

This is a report from Truong Nguyet-Anh, Vietnamese member for Wanneroo in WA, to Huu Nguyen, a Vietnamese in Sydney and editor of Saigon Times

REPORT

At the end of February 2008 Luu Dan, editor in chief of the weekly magazine Dan Viet, called from Sydney to introduce Le Phu Cuong to me (Truong Nguyet-Anh, Member for Wanneroo City, WA).

My first question I asked Luu Dan was about political thinking of Le Phu Cuong. Luu Dan informed me that Cuong is a young person, about 40, working for multicultural program and there is nothing suspicious about him. Luu Dan asked me to extend my assistance to Cuong when he comes to Perth to prepare for a [forthcoming] multicultural program in Perth.

Having worked several years in Australian schools (I arrived in WA in 1978) I have gained considerable experience with various multicultural programs in Australia. I have visited numerous schools and every where I went I was able to remove the red flag [the national flag of Vietnam] replace it with the yellow flag with three red stripes [flag of the former Republic of Vietnam].

Because of their lack of knowledge, I am often invited to help with various multicultural programs, the most recent of which was held on 27-3-2008 at Willetton High School (South Perth). I prepared Vietnamese foods (cha gio).

When arriving at the school I noted that the red flag (1.20 metre) was flying along side other flags of the same size in the school yard. I reacted and explained to Mrs Pauline, organizer and coordinator of ESL program, why I was present at the school, and that I am a refugee from communism. I came to the school to help because of 2 words Viet Nam, and the yellow flag with three red stripes.

Mrs Pauline said they did not have the yellow flag that I wanted. I asked Tran Huu Tam (a member of a fighting cell [against communism]) of the Vietnamese community in WA to find one of the same size to replace the 2 red flags for the multicultural week. The flag was subsequently donated to the school for future use. Accompanying me to the school and bearing witness to this encounter were Miss Phuong (Women's Association), Mrs Hien (Senior Citizen Association) and Professor Bui Ta Trinh.

I did not know when Le Phu Cuong arrived in Perth. But he called me at 8.30 pm on Thursday 08-05-2008. At that time I was on another phone talking to a friend in a fighting cell. So I opened the loudspeaker for my friend to listen in on the conversation. I asked Cuong whether he had completed the display for the exhibition to be open on 09-05-2008. He replied positive.

I asked Cuong to take me to the venue for a preview, but he declined saying that it was 10 pm and the venue was closed. Cuong wanted to arrange to show me on the following day, but I insisted that he bring me to the venue that night. Upon arriving at the venue Cuong asked me to view the display from the car as it would be better to

see it at 6 pm on the following day [opening day]. He added that the display is simple and beautiful, "It is lovable because we believe in art for art's sake only".

I did not agree with his suggestion, got out of the car and walked to 233 James Street, Northbridge, Perth. The address is at the end of James Street. It was late in the night and there was no one around. I protested loudly to Cuong when I caught sight of a large red flag painted on the back of a paper-mache dog. I demanded Cuong to destroy that dog bearing the communist flag. Cuong pointed out that there was also a yellow flag painted near the tail of the dog. I said this was an insult. But Cuong insisted that this was art and assured me that there would not be any trouble. He added that there were no objections in Sydney and Melbourne, and no Vietnamese had visited these exhibitions.

I informed Cuong that I would not be an accomplice to this communist cultural propaganda of his. While in WA he should remember that "each forest has its own tiger". Although WA is small and has a small number of Vietnamese the fight against communism is very strong. I will report this matter to the community, fighting cells and associations.

After learning of Cuong's view I told him straight that whether the VC [Viet Cong] flag is there or not I would not support the program and would not come to the opening, nor visit the exhibition while it was in WA. I shall inform Luu Dan and Quoc Viet, because Quoc Viet interviewed Cuong last February 2008. I shall also inform Mr Nguyen Van Minh, Chief Radio WA that I have interviewed Cuong and ask him not to go to the exhibition to see the communist flag on this Pho Dog.

I also asked Cuong why did he include my name in the Press Release without my approval, and requested him to withdraw my name. Because he was lying at the beginning I proposed to Cuong to destroy the dog with VC flag and cancelled the pho cooking program. Cuong said that if he did destroy the dog he would be under pressure from both the director in Perth and the director in Sydney. Both will give him a "hiding" and who would endure this for him. Anyhow he said he respected me for being straight with him and promised to seek Mrs Sian's opinion on the following day and to report back to me.

I would like to iterate that on Tuesday 06-05-2008 Mrs Ali Martin, KULCHA staff, invited me for an interview to be conducted at 10 am on Thursday 08-05. I declined. The reason was that I had several times tried to find out from Cuong what was going to be exhibited, but he never gave a clear reply. I also sensed several things were not right, and his language reeked of communist odour like: "Art for art's sake in order to widen our arm link to embrace from the north to the south...", etc. That was why I had refused to be interviewed before I met Cuong in WA.

