs. Amerasian children, now teenagers, still wait to see their fathers. There is a shortage of artificial limbs. Yet our government still refuses to accept its responsibility for these problems.

During a trip to Tay Ninh where I had served as an infantryman with the 25th Division, we went to the Black Virgin Mountain. I had been on many sweeps and ambushes in this area. While we were there, we met a former commander of the Viet Cong. We shook hands and as we talked about our experiences, it hit home that last time I was here, we were trying to kill each other. Now we could talk as friends. At the base of the mountain was a monument to the war dead from Tay Ninh. We burned joss sticks in remembrance and I felt both sadness and joy--sadness about what had happened in the past and joy because we didn't have to be trapped by that past.

As one Vietnamese put it, "Please ask American veterans to struggle for normalization, develop good relations with Vietnamese veterans through friendship visits and help heal the war wounded in Vietnam. We veterans understand each other. We have the same sentiments. We should try our best to struggle for peace."

## "OUR LEGACY" AMERASIAN KIDS

by Greg Payton  
VVAW New York

One of my primary purposes in going to Vietnam was to investigate the situation of Amerasian children. Having seen several white Amerasian children on TV talk shows and in newspapers, I was concerned about what life might be like for Black Amerasians in an oriental country. And, honestly not knowing whether I might have left a child in Vietnam, I felt I might act as some kind of liaison between the children and a U.S. government agency.

Upon landing at Ton Son Nhut Airport in Ho Chi Minh City, I was terribly excited about returning to South Vietnam. As we were waiting for our baggage, I looked over my shoulder and there stood a Black kid who looked like any number of boys who might pal around with my own teenaged sons. I was in complete shock. This young man didn't seem to have any strong oriental features. I tried to observe him further but he disappeared into the crowd.

After we got settled in the Vietnamese government guest house, I went on a short walking tour of the area. Several blocks away in a small park across from the Ho Chi Minh City Main Post Office, I encountered a group of Amerasian children. Apparently this was a gathering place for them. As I approached, I could see the faces of the Black kids light up. One attractive young lady pointed to me and said, "Number One!" It was in this park that I met two Vietnamese women "mamasans," who act as surrogate mothers for these children many of whom are homeless and orphaned. A strange feeling came over me--along with a feeling of guilt: I had some memories of being a street kid myself, raised without knowing my own father.

Returning to the park the following day, I was able to meet and talk with both Black and white Amerasian children through an interpreter. I could see from their faces they were glad to talk to an American. They were very friendly and interested in the U.S. Some wanted to continue their educations in the U.S. (high education being difficult in Vietnam) and many talked of improving living conditions in Vietnam. I was surprised that many had basic information about their

fathers. Most knew the names and area of the country where their dads had lived.

I promised a group of five young people that I would take them to dinner that evening. When I returned, I was surprised to find about twenty kids in the park. The "mamasans" knew I couldn't afford to take all these people to dinner. But the young people got together and asked if I could take this one kid, Nguyen Van Hai, because he was homeless and really in need of help. That moved me deeply.

When I returned to Bangkok, Thailand, I met with Mr Randall Rice who is affiliated with the IndoChinese Refugee Center. He informed me that over 500,000 people want to emigrate from Vietnam but because of political red tape, only 100 per month are processed and 50 actually leave. Mr Rice suggested that I contact refugee agencies in the U.S. and try to help from that vantage point. Below is a list of the names of some of the children I met and a list of agencies that may be useful in helping them.

Amerasian children  
Leslie Floyd  
Nguyen Van Dung  
Nguyen Thanh Binh  
Nguyen Thanh Tung (born 1968)  
Nguyen Van Hai  
Tran Huy Hung (born 1967)  
Duong Hoan Vu (born 1968)  
Nguyen Thi Rim Huong (born 1972)  
Tu Thi Rim Anh (born 1970)  
Pham L. Hong Loan (born 1970)  
Le Minh Hieu (born 1972)  
Nguyen Thi Kim Lien (born 1968)  
Duong Thi Ly (born 1970)  
Thach Thi My Lan (born 1970)  
Le Van Hoang (born 1971)  
Duong Thanh Nhan (born 1970)  
Nguyen Thi Xinh (born 1970)  
Phan Thi My Loan (born 1971)  
Nguyen Thi Thu (born 1967)  
Nguyen Thi Minh Thu (born 1967)  
Huynh Thi Thuy

U.S. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES  
American Council for Nationalities Service (ACNS)  
Buddhist Council for Refugee Rescue and Resettlement (BC)  
Church World Service (CWS)  
Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS)  
United States Catholic Conference (USCC)  
World Relief Refugee Service (WRRS)



ve Cline exchange views with friend.

the Ministry of Invalids and Social Affairs (their Veteran Administration) we were told that the consequences of the war were:

- ..2 million dead or invalid..
- ..1.5 million civilian handicapped..
- ..2 million affected by Agent Orange..
- ..1/2 million orphans..
- ..1/2 million addicts and prostitutes..
- ..400,000 ARVN invalids..
- ..300,000 Vietnamese MIAs..

At Bach Mai Hospital, a central training facility for their national health care system, the director told us how it had been bombed three times during the war. As we toured the wards, we were shown equipment that had been donated by various governments. The American government had not helped at all. the only reminder of anything from the U.S. was the monument in front with the names of the 28 people who were killed in the bombings.

Official U.S. policy is that there will be no relations with Vietnam, until the American MIAs are accounted for and Vietnamese troops leave Kampuchea (Cambodia). While we were in



# "RETURNING TO VIETNAM WAS A JOYFUL EXPERIENCE"

by Stanley Campbell  
VVAW  
Rockford, IL

I first went to Vietnam in 1970 thinking this would be a noble cause, but I return knowing it was a horrible mistake. I remember serving with the best group of men and women our country had to offer. I'm glad I went.

I am glad I served in Vietnam because I was a firm anti-communist that thought we could kill commies from thirty thousand feet with high explosives. I learned you cannot tell the communists from the normal people who wanted their own country. I am glad I served in Vietnam because I learned to hate war. So I am very happy to return to Vietnam, to lay some ghosts to rest, to work for the return of my comrade's remains, and to seek reconciliation, if not between our two countries, then perhaps, between the people who actually did the fighting.

Returning to Vietnam was a joyful experience, for this is where I learned to love peace, to rejoice in the humanity of all, and to begin seriously questioning my government's foreign policy.

Our country dumped more bombs on Vietnam than on any other country, so I was really surprised when people greeted us with joy and laughter when we told them, "No, we are not Russians, we are Americans." And when they discovered that we were veterans, they quickly ran to get someone who could speak better English, sat us down, and peppered us with questions:

"What do you think of our country?"

"Why are you here?"

"Will more of you visit?"

