

# Huynh Kim Khanh: You Have Planned Enough!

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I would like to talk about the significance of the Center for Vietnamese Studies for the future of Vietnam not as a Vietnamese expert, the kind of elite expert that Nina Adams spoke of, but from my standpoint as a Vietnamese.

I have been quoted as saying that we would be coming here as a group of anti-U.S. personnel. At a time when millions of American people are against this odious war in Vietnam, this war which kills both of our people, Vietnamese and American, I do not consider my involvement against the war in Vietnam as anti-American. I am helping the Americans out, if you regard the recorded majority of the people in the United States as American. I am not anti-American, I am pro-American. In fact, to borrow a phrase, some of my best friends happen to be Americans. This is a phrase not often used about Americans; it is said about Negroes and Jews, and anybody else. But as a Vietnamese I am still proud to say it.

Since coming to this campus I've seen posters and signs saying "off so-and-so", "off so-and-so." I think you give too much importance to some of these personalities. They may have had some importance in the past and they may not. But they do not deserve the amount of attention you are giving them now. And with regard to the size of the grant and its importance, I've read that the cost of killing one "Viet Cong" is something like \$350,000--a real Viet Cong, that is, not just a gook or any Vietnamese. In these terms, the \$1 million given to the Vietnam Center is very cheap.

More significant than particular personalities or amounts of money, I think, is the purpose for which this Center was established. If a Center for Vietnamese Studies were established in order to study Vietnamese society, to explain Vietnamese society to the American people in the hope of promoting understanding between the two societies, then that would be just great. But as the Center here is set up, it is part of a scheme to continue the American presence in Vietnam. This is simply no good; and it is very dangerous. It is dangerous because it is part of the pattern of the Vietnam war itself. Much has been said about this war's being a "mistake", as though it were correctable or whatever. It is not; it is part of a larger pattern. And I think that in the future after the Center is abolished, then people will say that the Center was a mistake, too.

This leads me to my main point--that the Center for Vietnamese Studies is an instrument of American neo-colonialism in South Vietnam. The very presence of the U.S. in Vietnam has to be understood as part of the postwar emergence of superpowers and of neo-colonialism. After 1945 one type of colonialism, that of small European countries with limited resources, was replaced by a new form of domination maintained by large countries with extensive resources, territories and populations, operating through foreign military and economic aid programs. The term "aid" itself reflects the fiction at the heart of these new arrangements--that the subject state has all the superficial symbols of national sovereignty, such as international

A. Indeed, we learned very much from the Chinese, we learned very much from the French and hopefully we have learned something from the Americans, although I'm not sure what it is other than striptease shows in the bars and certain other aspects of the "American way of life" in Vietnam.

You said you don't know how the Center contributes to all this. I think if you will read the grant document written by the Center itself, it will become very clear to you. Attempting to prove their qualifications for aiding the post-war reconstruction of Vietnam, they claim that the university has already trained 200 provincial chiefs as part of AID's educational programs there. The Center itself could provide the best answer to this question.

As regards Americans learning to speak Vietnamese, I would also be very pleased to be able to converse with Americans in another language than English, so I am happy to see Americans speaking Vietnamese, too. I could even have some nationalistic pride in it as well--but for what purpose are they trying to speak Vietnamese? To continue American domination of Vietnam, or what? Is it in order to understand Vietnamese better so as to promote better understanding between our peoples, to learn something from Vietnam? Well, if they would start doing that too--learning something from Vietnam--then I would be very happy. I haven't seen that yet. As far as Americans are concerned, they are still gooks and have nothing to teach you.

Let me mention the situation of those Vietnamese who are involved in these AID projects. Actually, I think this is one of the main reasons I am against this war. It is very sad that the Vietnamese

have been corrupted by the war. I feel very sorry that our Vietnamese soldiers have been made to fight their own brothers. They didn't want to. Many Vietnamese who work for the Saigon government today have to do so in order to make a living. What else can they do? I'm not calling all of them corrupt--they have to live somehow. You have to understand them as human beings. I make an exception in the case of certain personnel of the South Vietnamese government such as Thieu, Ky, Khiem and some others who clearly work for the Americans, and who, if the Americans would leave, would be among the first to leave with them. But the majority of the people who work for the government--civil servants, the students sent over here by AID--they understandably had to find some way out of the war. I respect their human quality of fearing death like anybody else. I fear death, too.

Then I am left with the question: Why am I not in Vietnam myself? Why am I sitting here? And I say yes, I'm a coward. I fear death, because I'm human. If I were not a coward I would be on the other side, fighting the Americans. Yet while admitting I'm a coward I still think I'm doing the best thing I can--staying abroad, telling the Americans what the war is about. Probably in this way I can do something to justify my being a coward.

Finally, what ought we to study here in order to do some good for our country? The question is to define what is good, what is good for Vietnam, and the answer is to stop the war, get the Americans out completely and unconditionally, and immediately, so that we the Vietnamese can reconstruct our own country. If we need American help, we shall ask for it. But let us ask you, not have you plan the development for us. You have planned enough--you have planned enough