After that I requested Mrs Sian and Ali Martin to certify in writing my protest against communist propaganda activity by Cuong.

On Friday 09-05 at 7 am and 9 am I telephoned Mrs Sian and Cuong. Both set their phones to message. Again at 12 noon I called Mrs Sian who said that she would talk with Cuong. I waited until 3 pm without hearing from Cuong. Finally he called me at 3.45 pm telling me that he had discussed the matter with Mrs Sian. [They were of the

view that] this is art of young people, if we remove the dog painted with flags Miss Mail Long would not agree, and this is just “art for art’s sake”.

I replied that in creating art one can use so many other beautiful things from Vietnamese culture. I consider this is a smear, barbaric and backward, to use [the theme] Pho Dogs and the Australians will see us as savages because they love dogs.

Finally Cuong said he would contact me before returning to Sydney. But he remained silent until last night (Friday 16-05, 9 pm) when he sent me and Hoang Nam (Chairman, WA Vietnamese Community) an invitation to meet on Friday 23-05 at 5 pm to hear Miss Mai Long’s explanation [on the matter], (I shall forward you this message).

On Tuesday 13-05-2008 at 4.30 pm I had an appointment to meet Mr Jon Kelly (Mayor) and Brett Treby (Deputy Mayor) and the Mayor’s office Wanneroo City. I presented all about the cultural propaganda program for communist Vietnam by Cuong and they promised support if necessary by letter.

On Friday 16-05-2008 at 4 pm I called Mrs Sian and asked about the letter of certification I had requested more than a week ago.

Mrs Sian promised, with a very annoyed tone, to have the letter ready by Monday or Tuesday. The reason was because she knew I contacted the community and asked Australian people not to visit the exhibition, as well as the pho cooking program which I cancelled.

I requested Mrs Sian for an appointment for Mr Hoang Nam (Chairman) and me to meet her on Saturday 17-05. She declined for the reason she had to take care of the workshop by Mai Long in Wanneroo City. I enquired whether she had discussed and obtained permission of the Mayor. She said no. She only needs to ask permission from the Director of Community Development (because Cuong’s official title is Asian-Australian Community Development Officer).

Mrs Sian used the reason being busy with the workshop of Mai Long (creator of Pho dogs for the communist propaganda program of Le Phu Cuong) on the weekend (17-05 and 18-05). Mai Long will come from Sydney. I also asked her for the name of the Director of Community Development to which she replied she did not remember.

After hanging up the phone I immediately telephoned Mr Garry (Director of Wanneroo Community Development) and told him about the conversation between me and Mrs Sian and explained my political stand. Garry said that Mrs Sian did ask for sponsorship because this is a cultural program, and Mai Long’ workshop will be held together with Tommy Trinh’s music show on the following weekend (24 and 25-05), not on 17 and 18-05 as mentioned by Mrs Sian. Thus, I have figured that she deliberately resorted to diversionary tactics to put me off?

Garry showed that he understood well my stand. So I asked him to cancel this program because I am an elected representative of Wanneroo City representing the voice of the Vietnamese refugees from communism.

I added that if Cuong's program were to go ahead there would be a demonstration of the Free Vietnamese Community in WA to protest against communist cultural propaganda by Le Phu Cuong and Pho Dog Workshop of Mai Long.

Mr Garry assured me with these words: "Not to worry, Anh, Mayor Jon Kelly has informed me that you had come to see him already, and as the program has not been announced in the local media there is plenty of time to cancel it. I have called Mrs Sian but she did not pick up her phone."

After this exchange I met Mr Garry again on Friday 16-05 at 7.30 pm at the exhibition room of Wanneroo City where he opened an art exhibition and acted as MC for the Art Award Opening Night. The exhibition was opened from 16-05 to 2505.

Finally, to conclude Le Phu Cuong has taken advantage and made use of Mrs Sian of KULCHA to bring Pho Dogs to Wanneroo City because all other cities in WA do not have this program.

Wishing you and your family good health, peace and happiness.
Hope to see you again in Sydney at the end of next week.

PS.

I represent WA branches of Associations of Former Students of Nguyen Dinh Chieu High School and Le Ngoc Han High School, and Association of My Tho Fellow countrymen.

Respectfully invite you and you family to the inauguration of the Special Issue on the 50th Anniversary of Le Ngoc Han High School, My Tho, on Sunday 25-03-2008 at International Restaurant, 42 Canley Vale Road, Canley Vale NSW 2166.
From 13:00 to 16:00 hours.

Truong Nguyet-Anh (Western Australia)