The days were full of meetings and site seeing, but we had plenty of time to ourselves. Housed in government guest houses, we soon found English speaking cyclo drivers (bicycles with big seats) who took us on unescorted tours. The beauty of the countryside--the green beyond any green--left impressions on me. The poverty is appalling, especially in the south. Former ARVN (South Vietnamese Army Veterans) are not treated well, and there is a general malaise on the economy. "We learned the hard way that you cannot disobey the law of the market," said Foreign Minister Dang Nghiem Bai, director of the American Department. "You cannot build socialism while people are walking around without pants." "We tried to build a country the same way as we fought the war. We won the war, but lost the economy." "The government cannot forever subsidize businesses that lose money. We lost 89% through

subsidies; now, with a quasi-market economy, we only lose 20%." Hard words, but you wonder if the government will respond to the challenge. The Vietnamese economy sucks. Everyone knows it. The remarkable thing, everyone has an opinion. Hard-liners say "the Vietnamese people can reconstruct the country themselves, with the help of our friends." "Our friends" does not include the U.S.

The head of the VN-US Friendship Society, was blunt when he said "We have had to fire 'heroes of the revolution' from economic positions because they could not run the country."

Outdoors, I shopped. I loved the markets, and the prices were amazingly low. The market place has had a boost from the government's new "hands-off" (comparatively)--lots of people buy in bulk and sell on the street. Cafes open as boxes over-turned on a street corner, the patrons sipping at the sludge called coffee, purchasing tobacco by the cigarette or by the "bowl" for their individual "bongs". Marijuana is cheaper than tobacco and we caught a whiff of the illegal memory down some of these back streets.

I bought a pair of scissors that were cut, themselves, by and pounded into shape: primitive hand-made scissors! They had drop-forged stainless steel scissors at government shops (at high prices--no more subsidy). People will set up shop selling anything(!) and they seem to locate themselves in "districts": One street dedicated to shoes, the next

stocked with larger items: furniture, televisions (assembled in Vietnam for Japan), but, in Hanoi, it was spartan living.

Ho Chi Minh City is more a tourist town. The climate and the people are warmer (all Vietnam is friendly). Bars are more prevalent, but Hanoi is beginning to swing--with a disco, some dancing, western dress (coming from the south?), and even bar girls. Just for the sake of investigating decadence in the capital of Marxism-Leninism we allowed ourselves to be taken, and we were: thirty bucks for a short time with b-girls, American coke, and Asian rock and roll at the "Cafe Mademoiselle", our hosts: the cyclo drivers!

You can see a worn, almost desperate, Saigon. We ate well: five course meals for six people for ten bucks. But there were beggars on many streets, and the streets closed up after eleven pm, leaving it to the many



Stan Campbell, Rockford, IL, places soil from war memorial into container which he exchanged for Vietnam earth.

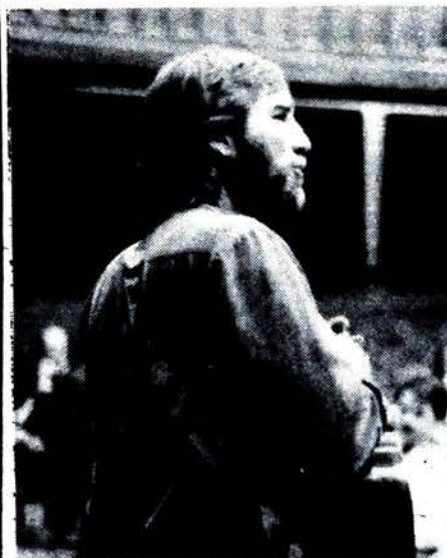
homeless men, women and children. We were approached many times with appeals for help, and sometimes with appeals to "help me leave."

Vietnam is going to get a good dose of capitalism. While I was eating dinner at the Cuban-built Liberty Hotel a swarm of 25 Japanese businessmen descended on the place. The American embassy official we spoke

with in Bangkok, Thailand, said the U.S. was having a fit keeping Australia and Japan from buying up Vietnam. Lumber, shrimp farms, tourism, cheap labor, and undeveloped natural resources make Vietnam a dream for venture capital.

If anything can bring Vietnam and the United States together, it will be the chance to make a buck!

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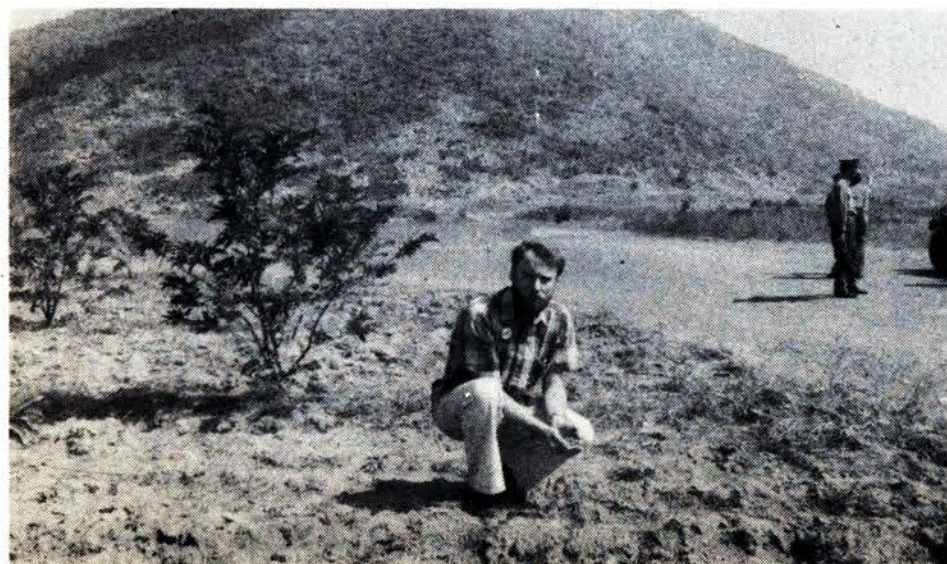
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

# THE LAST VIETNAM?

# THE PHILIPPINES

that their upper class status and European education did not provide them with social and economic equality with the Spanish. In 1896, the central intellectual leader of the insurrection, Jose Rizal, was executed by the Spanish, and the revolution became a military campaign. By 1898, the Spanish had been driven by the Filipinos into the besieged city of Manila. Only the Spanish fleet prevented the fall of Manila.

Half a world away, historical forces conspired to thwart what might have been the emergence of the independent nation of the Philippines. The United States of America in its stated desire to bring independence to the people of Cuba entered with great enthusiasm into the Spanish-American war. Second only to Teddy Roosevelt's charge up San Juan Hill in that brief burst of American war-making tradition was Admiral Dewey's destruction of the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay. For the Filipino people, the strategic situation changed. Instead of imperial Spain occupying besieged Manila, the Filipino insurgents faced U.S. military forces. The U.S. was regarded by many Filipino and American intellectuals as the birthplace of republican democracy in the post-Dark-Ages world. Many of the better-educated among the Filipino forces must have felt a sense of optimism.

