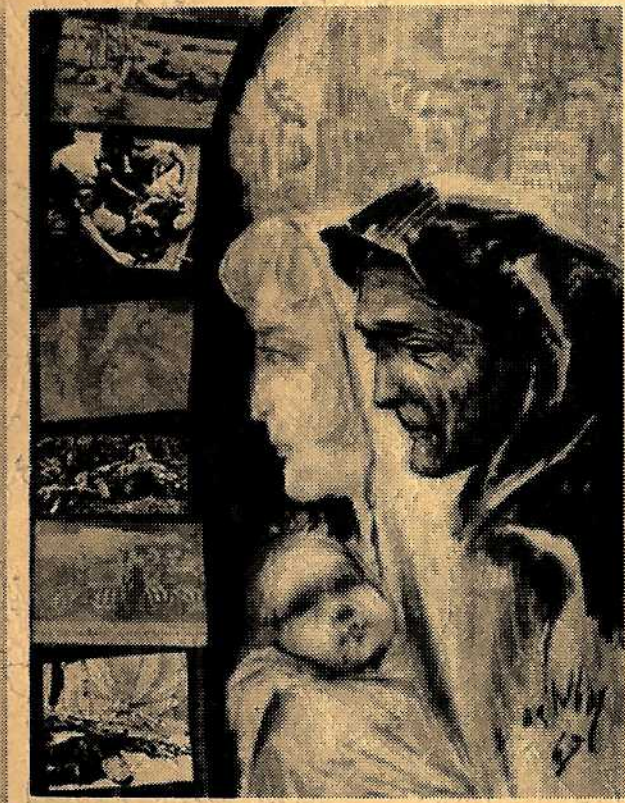


Korea Report 21 Volume 1. No 1.

Vietnam Report

인권정보자료실
SAe2.33

Dream for Peace and Reconciliation Korean Soldiers in Vietnam and the Scar of War



BUI QUANG NGOC

American Mothers Anti Vietnam War (1967)

Korean House for International Solidarity

SAe2.33

Korea Report 21 (KR21) is a bi-annual English language publication of Korean House for International Solidarity(KHIS). The Korea Report 21 Group holds monthly meetings to discuss current social issues and historical topics in relation to human rights and peace on the Korean peninsula. Articles for KR21 are drawn from a variety of sources. Some are translated pieces (from the Korean), others are written in English by KHIS staff, KR21 members or by invitation.

We always welcome commentary and submissions from our friends at home and abroad! Subscription inquiries as well can be addressed to the Editors of KR21 at: khis21@nownuri.net

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KHIS is a non-profit membership based organization for peace and human rights. KHIS has been carrying out action campaigns, educational programs and research since 1994. We work with NGOs, student groups and trade unions, both in Korea and abroad to improve the human rights situation under the ongoing process of economic globalization. Through international solidarity with other groups we work to develop a global people-oriented agenda.

Table of Contents

Editorial Preface	1
Eunji Kang & Soo Sun Choe/ people to People, KR21	
A Call for True Glory, Open Letter	3
Kim Young-Mahn/ Navy Veteran	
Why He Had to Take Aim at His Own	7
Hwang Sang Cheol/ Reporter, Hankyoreh21	
Emotion-Filled Reunion in Vietnam	12
Koh Kyoung Tae/ Reporter, Hankyoreh21	
Reconciliation	16
Ku Su Jeong/ Correspondent, Hankyoreh21	
Candy(Cartoon)	20
Cho Nam Joon/ Illustrator, Hankyoreh21	
Saigon: Songs of That Day	22
Yoo Hosun/ KHIS volunteer	
Moon Halmonie's story	24
The Korean Movement for Peace and Reconciliation: Vietnam War in Retrospect	26
Soo Sun Choe/ KHIS staff	
Interview with John Feffer AFSC Japan	31
Koh Kyoung Tae /Reporter, Hankyoreh21	
And a Massacre Bred a Massacre	35
Han Hong Koo/ Sungkonghoe University	
Contributions in Remembrance: Interim Report	40
Letters to the Editor of Hankyoreh 21	42
Letter from the Vietnam Embassy	44
Nguyen Van Xuong/ Ambassador to Republic of Korea, The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	
Korea and the Vietnam War: Letter of Solidarity	46
John Feffer and Karin Lee/ American Friends Service Committee	
The Fact-Finding Committee	47
Supporting the Campaign	48
Kim Soogkyung/ Fact-Finding Committee for Civilian Massacres during the Vietnam War	

Editorial Preface

Welcome to the first issue of **Korea Report 21**, a bi-annual publication of Korean House for International Solidarity(KHIS). It is our hope to be able to bring matters concerning peace and human rights on the Korean peninsula to the attention of our English-speaking friends, both at home and abroad with an interest in events in Korea. In this edition we address an issue that has been controversial in mainstream discourse.

