

HUE MASSACRE



"Massacre At Hue" by Gucci (diptych, oils on canvas (56"x 30" & 26"x30"), 1980)

Most people heard of My Lai atrocity, but a few would know of Hue massacre. Today some Hanoi's sympathizers have even tried to whitewash the war crime by saying the Hue massacre never happened. It sounds just like the neo-nazis saying the Holocaust is a myth. The two following articles will offer you a better perspective (thanks to the recent opening of LIFE photo's archive, we found the original pictures of Hue massacre related photos that were thought ever lost).

PHOTOS OF HUE MASSACRE



The Silent Tears In Hue City

In the darkness of the 1968 Tet's Eve, North Vietnamese Communist Army units conducted a surprise attack at Hue City, while the two sides were in a truce that had been agreed upon previously. South Vietnamese Army units defending the city were not in good positions to fight as they expected that the enemy would abide by their 4-day cease-fire promise, as they did in the preceding years. On the first day of the new year - the Year of the Monkey - Hue City streets were filled with NVA soldiers in baggy olive uniforms and pithy hats. The communist cadres set up the provisional authorities. The first thing they did was call all ARVN soldiers, civil servants of all services, political party members, and college students, to report to the "revolutionary people's committee." Those who reported to the communist committee were registered in control books then released with promise of safety.

After a few days, they were called to report again, then all were sent home safe and sound. During three weeks under NVA units' occupation, they were ordered to report to the communist committee three or four times. In the late half of January 1968, the US Marines and the South Vietnamese infantry conducted bloody counterattacks and recaptured the whole city after many days of fierce fighting that forced their enemy to withdraw in several directions.

Meanwhile, those who were called to report the last time to the communist authorities disappeared after the Marines and South Vietnamese Army units liberated Hue. Most of the missing were soldiers in non-combat units and young civilians. No one knew their whereabouts.

In late Feb. 1968, from reports of Vietnamese Communist ralliers and POWs, the South Vietnamese local authorities found several mass graves. In each site, hundreds of bodies of the missing were buried. Most were tied to each other by ropes, electric wires or telephone wires. They had been shot or beaten or even stabbed to death. The mass graves shocked the city and the whole country. Almost every family in Hue has at least one relative, close or remote, who was killed or still missing. The latest mass grave found in the front yard of a Phu Thu district elementary school in May 1972, contained some two hundred bodies under the sand. They had been slaughtered during one-month occupation of an NVA unit. Sand left no sign of a mass grave below until a 3rd-grader dug the ground rather deep for a cricket.



Besides more than two thousand persons whose deaths were confirmed after the revelation of the mass graves, the fate of the others, amounted to several thousands, are still unknown. The 1968 massacre in Hue brought a sharp turn in the common attitude toward the war. A great number of the pre-'68 fence sitters, anti-war activists, and even pro-Communist people, took side with the South Vietnamese government after the horrible events. After April 30, 1975 when South Vietnam fell into the hand of the Communist Party, it seems that the number of boat people of Hue origin takes up a greater proportion among the refugees than that from the other areas.

Since April 1975, the Vietnamese Communist regime deliberately moved many families of the 68-massacre victims out of Hue City. People in the city however, still commemorate them every year. Because the people are mingling the rites with Tet celebrations, Communist local authorities have no reason to forbid them. Most Americans knew well about the My Lai massacre of US Army Lieutenant Calley where from 200 to 350 persons were killed. The '68-massacre in Hue however, has not been covered at the same proportion by the English language media. When a Tet Offensive documentary film by South Vietnamese reporters was shown to the American audience of more than 200 US Army officers in Fort Benning, Ga. in November 1974, almost 90 percent of them hadn't been informed of the facts. Many even said that had they known the savage slaughter at the time, they would have acted differently while serving in Vietnam.



The US Navy has a warship named "Hue City." It is not known how many of her sailors realize that the city she carries as a name suffered so much. Would it be a good idea to have a rite once a year in the Tet season on the "Hue City" for the dead whom the US Marines were fighting for in February

1968?