President William McKinley spoke for those who defined American foreign policy when it came to the "Philippines business" as he called it.

"When I ... realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps I confess I did not know what to do with them. ... I went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way -- I don't know how it was, but it came: (1) That we could not give them back to Spain -- that would be cowardly and dishonorable; (2) that we could not turn them over to France and Germany -- our commercial rivals in the Orient -- that would be bad business and discreditable; (3) that we could not leave them to themselves -- they were unfit for self-government -- and they would soon have anarchy and misrule over there worse than Spain's was; and (4) that there was nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow-men for whom Christ also died. ...the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department, and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States, and there they are, and there they will stay while I am President!"

On February 4, 1899, the education and Christianization of the Philippines began. American gunboats steamed up the rivers pouring into Manila Bay, firing 500-pound shells into the Filipino trenches. According to Luzviminda Francisco, "... the American troops jokingly referred to it as a 'quail shoot' and dead Filipinos were piled so high that the Americans used the bodies for



U.S. soldiers administering the torture technique known as the "water-cure."

breastworks ..." Given the hopeless inferiority of their enemy whom the Americans called "niggers", "barbarians", and "savages", the invading forces showed no tendency to display the least demonstration of humanity much less follow the "rules of war". Ironically the American military had just culminated a similar war against the native American population who had likewise stood in the way of economic development.

The battered Filipino force remembering their hard fought victories over the Spanish mustered their courage and reorganized their revolutionary units into guerilla bands. This effective retrenchment and the almost universal support for the insurgents among the Filipino population left the Americans in a situation that they would face several decades later in Vietnam. The further the Americans were drawn from their areas of fortification and control, the more vulnerable they became to ambush, harassment, and "suicidal" military attacks by massed insurgent forces. The American military was "bogged down" in its first Asian war.

Bloody, ruthless, and costly in Filipino life was the campaign to subdue the Philippines. Early in the campaign, an American general observed, "It may be necessary to kill half of the Filipinos in order that the remaining half of the population may be advanced to a higher plane of life than their present semi-barbarous state affords." As a year passed, it became more evident that the enemy was not a "faction" of the Filipino people but the entire population. In early 1901, the entire population (51,000) of Marinduque Island was forced into concentration camps. The torture and slaughter of civilians was not an uncommon feature of the campaign. As General J. Franklin Bell said in late 1901, "All consideration and regard for the inhabitants of this place cease from the day I become commander. I have the force and the authority to do whatever seems to me good and especially to humiliate those in the Province who have any pride." Though the war was declared "over" by President Roosevelt in 1902, it really

seducer that so seriously cost the American people in Korea and Vietnam.

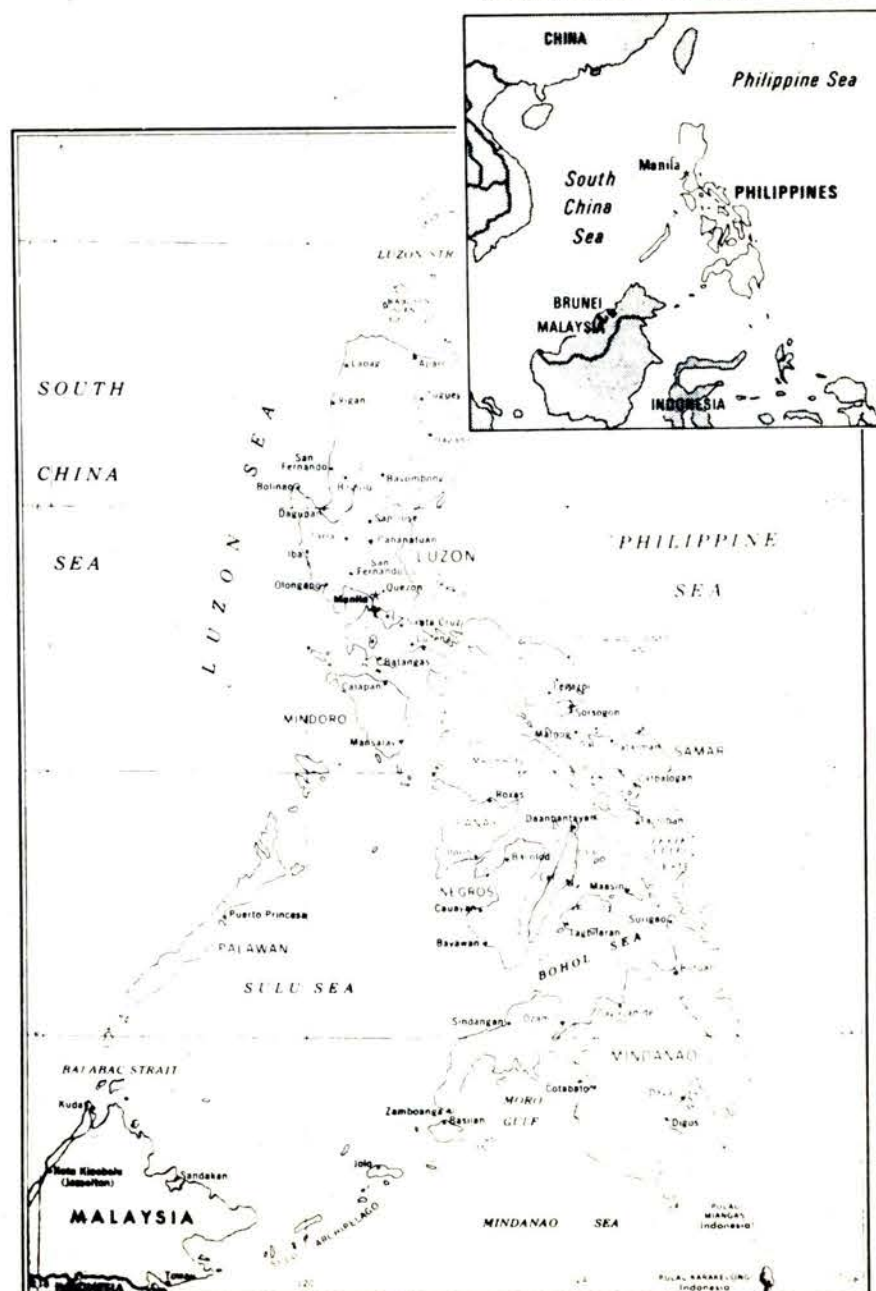
## The Next Vietnam

The continuation of American domination in the Philippines is not one marked by fair play and democratic nation-building. The formula remained the same -- before and after the Japanese occupation -- duplicity, injustice, and sometimes murder, but always the old Spanish strategy. To retain foreign control of the Philippines, two classes of Filipinos are needed -- one small class loyal to the foreign controllers and one larger class serving the interests of both the other class and their foreign overlords.

