

TIẾNG VỌNG TỪ ĐÁY VỰC

MAY 1, 1981

"A CRY FROM THE ABYSS"

(an evening of poetry and songs)

PROGRAM

1. INTRODUCTION OF PROGRAM. (VIETNAMESE STUDENT ASSOC., UCB)
2. INTRODUCTION OF AUTHOR BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH (PRISONER-POET NGUYEN CHI THIEN) AND HIS POETRY COLLECTION.
3. INTRODUCTION OF PANEL MEMBERS.
4. ENGLISH POETRY READING (TRANSLATION) AND TYPICAL VIETNAMESE STYLE RECITAL WITH ACCOMPANIMENT OF 16-STRING ZITHER.
5. SONGS FROM THE POETRY COLLECTION, PUT INTO MUSIC BY PHAM DUY, FAMOUS VIETNAMESE COMPOSER.
6. DISCUSSION : 5 POLITICAL PRISONERS FROM VIETNAM.

Monsieur !

C'est au nom des millions de victimes innocentes de la dictature, déjà succombées ou subissant encore une mort lente et douloureuse dans les bagnes communistes, que je vous prie de faire publier ces poèmes dans votre pays libre. C'est le fruit de onze vingt ans de travail. La plupart en ont été créés dans mes années de détention.

Je pense qu'à nous, les victimes, il appartient plus qu'à personne d'autre de montrer au monde les souffrances incroyables de notre peuple opprimé et torturé à mort. De ma vie brisée, il ne reste qu'un seul rêve, c'est de voir le plus grand nombre possible d'hommes prendre conscience de ce que le communisme est un grand fléau de l'humanité.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de ma profonde reconnaissance ainsi que celle de mes compatriotes injustement !

Gentleman !

It is in the name of millions of innocent victims of the dictatorship already fallen or still being suffered a slow and painful death in the communist prisons, that I urge you to have these poems published in your free country. This is the fruit of my twenty years in detention. I think that it belongs to us, the victims, more than anybody else to describe to the world the incredible sufferings of our people oppressed and tortured mercilessly.

From my broken life there remains but one dream : it is to see the largest possible number of men awakened to the fact that Communism is an enormous calamity for mankind.

Please accept, Gentleman, the expression of deep gratitude from myself as well as from my unfortunate compatriots !

The author's hand-written letter, in French, and its English translation, in which he asked a diplomat in Hanoi to bring his poetry collection out of Vietnam.



ONCE LI PO

Once Li Po raised his head to look at the bright moon.
Then bowed his head missing his native land.
Now I raise my head to look at the dusty cobweb.
Bow my head, kill the lice, collect the scattered rice.
Li Po, drunken, prop his legs on the King of Tang's belly,
I, faint from hunger, dizzily put my legs on the rusty fetters.
Li Po lived in the dark age of monarchism,
Of cruel feudalism, where FREEDOM had yet to exist.
Now I'm living in the cozy, well-fed Communist
Age of Happiness, of Liberty, of Paradise on earth!
How unfortunate for Li Po! How fortunate for me!

I CAN DEVOUR/INVINCIBLE

I can devour pounds of uncooked manioc
Deliciously as if they were chocolate!
You admire me for being more talented than a pig?
I'm living in a Viet Cong prison!
In the cold winter, when the wind is roaring furiously
Soaking myself in the middle of icy stream, fish up the
bamboo trunks.
Do you think my skin is made of bronze, my bone of iron?
I'm living in a Viet Cong prison!
The place where I lie is twenty inches wide,
Between two inmates neighbors, one leper, the other
tuberculosis!
Please tell me, friend, what else can I do?
I'm living in a Viet Cong prison!

THERE WILL BE A DAY

There will be a day when today's man will throw away his guns,
chains, Party and flag
Reclaiming his mourning band, sticking out his crutches born
of injustices!
To come home to ancestral halls and tombs and forefathers whom
for decades he was forced to forget
All the hatred and poisonous fumes born thereof will fade away
in the incense smoke, into the heaven
Everyone will be shoed out of the nightmare
The deceivers as well as the victims of violence will survive
to come home out of past deeds
On the reunion day of brotherly love
As they stand together sharing the same losses
Some deeply repentant, other in respectful excitement
As they lay reunion wreaths on the ancestral graves, mark the
era of white diapers winning over the red flag!
The soothing flutes of herdboys
And the ringing love of country will replace the Forward Soldier
song and the Internationale shall be the kite flute song in
the blue sky!