Animosity should not be handed down to younger generations, but our descendants must be taught the truth. War crimes must not be forgotten, and history is not written by one-sided writers.

An other writing relates a bit about Hue Massacre, but more interestingly it offers an insightful perspective on how the "academic intellectuals" still biased against South Vietnamese when showcasing the Vietnam war. Please continue the article below.

A Smithsonian exhibit of the World War II bomber the Enola Gay is being criticized for its failure to mention the destruction the plane caused when it dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. Vietnamese Americans in California say an upcoming Oakland exhibit on the Vietnam War commits a similar crime.

California's Vietnamese refugees are incensed and claim that the exhibit at the Oakland Art Museum scheduled for 2004 does not give them adequate representation. They are also protesting the firing of a Vietnamese American employee at the museum who spoke out against the exhibit.

The museum received a National Endowment grant for a retrospective exhibit on the Vietnam War and its impact on California. The grant stipulates that the Next Stop Vietnam exhibit should engage in a dialogue with the community, but very little of that has happened, according to Mimi Nguyen, who says she was fired after repeated efforts to call the museum's attention to the cursory representation of Vietnamese voices and experience. Instead, she says, the exhibit focuses on the experience of the U.S. veteran community and does not represent the experience of not only Vietnamese, but other Southeast Asian groups that populate California.

In a letter to the museum's administration which was leaked to Vietnamese language press, Nguyen wrote, *"Fifty-eight thousand American GIs died in the war. Some four million Vietnamese perished, and an entire nation collapsed. Shouldn't Vietnamese Californians have equal stake and voice in this exhibit?"*

She wrote that initial agreements to interview Vietnamese living in California on their reaction to U.S. troops arriving in Vietnam were retracted and eliminated from the exhibit.

"Thanh was eight when American troops tossed a grenade into his family's bomb shelter. The grenade ruptured his vocal cords and disfigured his face. Duong was eleven when strayed bullets ruptured his spinal cord, leaving him paraplegic; he overcame many obstacles to become an Assistant Professor of Education at UCLA today," she wrote.

She says Vietnamese are portrayed as refugees at the end of the war without struggle, heritage, history and past. She wonders if the stories were neglected because the public cannot handle the realities of the Vietnam War. "Or are we uncomfortable with the truth because Vietnam reminds Americans of our discomfoting role in transforming the Persian Gulf? Wouldn't this reality shake people out of their comfort zone to deal with 'collateral damage' in Iraq and Afghanistan?"

The exhibit will highlight the widely known My Lai massacre where American forces attacked a Vietnamese village, but she says other atrocities like the Hue Massacre deserve to be uncovered. The memories still haunt survivors living in California. During the Hue massacre, some 4,000 students, professors, doctors, government officials and their families were buried alive by the Vietnamese Communist soldiers in mass graves. Some 21 U.S. veterans were interviewed for the exhibit compared to only one or two South Vietnamese soldiers, she wrote. "Over one million South Vietnamese men were under arms, and many are now Californians whose stories deserve our attention and a better history than the United States allows." She says Vietnamese play a valuable part of the California landscape and deserve an exhibit that speaks to them. "Refugees include sons, daughters, nieces, nephews and grandchildren of former South Vietnamese officials, who are transforming California and the nation as well. Vietnamese engineers and assembly line laborers helped build Silicon Valley, the engine of California's economy that was generating wealth and income, making California the richest state in the country."

The largest overseas Vietnamese population resides in California, numbering some half a million, and yet their views are not well represented, Nguyen says. The Vietnamese community, from Oakland to San Jose to Orange County, plan to circulate petitions and protest the museum's actions. Last week the deputy mayor of Garden Grove held a townhall meeting on the issue. Other Southeast Asian groups as well as a cross-cultural mix of immigrant and advocacy groups plan to join the Vietnamese in their protests. They include the American

Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and PUEBLO, a local activist organization.

Compiled by Pueng Vongs CaliToday News Report November 4, 2003