Oppression alone does not make a Vietnam-like military misadventure. The other necessary element is an organized local opposition with a unified ideological focus. During the Japanese occupation, the Hukbalahap came into being as the People's Anti-Japanese Army. When the U.S. regained control of the islands, it did not hesitate to invest its trust in Japanese collaborators rather than risk providing any legitimacy to the Hukbalahap or even neutral elements in the Philippine government.

Despite a low intensity war waged against rebellious elements in the "independent" Philippines during the late 40's, 50's, and 60's, the U.S. came closest to losing its control through its partnership with Ferdinand Marcos.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Source: U.S. Dept. of State, Background Notes: Philippines, August 1986.



## CONTINUED FROM LAST PAGE

Elected president in 1965, Marcos initially seemed to be just another American puppet ruler. It was his uncanny financial acumen that distinguished Marcos from his predecessors. Largely due to his finances, Marcos became the first president of the Philippines to be elected to a second term in 1969. Several sources attribute Marcos' wealth to his ability to manipulate the U.S. government's payments to its many Filipino employees through its massive military presence. Whatever the basis of Marcos's early economic miracles, we know that his more recent "economic miracles" are the object of federal indictments for which his only defense seems to be his flagging health.

Two crises came to a head in 1972, one for the U.S. and one for Ferdinand Marcos. For the U.S., civil liberties guaranteed by the Philippine constitution had led to unforeseen consequences including a growing opposition to the U.S. military bases in the Philippines and a readiness to normalize trade barriers with Japan. For Marcos, the Philippine constitution forbade his election to a third term as president. There was one easy solution. On September 21, 1972, Marcos declared martial law citing as his motivation growing "threats to democracy".

For the next fourteen years, Marcos and his wife Imelda continued to exercise their talent for self-enrichment. For fourteen more years, the Marcos's served as an increasingly vulnerable target for critics of U.S. policy in the Philippines. One of the more outrageous catastrophes of the Marcos travesty occurred on August 21, 1983, when Benigno Aquino, a major opposition leader to Marcos returned to Manila from the United States. The reaction to this challenge was as simple to Marcos as it was embarrassing to the U.S. Marcos probably had Aquino shot in the back of his head as he descended from his plane at Manila International Airport. The chain of events that followed might have inevitably led to American military action in the Philippines had it not been for the availability of an invaluable political opportunity embodied in the widow of the slain Aquino -- Corazon "Cory" Aquino.

As Raymond Bonner notes, "As traumatic as the Aquino assassination was ... , as great as its impact was in the Philippines, it did not, contrary to conventional wisdom, precipitate a fundamental change in the Reagan administration's pro-Marcos stand." What mattered according to Bonner's quotation from an unnamed senior State Department official is something else. "They [the Reagan administration] didn't ease him out because he was corrupt. They eased him out because he lost control of the country." What the U.S. needed was someone who could control (or, at least, appear to control) the Philippines. Bonner describes the behind-the-scenes efforts that projected Cory Aquino into the struggle for power in the Philippines. Before she advanced on Marcos, Aquino as a political entity was created by a staff of U.S. supporters and advisors. Her whole campaign was tailored for her U.S. audience long before it was distributed to its Filipino consumers. The crucial election that gave Aquino her source of legitimacy was carefully orchestrated by U.S. interests. Filipino allies were not too difficult to obtain, but the complete charade that effected the departure of Marcos was a complex process that goes beyond the



Ms. Zendarda Uy, chair of BAYAN accepts VVAW T-shirt in solidarity with anti-base struggle of Philippine people.

goals of this article. On February 25, 1986, Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos left the Philippines.

Some time has passed. The World Bank has evaluated Mrs. Aquino's land reform policy as "fundamentally flawed". Human Rights Watch's Annual Report revealed that in 1988 the Philippines passed Columbia to become the number one nation in the world in disappearances and murders of human rights workers. Task Force Detainees of the Philippines which originally supported Aquino's election reports that 11,000 persons were arrested for political crimes in the Philippines in 1988. The two-class policy of subjugating the Philippine is still working, at least for the time being. Mrs. Aquino has made many compromises. The presence of the U.S. bases are unchallenged. Two-thirds of the population of the Philippines live in rural poverty. The New Peoples Army (NPA) continues the guerilla struggle that began over 90 years ago. The Philippines could still easily become America's next Vietnam.

#### The Last Vietnam

Another Vietnam might not destroy the American people. After all, Americans, left and right, have slowly begun to service the wounds of that conflict. But there may be more involved in a Vietnam in the Philippines. When the U.S. launched its military presence in Vietnam, it was a matter of carving defensible fortresses out of unclaimed land. In the Philippines, the American bases are long-standing institutions. Their legitimacy in the eyes of the U.S. government make Lincoln's obsession with Fort Sumter seem trivial.

The American bases are the one obstacle that all American collaborators in the Philippines must overcome. The Military Bases Agreements of 1947 provided the justification for two extremely large U.S. military bases in the Philippines -- Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base. According to Schirmer and Shalom, the agreement assured the bases presence for 99 years, "prohibited the Philippines from granting base rights to any other country, and placed no restrictions on the uses to which the U.S. could put the bases, nor the types of weapons that it could deploy or store there." As Raymond Bonner points out on Aquino's earlier position on the bases, "Mrs. Aquino was opposed to the bases in principle. As a nationalist she didn't like the foreign influence; as a woman and Catholic she was sickened by the seediness surrounding the bases, the abuse and exploitation of women, the thousands of teen-

agers who had turned to prostitution. But her positions on the bases did play well in Washington. So she modified it." For an American public obsessed with the fate of Amerasian children in Vietnam, the births of generations of Amerasian offspring around the U.S. bases in the Philippines apparently holds no currency. Thanks to the thriving market in human flesh and narcotics around bases, the AIDS epidemic has found fertile ground and grown proportionally.

Carlo M. Recto contributed a long career of public service to the Philippines. His career's earlier years are marked by an unsurprising upper-class Filipino's political service to U.S. interests. His later years were devoted to a striking awareness of what the U.S. bases really mean for the people of the Philippines. Just before his death, Recto recognized the true purposes of the bases, "American commentators candidly admit that the purpose of these bases is not our protection against, but our invitation to enemy attack in order to protect the people of the United States at the cost of the lives of our own people. ... I am the first to admit it is understandable that political and military leaders of the United States should devise ways and means of protecting the lives of their own people. If in a nuclear war they stand to lose 100 million in the first few hours of a concentrated enemy attack, it would be natural for them to try to minimize their casualties by diverting the attack. Overseas bases, like those in the Philippines, are precisely the diversionary objectives for such enemy attack on the United States."

Recto's realization though astute is limited in its vision. As Hayes, Zarsky, and Bello point out in their *American Lake: Nuclear Peril in the Pacific*, the

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Americans and the Soviets have each invested a nuclear commitment to controlling the Pacific theater. It no longer takes two to make a nuclear holocaust. The U.S. is unequivocally committed to protecting its nuclear hold on the Philippines. There was no such commitment or tradition in Vietnam. The U.S. will not give up the Philippines as easily as it gave up Vietnam -- as if that were not cost enough. Those nuclear weapons in the Philippines, though originally deployed to distract the fire of our enemies might just as well be turned on the "enemies" who are blessed with their presence.

