

Heroes and Heroines

**of the Liberation
Armed Forces
of South Vietnam**

LIBERATION EDITIONS — SOUTH VIETNAM — 1965

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OF THE LIBERATION ARMED FORCES
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EDITOR'S NOTE

The reader will find in this pamphlet the living stories of **ten** among the most typical heroes and heroines of the South Vietnam Liberation Army. To help him grasp the whole meaning and importance of their exploits which are often unconceivable, we deem it advisable to open this pamphlet with **large excerpts** from Mr. Truong Son's speech delivered at the First Congress of Heroes and Model Fighters of the South Vietnam Liberation Army held in May 1965.

"...This war of resistance against the American aggressors waged by the 14 million of our compatriots (in South Vietnam — Ed) is in fact part of a larger struggle carried out by more than 30 million people of Vietnam as a whole. The most glorious traditions of the Vietnamese people of resolutely opposing imperialism and aggression have been brought into full play. For more than 10 years now, each of our villages and hamlets in the delta as well as in the mountain region, each of our streets have had their own heroes and their own exploits. This fact has struck fear and consternation among our enemy; for us, it is a source of legitimate pride.

"At the start of their intervention, with their power, weapons and dollars, the Yankee imperialists thought they could easily win victory and complete the conquest of South Vietnam by 1954 or 1955.

"After the expiration of this time limit, Washington put it off until 1957 and later gave itself a new 3-year delay. In 1960, when it began its 'special war' with a massive introduction of tanks, cannons, M-113 trucks and aircraft and an increase of budget allowances, Washington thought it could make everything all right within 18 months, that is in late 1961. Yet since then, after sustaining one defeat after another, Washington has not been able to raise its head.

"We have inflicted on the aggressors so hard blows that neither U.S. President Johnson nor his Defence Secretary McNamara and U.S. ambassador in Saigon M. Taylor ever dared to speak of a U.S. victory but only contented themselves with saying that they had warded off defeat. In fact, we have shattered nearly all their designs.

"They are bumping against a people animated by a high revolutionary heroism and an unshakable determination to fight, a people who prefer to die than to be enslaved, who dare measure its strength with the U.S. imperialists with a firm determination to win.

"All along its history, our nation has gone through hard trials. Our people have always stood up against the ferocious aggressors and have never accepted defeat, successively triumphing over the Chinese invaders of the Yuan, Ming and Ching feudal dynasties, the Japanese fascists and French colonialists. Today, in taking up arms against the U.S. imperialists, we accept the trial of force. And when we have to fight, we will carry the fight through to the end, fearing neither the Yankees nor anything else.

"We are poorer than them in weapons, food and money. The Yankees swim in their wealth. But if they are millionnaires in dollars, we are so in revolutionary heroism. In this connection, they are far behind us. They will be defeated by our courage. For 10 years now, our troops, combatants, cadres and our civilian population have joined the fight without the least fear of death. In their confrontation with the Vietnamese people, the Americans cannot avoid more and more crushing defeats. The best way for them is to halt the hostilities, the prolongation of the war only brings them more disasters. The N.F.L. has declared that though our struggle may last 5, 10 or even 20 more years, we will be always resolved to strike back with the same energy, will deal more mortal blows at the enemy and prevent them from massacring with impunity our children and old folk, and usurping our land and fields.."

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TRAN DUONG

The Council of notables of Loc Quy was there in full meeting, watching the ballot-boxes. Its office was transformed into a polling booth. To ensure success of the elections, three local militia and "civil guard" sections had been sent to patrol the village day and night and were now guarding all entrances. The population was gathered and kept in respect in the yard by armed-to-the-teeth policemen.

The drum beats of the grand day having stopped, the first puppet official in the locality stood up.

"Listen here !" he bawled out to the crowds. "Prepare yourselves to vote well ! The militia who mount guard around here will allow nobody to make troubles... That those who vote for the list of President Ngô Dinh Diem put their ballots in this box ! Is it clear ?"

No sooner had he finished perorating than the big wardrobe of archives banged open and three lads with hats in the style of Liberation armymen sprang out, machineguns in hands. A young man of small stature, deep-set eyes and thin lips quickly knocked down a policeman and the first puppet notable, while the people, understanding that it was an attack by the revolutionary forces, upturned the ballot-boxes, tore into shreds their voting papers and dispersed amidst cheers.

The valorous young man turned toward his two companions : "Stand fast, boys !", he said. "We must protect the people's withdrawal."



TRẦN DƯỠNG

At the first gun shot, the guards leaped into the trenches behind the house. One of them who has regained his senses sought to encourage his mates :

"Come on ! They are only three small Vietcongs !"

"Small, yes, but diabolical !", replied the young man who was standing only about a dozen metres from them and showered them with a hail of gunfire.