FROM APE TO MAN

From ape to man, million of years gone by.
From man to ape, how many years?
Mankind, please come to visit
The concentration camps in the heart of the thickest jungles!
Naked prisoners, taking baths together in herds
Living in ill-smelling darkness with lice and mosquitoes,
Fighting each other for a piece of manioc or sweet potatoe
Chained, shot, dragged, slit up at will by their captors
Beat up and thrown away for the rats to gnaw at their breath!
This kind of ape is not fast but very slow in action, indeed
Quite different from that of the remote prehistory
They are hungry, they are thin as toothpicks
And yet they do produce the nation's resource all year long
Mankind, please come and visit!

THE CHILDREN WHO SYMBOLIZE THE REGIME

One of his arm is tattooed "LIFE OUTCASTS"
The other "EXCEEDING HATRED"
Oh world can you believe
This is an eight-year old prisoner?
On my long journeys from prison to prison,
I have met thousands of children prisoners like him

The children who were the symbol of the regime.
How comely they were on the first day they were put in prison!
Lolling around, they didn't need to wear pants:
The prisoner's shirts already covered them to the toes.
Ten years have passed so rapidly, now they're grown
Their faces are... their characters cruel
Open... course, making exception for none,
Kill for a piece of manioc, a potatoe!

DISCOVER THE CULPRIT AT ONCE/THAT OLD WOMAN

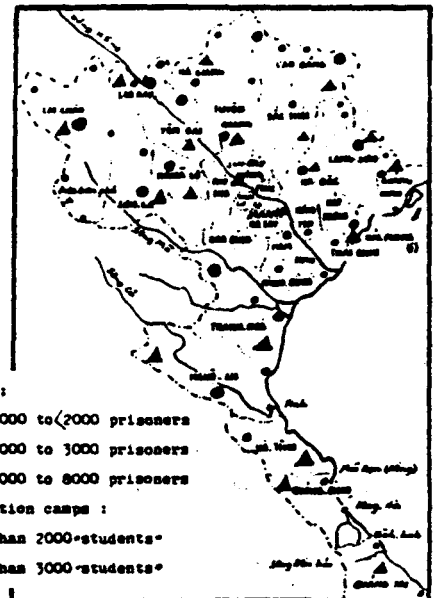
That old woman is sixty years old,
Why can't she peddle potatoes on the roadside?
That old man is seventy yearfive
Why isn't he excused from political meetings?
Freedom! How it is precious to me!
Why is prison my permanent resident?
That young man has been in the army forever
Why did the police arrest him?
That untutored boy should go to school
Why did he graduate so soon to the work camp?
My friend, who is extraordinarily educated
Why is he now a tubercular road-wander?
That gentleman, son of a prestigious Confucian teacher
Why did he steal and turn out to be the object of public scorn?
That young lady, fresh and gentle as a rose
Why must she give herself so quickly, just for a cheap bowl
of soup?
The reason for all of these stories need not be looked too far:
It's easy to discover the answer: in the red banner and bright
yellow star!

THE PARTY MISTREATED ME

The party banished me to the jungle, intended to transform me
into the fertilizer for manioc.
I became a skillful hunter and came back with snake charms and
rhinoceros' horns.
The party drowned me into the sea, hoped that I would be
submerged to the bottom.
I became a good diver, and rose to the surface with shining
pearls and shells.
The party buried me in the dark ground, hoped that I would turn
into black mud there,
I became a successful miner, and dugged up treasures and
treasures,
Not diamond mine or gold ore for nice and tiny jewels,
But uranium ore to make an atomic bomb!

MƯỜI BÀI NGỤC CA TEN PRISON SONGS

Tiếng vọng từ đây vực



THƠ CỦA MỘT THÍ SINH MIỀN BẮC
VIẾT VÀ GỬI ĐI TỪ MIỀN BẮC
CHO ĐỒNG BÀO VIỆT
VÀ NHỮNG NGƯỜI YÊU TỰ DO
TRÊN KHẮP THẾ GIỚI