The Filipino people understand what is at stake there more than anyone else. These excerpts from a poem by Ruben Anib, an NPA guerilla say it well:

*Death shall have no dominion*

*The people release you from its shackles  
And hold you in being in their hearts  
Fallen comrades you arise anew with the masses*

*Never shall you cease to serve*

*Future is long/generation arriving  
You prove selflessness unto death opens us earth  
Cracks us rock/and death shall have no dominion*

In 1520, the Spanish conquistador Ferdinand Magellan captured the imagination of would-be explorers and adventurers of many generations to come. Magellan was the first European to sail around the world. At least, he was the first European to lead an expedition that sailed around the world. Magellan himself didn't complete the voyage.

There were two multi-color illustrations of Magellan in my fifth-grade history book. One showed the gallant explorer striking a majestic pose looking across the bow of his ship. The caption read "Magellan: the First Man to Circumnavigate the Globe". The other illustration showed Magellan face down in the mud in a jungle setting. Its caption read "Magellan: Killed by Savages on an Island in the South Pacific".

Magellan was killed by Chief Lapu-Lapu on the Philippine island of Mactan. Since all written records of the event as recorded by the people of the Mactan were later destroyed by their Spanish conquerors, we can't know how the Spanish conquistador failed to measure up in the eyes of the Philippine inhabitants. (The Christian Spanish destroyed all existing Filipino written documents on the basis that they were "pagan.") We only know that Western European culture's conquest of the world for God, glory, and gold came to an end for Magellan in the Philippines. Unless modern day conquistadors grow and learn or are controlled by those of us who do grow and learn, we and all of humankind will join Magellan in his fate.

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## A WOMAN TRIES TO UNDERSTAND

## REFLECTIONS ON THE BASES

by Jan Lugibihl

IMAGES OF  
OLONGAPO

For three and a half years, from 1984 to 1987, I lived in Olongapo City in the Philippines, site of the U.S. Subic Naval Base and home of 12-16,000 hospitality women (prostitutes) and 3,000 street children. Some of those women and children became my friends and images of them and their lives stay with me even after a year back in the U.S.

I am in a bar that feels like home to me, the Hole in the Wall—a descriptive name if there ever was one. I am talking with some friends when Maria, the two-year-old who lives there, is brought downstairs. Maria's mother is one of the hospitality women who works in the bar. Everyone watches over Maria—the women and men who work in the bar, the vendors on the street, the sailors.

When someone plays a song on the juke box, everyone says, "Dance maria, dance," and she does, showing off as two-year-olds do. Maria dances and plays while sailors get drunk around her, while men and women pair off before leaving to have sex, while others return and sit together kissing and touching each other. Maria dances for the Americans around her, men who look like the father who is no longer in her life. Dances to "We are the world/We are the children."

Maria's face merges in Gloria's. I met 12-year-old Gloria when she was selling plastic bags in the market in Olongapo. She lives across the river from Subic Naval Base in one of the 500 shanties built on Olongapo's garbage dump.

Gloria was working in the market every day to earn money to help her family survive. After our first meeting we became friends and I looked for her each time I went to the market.

Then one night a year later, I saw her on the street leading from the main gate of Subic Naval Base. She was wearing make-up and a frilly dress. She said she and her friends were selling gum to the American sailors who were on leave.

A few months later, another 12-year-old street child named Rose went with a tourist who was attracted to Olongapo by stores he'd heard about what was available there. This man net Rose, took her to a hotel room and inserted a vibrator into her body. When the vibrator broke apart and became stuck inside her, he left Rose to die.

The last time I saw Gloria before I left Olongapo she hid from me. She was embarrassed because she's selling more than gum to American sailors now. The man who killed Rose has been caught, but I fear others like him will go to Olongapo and I fear Gloria may meet one of them.

When I think of Gloria, I wonder if someday her life will be like my friend Mila's. Mila arrived in Olongapo a few months before I did. She left her rural province when she was 16 because she wanted to get a job on the Navy base and send money to her family who are among the 70% of Filipinos who live below the poverty line. Since she did not know anyone who could help her

get a job on the base, Mila went to work in a bar.

Her first customer, an American sailor, abused her, then complained to the American who owned Mila's bar that she would not do everything he wanted her to do. The bar owner believed the sailor, gave him his money back, then fined Mila the total amount, about \$25.00. Since Mila had no money she became indebted to the bar owner.

Six months later, after going with another sailor, Mila became pregnant. By the time she realized she was pregnant her boyfriend was gone on his ship. Mila knew she would be forced to quit working when her employer discovered she was pregnant, so she tried to abort the child. She went to a practitioner of herbal medicine, drank the medicine she was given, jumped rope. Nothing worked.

Two days after Christmas when Mila went into labor the city hospital refused to admit her until she gave them money. They said, "We know what your work is and that the father of your child is an American. All Americans are rich, so we know you have lots of money."

While her friends were out trying to borrow money, another doctor decided to admit Mila. He delivered the baby without giving Mila any anesthetic. The baby, a girl, was stillborn.

Mila had no choice but to return to work in her bar because now she had hospital and doctor bills to pay.

And I remember Julie, wanting desperately to get out of Olongapo, but feeling trapped there. It is another evening, in another bar. I spend the evening talking to Julie who is 30 and has been in Olongapo for 2 1/2 years. She left her home in Mindanao because she is the oldest child in her family and she wanted to help pay for her younger brothers and sisters to go to school. Her parents are farmers and because they do not own the land they till and the harvests have been bad they won money to their landlord and cannot support their family.

Julie did not plan to go to Olongapo, but now she is here and she knows she cannot go home because her family would be very angry if they knew what she is doing. What she really wants now is to be a nurse. Instead, she is a cashier in a bar.

Being a cashier means she receives a regular salary and can choose to go with a man only when she wants to. She has gone with one man a year, choosing older sailors because "I'm not very good in bed and that doesn't matter to them as much as it does to younger men."

As the evening progresses, she tells me something she had told no one except her best friend. The last man she was with, an older sailor, was very nice to her and promised her many things. He said he would give her the money to open a small store and support her until her business was established.

A few months earlier he sent her a check for 5,000 pesos. Few people in the Philippines have checking accounts, so a local dentist agreed to be her guarantor. Julie cashed the check, sent some to her family and spent some on food. A week later the dentist came to her and said the check had bounced.

Now Julie is working extra hours so



she can pay back the money she spent as well as continue to support herself day to day. She had written to the U.S. address the man, who is no longer in the Navy, gave her but has received no response.

She says, "Sometimes now I wonder if I shouldn't just go with every man who asks me and not trust anyone again. Now I tell other women, if he says he'll marry you, say, 'Do it first, then I'll believe you.'"