Then, he rushed toward the other end of the masonry and fired on the militiamen who were trying to close in. While the puppet soldiers were sticking to the ground and watching their dead and wounded with horrified eyes, the three men calmly withdrew.

The "presidential" elections ordered by the Saigon puppets will never take place in Lóc Quy.

The little young man, who commanded the expedition which has since become famous in this region under the rigorous enemy control, is called Tran Duong. As an information agent and scout of the Liberation Army, he operated in circumstances requiring all his intelligence and courage.

In day time, on the surrounding hills, he engraved in his memory the place and characteristics of each lane, each dune and each field so that when night came he could stroll the area with assurance and serve as a guide for the Liberation units in operation.

Perfectly aware of every action and conduct of the enemy, he knew how to avoid them and find them when necessary. Never could an enemy ambush succeed when it had to deal with the three-man group headed by Duong. In a single night, he once succeeded in breaking off eight successive enemy ambushes.

Expert in intelligence work, Duong was equally admirable in the engagements, distinguishing himself particularly in close combats and flank attacks.

In September 1962, his unit was entrusted with wiping out the enemy forces stationed in the Xuyen Phu "strategic hamlet". After disguising himself, Duong entered the hamlet and went to

inspect every corner. That night, his cell assumed the road-opening mission. After secretly jumping over the first wall, the three men were spotted by the defenders. His comrade Bach exploded a plastic charge to demolish the second wall. The explosion hurled Duong to the third and last wall. Giving the enemy no time to react, he blew up the wall by exploding the second plastic charge. This time he was thrown into air. By rolling himself in a ball to palliate the fall, he stood up immediately. His body was pierced by many bamboo stakes planted all over the ground. All the three men jumped into enemy trenches and destroyed at once a machine-gun nest. Then they attacked the house of the garrison commander and killed the deputy-commander as well as a group leader before the bulk of the enemy forces could enter the hamlet. The post held by 39 mercenaries was thus quickly overrun and all weapons were captured.

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When Duong was detailed to Phu Xuan, he saw that the people there wished more than anything else the liquidation of a notorious hangman named Suy, head of the "strategic hamlet" and also responsible for the local organization of a reactionary party.

Surrounded by three ditches and three rows of fence, the Phu Xuan hamlet was guarded at night by guards who, a lighted torch in hand, were planted all around at a distance of 50 metres from each other. A bloodhound was attached to a stake every 100 metres. Every time Suy slept in the hamlet, a militia section mounted guard around his house.

One night when Suy slept at his home, Duong and his comrade Dong, a local cadre, tried in vain to filter into the hamlet without wakening the sentries.

"What to be done?" asked Dong, a little discouraged.

"Let me think it over," replied Duong. "We must win at any cost."

The same night, the two men in uniforms of mercenaries showed up before the big gate of the hamlet.

"Who goes there?" cried a sentry.

"Commandos back from operations!"

They went past the guards without arousing the least suspicion and made straight for the hangman's house. Duong assumed an impatient appearance in knocking at the door.

"Open the door, quick!"

"What's the matter?" answered a hoarse voice from inside.

"Urgent affair. I am Son, chief of the district militia."

"What affair?"

"Send you for an ambush."

"But I've just returned from there."

"I know, but the Vietcongs have just arrived. Now, open, we'll discuss later."

Unable to wait any longer, Duong raised the bamboo wattle, broke into the room and lighted his electric torch. Seeing the hangman, he placed the barrel of his sub-machinegun to the latter's ear and fired. A shot went off and the man crumbled in a muffled cry. He sent another bullet into Suy's head and was about to go away.

The guards, wakened by the shots, were seized with panic and tried to flee. Duong blocked the lateral door and emptied his gun into the mess. Terrified cries were heard:

"Oh, heavens! my leg has broken!"

"For pity's sake! Finish me off!"

With his powerful voice, Duong shouted an order.

"All the company, charge! Capture all of them!"

Leaving behind the militiamen trembling with fight, Duong rejoined Dong. When running past the hamlet's entrance gate, he scolded the guards of the post:

"Is this how you mounted guard? The communists operated freely in the hamlet and you knew nothing. I'll jail you all tomorrow, you will see!"

Thinking that they had run into a ranking officer, the militiamen let them go out without asking anything. Until the next morning, they dared not fire any shot, even when they discovered that their chief had been killed.

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Duong has fought 29 battles during which he killed or wounded 83 enemy troops, seized 19 arms including three machine-guns. His most meritorious action took place in the Loc Tan battle. His unit decided to go on an armed propaganda mission at Loc Tan market without knowing that that day the enemy had sent there new reinforcements comprising one "civil guard" company and two commando sections. When the guerillas reached the gate, they were met by an intense fire. Pin-pointing one machine-gun near the fence, Duong dashed forward, wiped out two gunners and turned the gun on the enemy who was forced to retreat to the market. After entering the place the guerillas were encircled by the enemy many times bigger in numbers.