ILLUSIONS?  
LIFE NEAR A  
MILITARY BASE

The young American sailor comes off the ship. He has been on that aircraft carrier with 6,000 other men for three months. He walks through the gate and crosses the bridge leaving Subic Naval Base behind him. He is heading for Olongapo's strip—over 500 clubs and its estimated 15,000 "hospitality women" (prostitutes).

He sees himself as macho, entitled to whatever is powerful American dollar can buy—beer, a souvenir T-shirt, a women, the illusion of intimacy for a night for less than 15 American dollars. He has heard about Olongapo from the men on his ship who have been here before. He has heard their stories of sexual prowess.

Even if he is scared, he thinks he must try to make his own memories of this place. He is over 10,000 miles from his home in the midwestern United States. No one there will ever know what he does here unless he tells them. For one night he can live under the illusion that he is desirable to any beautiful woman he chooses. He can forget that it is only his money and the hope of going to America as his wife

that makes him attractive to the women.

The young Filipina sits waiting in a bar. It is late afternoon—no sailors there yet. She has been in Olongapo for just two days. She came from the southern island of Mindanao, leaving her one-year-old daughter behind with family. There are no jobs in her village. She is here under the illusion that a sailor will marry her and take her to his home in the United States. She thinks then she will be rich. His mother will accept her. Her own family will believe she was a maid or a waitress when she met her boyfriend in Olongapo.

The older sailor comes into the bar. He has been coming to Olongapo off and on for five years. He has been drinking for four hours already, so his illusions are almost gone for this day. The pain is closer to the surface. "All of us are lonely," he says. "All of us. We just want someone to talk with."

He compares what he is doing the Philippines to the time he spent in Vietnam during the war. Then and now he is helping to keep a country—the world—safe from the Russians. Another beer and he says that after 16 years in the service, all he knows how to do is kill people. He claims he has dealt with his experiences in Vietnam, but as he talks of choking a man and beating his head against the floor in his last bar fight, violence seems very close to the surface.

He says that now sometimes he feels like the real choice for him is between God and country, a choice he mostly tries not to think about. His illusions began to evaporate the day he left Vietnam and knew the villagers who had lived near his company might be killed as American sympathizers as

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



# CONTINUED TONKIN GULF

questions were beginning to form in my mind. Official statements said that our destroyers had not provoked the North Vietnamese in the Tonkin Gulf, but I knew otherwise, and it began to bother me.

Some days after all the action, the Ticonderoga had occasion to refuel and resupply the Maddox. During these operations, it was one of my duties to be above decks to time the process. As I stood there, I could hear someone shouting out my name from the deck of the Maddox. I looked across the expanse of perhaps forty to sixty feet which separated out two ships, and I recognized a few of my former intelligence workmates from the Naval Security Group on Taiwan. Then it dawned on me what the Maddox had been doing off the coast of northern Vietnam—it was on a Desoto patrol.

Desoto patrols in the Western Pacific had actually been going on since sometime in 1963, a couple had been sent out while I was assigned to the NSG Detachment in Taiwan, and, if I had not been removed from intelligence work, I was about due to go out on one. I have often thought that I might have been on the Maddox during its most infamous period.

These patrols were operations carried out by regular destroyers which were fitted with a temporary working space, an intelligence van (or "black box"), right on top of the main deck. Special intelligence personnel, Communications Technicians, were picked up from shore stations around the Western Pacific and carried on board for a couple of weeks while the ship would make certain maneuvers in an attempt to get some sort of reaction from enemy coastal installations. The personnel who worked in the intelligence van included people who were trained in the lan-

guages of the country (or countries) being investigated, in this case Vietnamese and Chinese. Recordings were made of any reactions to the ship's presence (voice or electronic), and these recordings were then sent to the various shore stations where the naval Security Group operated, such as Taiwan, the Philippines, Okinawa, or even back to NSA headquarters in the United States.

At times, the only maneuver which could get some sort of communications reaction was to drastically turn the ship landward and even enter the territorial waters of the country in question, as if heading up a potential invasion force. We all now know, at least since 1968, that the Maddox was engaged in such maneuvers when it was attacked by North Vietnam. Add this to the covert operations then being carried out against North Vietnam by the U.S. and South Vietnamese governments (OPLAN 34-A), and it is not too surprising that the Maddox would be a target of North Vietnamese attack.

The questions produced by my knowledge of this background remained in the back of my mind for some time. As 1964 came to a close, these questions were pushed even further back in the excitement of returning to the States and seeing my wife, Linda, again. Of course, I didn't feel I could tell anyone about this reality behind the Tonkin Gulf "incidents" because I still believed in, and felt bound by, the security oath I signed when my clearance was revoked earlier that year. Later, perhaps too late, as the carnage grew to monstrous proportions in Vietnam, I no longer felt bound by such paper promises.

The Ticonderoga return to the States in December, 1964, for an overhaul. This required a six-month stay in dry-

dock at Hunter's Point, near San Francisco. My wife flew out from Chicago and we lived just outside Chinatown for that period. The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley was at its height, civil right struggles around the country were causing more and more people to question the truth of the basic principles of American society. I was not immune to these things. I found myself becoming more and more involved in questioning, more interest in digging below the surface reality of things.

By the time that period ended in June, 1965, much had happened, not least of which was the fact that Linda was now four months pregnant with our very first child. The war in Vietnam was now clearly a U.S. "problem," with the first American combat units sent there in February. By June, U.S. troop levels were up to 50,000. Also in February, Operation Rolling Thunder, the sustained bombing of North Vietnam, was ordered by President Johnson, the 1964 "peace candidate."

In March, the first of many college "teach-ins" on the war was held at the University of Michigan. On April 17, 1965, the first major antiwar demonstration took place in Washington, D.C., with some 20,000 participants.

My own thinking about the war was beginning to solidify as a result of personal study of the history of U.S. involvement in Indochina. The more I learned, the less I believed the official line on the war. I made no noise, however, there was no overt protest on my part. The questions remained and grew in intensity as I looked into it further.

The Ticonderoga was sent back to the Vietnam region around September, 1965, a few months earlier than planned. There were some grumbles from the crew, but this was largely out of selfishness at having to leave loved ones again. For example, I would now be 12,000 miles away while my wife was giving birth to our first child. No one among us seriously questioned our early return to the war zone at least not openly.

Things were much more hectic on the line that we remembered from a year before. Carriers were now averaging 75-80% of their time deployed at sea; now there were always three carrier groups on duty, two in the north and one in the south. Two other carriers and their escorts were rotated on "rest and maintenance." Generally, the schedule was two weeks on "Yankee Station," followed by two weeks on "Dixie Station," a visit to Subic Bay in the Philippines, then back to the war zone.

On the carrier, part of our "recreation," besides the "B" movies, was to go above decks and watch air operations. We would watch planes that could hardly stay above the water due to the weight of bombs and rockets get catapulted one after another from the ship. Of course, when they returned (if they returned), the weight problem didn't exist. My awareness of the destination and targets of these bombs began to weigh on me. You see, we didn't have the pressures of combat or fire fights to keep us from quiet thought. For most of us on carriers, it wasn't "kill or be killed," it was simply "kill" or act in support of the killing from great distances. Thought intruded on those who let down their guard.

Soon I began to discuss the war with

shipmates, trying to prod them into questioning more about its origins as I had. We had some informal debates about the bombing, its effects on the civilian population throughout Vietnam, the real reasons behind our involvement, and so on. This was certainly not a massive propaganda effort—I was neither that sophisticated or that brave. I merely tried to cause questions in the minds of others, questions which might lead some to search for their own answers. By the time I was transferred from the Ticonderoga to my next duty station in February, 1966, I felt I might have had some success with a few individuals, but I would never really know.

My final duty station was at Helicopter Training Squadron Eight in Pensacola, Florida. Even in the southeastern United States, Vietnam was still with me. Most of the flight instructors were Marine or navy veterans of Vietnam combat, and most of the students would soon experience that combat for themselves.

Once again, I was jockeying a desk, but this time, the desk itself became an over symbol of any antiwar feelings. Political cartoons, quotes from antiwar senators like Morse, Fulbright, and McGovern, and photos of Vietnamese people scarred by the bombing were openly displayed on my desk top. Since I worked in the squadron's central administrative office, many people tramped through each day. At times stares were directed toward my desk and rather pointed comments directed at me.

Curing this period, 1966-68, I also joined the American Servicemen's Union, subscribed to every underground newspaper I could find, and wrote letters to the local newspaper defending Bobby Kennedy's change of heart over the Vietnam war. In general, I was a visible antiwar as I could afford to be. My wife and daughter were there with me and I didn't want to bring them any grief. Surprisingly, there was little in the way of overt harassment, though I did lose a part time job with a local department store when the FBI came around to ask questions about my antiwar views—nothing more than that.

I worked at that squadron for two years and gained a reputation as a "good sailor" who was "too concerned with world affairs." I did not blindly accept the arguments for our actions in Vietnam, but all I would do was talk up my opposition. That was safe. It would not do to take any real action—to actually refuse to participate, for example. My discharge date was coming up and it was convenient to tell myself I could do more against the war outside the military.

That's as far as it went until my discharge in February, 1968, three days after the start of the Tet Offensive. I had put in my service, honorably, but the "honor" was all theirs. They got all they wanted out of me. What did any of us get in return?

For some, it was death or crippling. Others received psychological wounds which might never heal. Still others went to prison for refusing to cooperate with the war effort. The, there were those whose careers and fortunes were advanced by the war.

And yet, there are many thousands who also received a solid determination to see that it would all stop, the killing, the maiming, never to begin again. We are determined that we will not allow ourselves, our sons and daughters, or our grandchildren to ever be sucked in again when those who run our government decide it is time for some further bloodletting.

Continued from last page

## BASES

soon as his unit was gone.

The older hospitality women sits in her bar. Her illusions, too, have faded. An aircraft carrier has just left, so now there will be a long time with no customers, no money. She has no illusions about fitting back into her family anymore. She is no longer as attractive as she once was, and now other younger women are often chosen instead of her.

She has faded pictures of many men she has known, and carries memories of others in her head. Even now one American claims he wants to marry her, but she is no longer so sure she wants to leave the Philippines. She knows women who have gone to the United States, then returned to work in the bars of Olongapo when their marriages failed.

Soon she will be too old to have the child she wants. She knows she is just one among thousands of hospitality women—really no different from any other.

Olongapo City. A city of illusions and pain. The lights flash and the music blares. Sailors and women pass each other on the street, sit in bars looking at each other, trying to choose the one who will make their illusions become reality. Each uses the other to ease the pain and to keep the illusions alive.

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# Vietnam Veterans Tell Their Story RECOLLECTIONS

## REMEMBERING THE TONKIN GULF AND AFTER

by Joe Miller, VVAW Chicago (Champaign, IL)

I share with many thousands of others the somewhat dubious distinction of being a Vietnam veteran who never saw Vietnam. That's not quite right--in late December 1965 our ship was once perhaps five miles off the Vietnam coast at Cam Ranh Bay, with the land in clear view. We had to move in close, not for any military purpose, but to make it a little easier for the helicopters to bring Bob Hope's Christmas Show troupe out to us--Christmas in the tropics, 1965. Boy, it was war, and war sure was Hell!

We carrier-based sailors were recipients of the Vietnam Service Medal, combat pay (when the ship was operating in a designated "combat zone"), and the free mail privilege, along with any other "goodies" the government saw fit to throw at us to make us feel we were doing something worthwhile in that part of the world. (Of course, some of those goodies would be thrown back by antiwar veterans who converged on Washington, D.C., in 1971.) Most of us had never been, nor would we ever be, directly involved in any sort of real combat. We thought it was rough when we had to stand twelve-hour watches during general quarters. Of course, we did lose shipmates and pilots, many unseen and many the result of stupid accidents due to the pressures of a war time level activity during an official "peace time."

All in all, Vietnam was a very "clean" war for most of us on carrier duty during this early period. The ship's aircraft and pilots (A4s, F8s, A3Bs) did all the dirty work. We did not see any explosions (except for practice gunnery exercises), hear any screams, nor did we have to take any body count. If we were lucky, the CO would inform us each evening (just before the evening prayer--because we were doing God's work) of the day's "successes." I recall once when a great cheer rang throughout the ship's crew of some three thousand men, as the CO announced one particularly strategic dill--a water buffalo!