"Discard them, Duong!" ordered the group leader.

Availing himself of his small stature, Duong slipped from house to house and succeeded in attacking the enemy from behind. Thinking that they had to cope with reinforcements, the enemy were forced to turn against Duong, thus allowing the bulk of the liberation forces to decimate the enemy before withdrawing without serious losses.

On their way back the guerillas had to pass a 40-metre bridge made of two coupled rails. A unit of mercenaries stationed near the bridge opened fire when the guerillas were about to cross the bridge.

"Dislodge them, Dong!"

Duong's group tried to avoid the ambush by turning to the right. Applying his watchword "only open fire when we are two steps from the enemy", Duong dropped unexpectedly in the midst

of the mercenaries. He fired his sub-machinegun uninterruptedly, compelling the puppet soldiers to abandon their positions.

By the time all the valid men had arrived safely, but many wounded were still at the other side of the bridge. Duong was assigned again to go and seek for them.

Re-crossing the bridge with the two comrades of his group, he saw three wounded. "Each carries a wounded on his back," he said. "Go first. Leave me the weapons, I'll cover your retreat." But the enemy soon spotted them. Duong put his wounded friend on the ground, went round the enemy once again, tossed a grenade on the emplacement of their mortar and machinegun. Taking advantage of the disarray of the mercenaries, he ran toward his wounded, but upon crossing the bridge the enemy again fired on them.

"You can't do otherwise," Duong said to himself. "I cannot sacrifice our wounded comrade and the three weapons. We must wipe out these bastards."

For the third time, he filtered behind the enemy lines and put them to rout. Then he calmly returned, took his wounded comrade on his back and crossed the bridge with the three sub-machineguns.

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Duong was born in a region of Quang Nam occupied by the French troops. His mother was killed in an enemy raid during the past war of resistance. His father was murdered by the U.S.-Diem authorities at Vinh Trinh dam. Orphan and left without support since his early childhood, Duong had to work as a buffalo boy for rich families to sustain himself.

Witnessing the atrocities of the aggressors, Duong has grown up in a grim determination to avenge his parents and his country. By what means? he asked himself. The answer was the image of "Uncle Ho's soldier" which returned to his mind every now and then.

He went to seek a militant in the region :

"Let me join the army. I'm still little but I can do the cooking for the armymen. Later I'll handle a rifle."

Since his wish came true, he has only one thought in mind : beat the enemy out and out. He spent all his sparetime taking shooting exercises. At night, he would ask the permission to make probes deep into the enemy's refuges. While strolling all alone he would make as if he fell into an enemy ambush, threw himself on the ground, rolled upon himself and got ready to use his arm against the imaginary enemies. This passion, Duong still keeps intact today.

Dead set against the enemy, Duong is the incarnation of kindness in his relations with his friends and the people. Everybody held him in profound esteem and called on him each time he returned from a mission. His knapsack was full of pieces of cloth which he used to patch the clothes of his friends. He gave them his new uniforms at each distribution, contenting himself with the oldest ones.

At the Congress of Emulation Fighters in the central part of Central Vietnam, the commander of the local Liberation Forces embraced him and said : "You are really the reincarnation of the hero in the period of the Three Kingdoms in China, Hsien Tsung, who, alone among an enemy army, achieved a legendary exploit by coming out safe and sound."

NGUYEN VAN TU

It was late in the night. His wife and his youngest child were already soundly asleep on the hammock, but Tu still turned on himself in his bed without being able to sleep. The decision of the Party's cell appointing him to the village engineering group filled him with joy as well as anxiety. An engineering group without explosive charge indeed did not mean much. He racked his brain for a solution.

All inhabitants of Than Thanh Binh village, located between Mo Cay and Ben Tre held him in high esteem. Never had the enemy entered the village without incurring losses and this was mostly thanks to Tu.

At the start, they had practically nothing except their bare hands. The enemy took advantage of this to come and kill, plunder and arrest the people as they liked. What to do when one had not even a bar of steel for self-defence? Tu spent sleepless nights worrying whether the hornets nest near his house could be of any use. He had been told that during the first resistance war, hornets were used to intercept enemy raids. But how did they do? How to bring the nest up to the ambush? At the first test, the young man was kept in bed for many days due to the stings.

From that day, he spent whole days studying the terrible insects and finally found the way to move the nest at his will. He imparted the secret to his friends who decided to make a first attempt on the road. At that time, roads were often cut into

sections and covered with branches to frighten the mercenaries, but in the long run this practice no longer proved effective. It was then decided to lay an ambush with hornets and Tu was entrusted with commanding the operation, hiding himself in a dug-out.