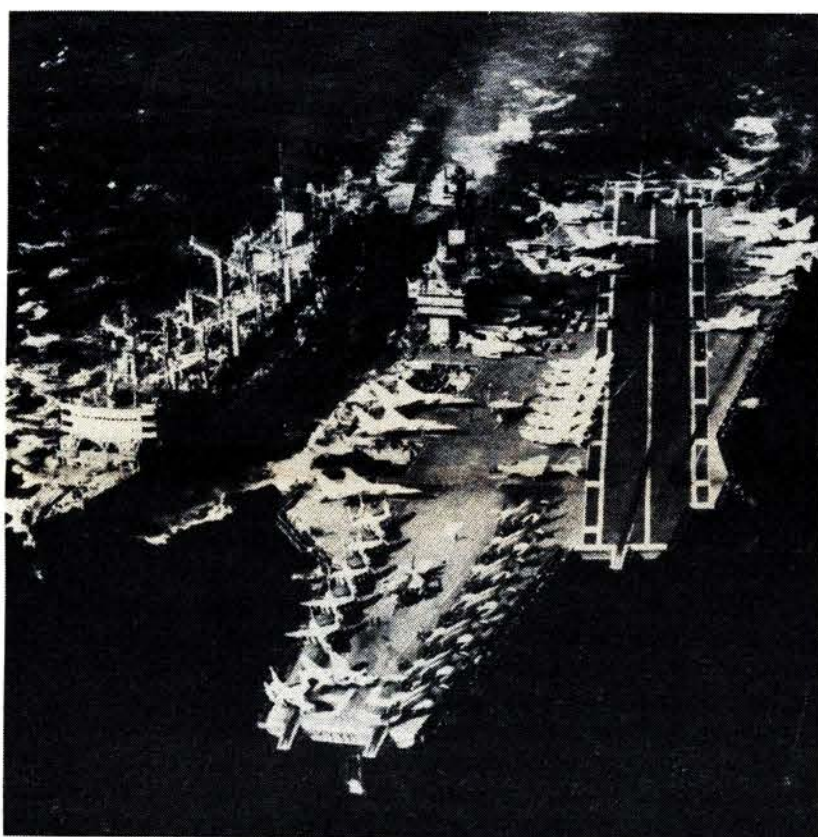
When I enlisted in the U.S. Navy in April, 1961, Vietnam, as an issue, simply did not exist. In those days there were not many with visions of necessarily "doing my part of the war effort"--this was peace time. Our enemies were far away, behind "iron" or "bamboo" curtains, and all most of us knew about them came through media images. My generation had been raised on TV shows such as "Navy Log", "Victory at Sea", "Annapolis", or "West Point", not to mention those postwar Hollywood productions which always glorified war and military service and starred some "reel" war heroes like Ronald Reagan and John Wayne. A so-called "tour" in the military in those days simply looked like some sort of romp. Surely, nothing would happen to any of us. Of course, all of us healthy, eighteen-year-old men had our military duty to perform in any case; all were required to service at least six

years, according to Selective Service rules of the day. No one really thought to oppose such requirements back then, so, joining up was the thing to do, and I did, as an eighteen-year-old kid just out of high school. In many ways it was also an escape from a humdrum existence, a search for some sort of adventure.

Upon completion of basic training at Great Lakes, I was designated to work as a Communications Technician (CT) in the Naval Security Group, a military intelligence organization which reported

regale us with stories about having been shot at while working in a spy plane over northern Vietnam. That sort of possibility was new to many of us "greenies", since the running joke had been that in any sort of emergency the CTs would be evacuated even before the women and children. (Of course, later there would be the USS Liberty in 1967 and the USS Pueblo in 1968 to put that viewpoint to rest...)

Well, as it happened, about six months into my tour on Taiwan, I was pegged as a "security risk" due to my



directly to the ultra-secret national Security Agency (NSA). As part of my training, I was sent to the Army Language School in Monterey, California, to study Chinese-Mandarin. While I was there, Vietnam began to have a little more relevance. We, who had to struggle with one to one-and-a-half years of language training, were appalled at the Green Berets and Rangers who were going through the school for six-week "quickie" courses in Vietnamese. How much could they learn in six weeks, when we were barely able to carry on any sort of conversation after six months? Also, why was Vietnamese so important all of a sudden? Remember, this was now 1962, and who among us knew much of anything about Vietnam then?

I completed language training in 1963 and was sent to the island of Taiwan to work with the Naval Security Group Detachment at Linkou Air Station, about fifteen miles outside Taipei. Though I considered myself a "China specialist" and was mainly concerned with analysis of materials about both the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (yes, Virginia, we also spied on our allies!), we also received daily reports on troops and ship movements in and around Southeast Asia--Vietnam was still a "presence." One of the senior noncoms used to

friendship with a Taiwanese woman, Linda. I had been spied upon by one of my best friends and he reported this relationship to the NSGD operations Officer, Lt. Dickey. When I learned of this, I demanded that the Ops Officer confront me directly if he wished to know anything of my personal life. At that meeting, I was told that I must break off the friendship with Linda, that I would be sent away to another station that same night and not allowed to ever communicate with her again. The only other alternative if I persisted in this relationship was that I would be removed from security work and sent out to the so-called "regular" Navy to finish out my enlistment.

I told Lt. Dickey what he could do with that job, was kicked out of the naval Security Group, had my Top Secret "Crypto" clearance removed, and was finally assigned to--horror of horrors!--sea duty on board the World War II vintage aircraft carrier, USS Ticonderoga. Before leaving Taiwan, however, I did manage to fight through all the official and unofficial obstacles in order to marry Linda.

In mid-June 1964, I reported aboard the Ticonderoga, was assigned to work as a clerk typist for the Weapons Department, and passed the first weeks at this new duty without any major event. We spent most of our time sailing back

and forth between Japan and the Philippines, with a week or two off the coast of Vietnam (our planes flying spotting missions) once in awhile. Suddenly, Vietnam was "real", though still unseen.

On August 2, 1964, the Ticonderoga received word that one of our task group's destroyers, the USS Maddox, was under attack by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. Planes from our ship were already in the air, and they were sent to defend the Maddox. These pilots had the "honor" of firing the first salvos in a new, naval side of what was fast becoming an American war against Vietnam. Two days later there were reports of another attack, this time against two U.S. destroyers, the Maddox and the Turner Joy. Once again, our planes, as well as those from other carriers, flew off to the rescue, just as John Wayne would have done.

Much of the Ticonderoga's crew was frustrated and angry because the United States seemed to be letting the "gooks" get away with these so-called "unprovoked" attacks. Keep in mind, there were no real U.S. casualties in these encounters, only those Vietnamese who had their boats shot out from under them. Tensions were high on the Ticonderoga for we had been at sea for more than sixty days straight, the longest continuous sea period many of the younger guys had ever experienced. Mail deliveries were extremely slow or nonexistent, ship's supplies, like fresh milk and soda pop were low. We all wanted to see something done, anything.

On the 5th of August, President Johnson ordered retaliatory air strikes against North Vietnam. Well, you would have thought that every man on that carrier was a fighter pilot--we wanted to hit the "gooks" and hit them hard. Then Johnson managed to push through the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in Congress, and that opened the gates for further direct U.S. involvement.

It had begun and we felt the release, not realizing or caring what the consequences might be for anyone. Later that year, some of us would even vote for Barry Goldwater because he promised to do more (or, we didn't trust Johnson). All of a sudden, we had a reason to be out there on that rust bucket--we were now actively fighting "communism." We didn't really know or care what that was; we simply gave it a label and felt much better because now we were not wasting our time.

We puffed with pride when we pulled into Hong Kong or Yokosuka, Japan, because we had "done something." The whole crew of three thousand were awarded the navy unit Commendation for our actions in the Gulf of Tonkin. We now had battle ribbons to prove our worth. Most of us saw no battle, fired no rockets, felt no fear--we just sat back on the ship, put on our ribbons, and collected the combat pay. What a way to fight a war!

Assuredly, I shared in all the excitement, I did my part, but some nagging