The next morning, five mercenaries who were sent to open the road took to flight while crying for help as soon as they laid their hands on the branches. The test was conclusive. The hornets might become very good fighters. But Tu was far from being satisfied since he had noticed from his observation post that only the working hornets took part in the fight. The nest should have been shaken more violently.

Soon afterward Tu made a second test. This time the nest was much bigger and Tu was sure that all the insects would take part in the fight since he took the precaution to attach to the nest a rope of which he held the other end in his hide-out. The next morning, 100 mercenaries riding in three trucks arrived at where the road was cut. Two of them alighted and after unpinning their grenades moved toward the branches. Tu pulled violently at the rope, setting the whole nest on the alert. Never the expression "to fall into a hornets' nest" was more proper than for the two enemy scouts who had to let hold of their hand grenades and ran away from the furious hornets. Woe to them, they were mowed down by their own grenades! The whole swarm rushed to the vehicles. The mercenaries screamed with pain without daring to get down. Promptly the GMCs turned back and fled at top speed, while the soldiers fired madly in an attempt to drive the hornets away. In his dug-out, Tu held his sides in watching the scene.

But Tu decided to do better, he wanted to recuperate his soldiers after each victory. He began anew to watch their habits and finally succeeded after persistent researches. His domesticated hornets returned to him after each battle.

He gradually became an expert in the matter. The hornets no longer bore any secret for him. He knew how to accelerate their multiplication, develop their size, and instil in them a great

combativeness. He trained them to fight with cleverness and to pursue the enemy on many miles. He did his job so expertly that finally the hornets were able to distinguish the guerillas of the village from the enemy troops and to assault the mercenaries without the need of being excited. Thus, patriotism and the hatred for the enemy have helped this peasant who just knew how to read and write to accomplish real marvels. He had indeed taught a good lesson to the scientists divorced from the masses.

Our biologist was also an engineer who invented a rudimentary but very efficacious trap. With his army of hornets, his spikes and traps of all kinds, he transformed his village into a murderous labyrinth for any foreigner who ventured in. In 1964 alone Tu engaged the enemy 30 times with his hornets and killed 50 enemies.

Nguyen Van Tu's experience was broadly populated all over South Vietnam. The hornets have become a very redoubtable arm and Nguyen Van Tu, a master in the training of the insects.

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Now, that alone would not do, Tu told himself. Beside the primitive arms, there must be more murderous ones since the enemy had become more ferocious.

At the break of the day his children already came out of their bed. Their mother recommended them not to wake their sleeping father who would have not a moment of rest once he had got up. Tu took part in every work — destruction of "strategic hamlets", laying of traps, building of fortified villages, meetings of guerillas, sabotage of the roads etc... Whenever an explosion was heard from the enemy post or on the road, the villagers were sure that Tu had been there. His wife was proud of having a husband of whom the whole village talked with high esteem. An excellent guerilla he also worked tirelessly on the ricefields without however being able to make the ends meet because of

his big family. But Tu did not complain. When the Yankees have been driven out of the country, there would be no more hunger. His comrades in his cell had told him so many marvellous stories about socialist construction in the North that he kept an unbreakeable faith in the future.

Today however he did not go to the field. He had taken counsel of his pillow. He took out an empty petrol cask and began working on it, surrounded by a crowd of curious kids. After cutting off the tin, he gave it the form of a cradle and covered it with a layer of tar. At first sight one might take it for a mine.

At nightfall, he went to bury his "mine" in the middle of the road and hid himself in a corner. Next morning, two enemy scouts came. It did not take long for their trained eyes to see the conductor string which was nevertheless very clumsily buried. After quickly cutting the string, they called two other mercenaries to unearth the mine.

"At last, this is our reward!" they screamed at seeing the "mine".

One of them eagerly snatched at it, but alas! while opening the box he set off a trapped grenade which knocked down three men on the ground. Tu moved away, smiling to himself.

At the entrance of the village, people showered him with questions:

"Hey, hey, Tu! What is that explosion", old Ba asked.

"That's a mine I just tested, uncle!", Tu replied.

"Goodness me! what a burst we heard! How many dead?"

"Three guys hit at the belly, uncle!"

"Formidable," uncle Ba exclaimed with a laughter. "Come and have some tea with me, boy!"

The villagers soon crowded around Tu, pressing him to relate his exploit. After relating, Tu said:

"It is a pity I had only one, otherwise I would have shattered for good their attempt to prowl on the road!"

A few days later, Tu was ordered to go at night and plant a mine on the fringes of the nearby post. He accepted the mission