This past year, KHIS has been quite busy in the campaign to bring about public awareness of and justice for the Vietnamese victims of the massacres by Korean troops.

Between 1965 and 1970 more than 312,000 South Koreans served as members of the army, marines, and as paratroopers in the Vietnam War. Despite the ideological reasons the South Korean government provided- in that they would be fighting for the glory of the ROK, and for democracy and freedom in the battle against communism, they served essentially as mercenary troops for the Americans. At the peak of the war in 1969, more than 50,000 South Korean soldiers engaged in battle, even outnumbering the regular North Vietnamese Army. And in the last months of the war they outnumbered the American troops as well.

Korean troops in joint ROK/US operations were the groundtroops at the "frontlines" if it could be said that there were frontlines in such a war. American troops supplied artillery support from the rear of the operations. Operating in a foreign country, earning hard cash, with the basic mission of securing particular areas- i.e. to kill as many of the enemy as possible, while minimizing their own casualties, it is not surprising that atrocities occurred. However the frequency, similar characteristics and brutality of the massacres of civilians that took place seemed near systematic, and so indicative of having the tacit approval of the authorities involved.

Korean troops were well-known at the time for their brutal actions to pacify the rural population. A member of the village council of Binh Duong Village, Southern Vietnam was quoted in a 1975 report by American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) as saying, "The Koreans only had to hear one shot ring out, and the nearest hamlet would lose 90 people." Such methods were often an effective deterrent to National Liberation Front soldiers, who tried to avoid causing such swaths of civilian casualties. Nonetheless they did occur, which is why we broach the issue today.

The South Korean government and Vietnam normalized relations in 1992, without comment on the shared history of violence between the two nations. Why is it important to bring up a past that neither of the governments involved nor most of the perpetrators themselves want to admit or remember? Despite government reluctance to research or acknowledge in concrete numbers the scale of atrocities committed by Korean troops in Vietnam, the people themselves cannot forget. The villagers in central Vietnam- haunted by the memories the deaths of loved ones, and emotional and physical injuries that remain with them more than thirty years later. And the young soldiers from the Republic of Korea who lost comrades, innocence, and dreams of glory, bringing home the aftereffects of Agent Orange and terrible memories of the war and the actions in which they partook. For us to move forward in the history of our peoples we must uncover this past in order to put it to rest, so that peace will be in our hearts, not just as words on paper.

The following articles selected, are for the most part, originals written in Korean and translated in order to inform concerned people around the world who may have heard but a part of the story. The atrocities committed by Korean troops in Vietnam, and the subsequent movement more than thirty years later for peace, reconciliation as well as the sincere desire for apology to the people of Vietnam is a step forward. It is a lesson on both the ugly, but ultimately also the beautiful potential of the humanity within each of us.

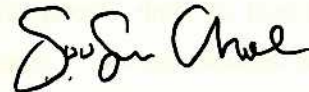
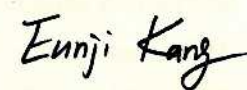
We hope that the following articles communicate how it is Korea is coming to a painful realization of the history of participation in the Vietnam war. Your comments in response to this issue and questions are always welcomed by KR21.

In Peace and Solidarity,

Co-Editors

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A Call for "True Glory"

**"I write this for my 'fellow Vietnam war soldiers'
who have been suffering from guilt their whole lives."**

-Kim Young-Mahn

Navy, Mortar Battery

Participant of the battle of Tra Binh Dong

Kim, Young-Mahn (Age 55, advisor to Masan Hope News) sent this letter to 321st edition of *Hankyoreh* 21. Kim believes that now is the time for Vietnam war veterans to actively participate in asking for forgiveness from Vietnam civilians who suffered during the war. He says that if other veterans come together on this issue, he is willing to take the initiative for action. He left his contact number for his "fellow soldiers" to reach him.

<Editor of Hankyoreh21>

Fellow Soldier Participants in the Vietnam War!

How are you surviving this world that can be so harsh and inhumane? I imagine that we are all leading very different lives as our jobs and life paths are varied. Nevertheless, we are connected by a fate that ties us together despite our own wishes. That tie that binds us is that at one time in our lives, we fought in a jungle of a foreign country for "the protection of freedom and democracy", against our enemy the Vietcong. We all are a part of this history of participating in the war, and we share the experience of that war.

Sure enough, we have all had slightly different experiences depending on our branch, assigned position, and the unit. But we all share this: a battle where there was no front, a foreign country where we couldn't even tell the difference between the ally and the enemy, and a terrifying fear that constantly followed us like a shadow, that we

might die first if we didn't find the enemy. We were haunted by a mixture of fear and hatred because we did not know when we would get killed by our enemies. We were always hypersensitive and tensed, like ferocious beasts hunting their prey. We always kept our fingers on the trigger of our M-1 rifles, even in bed. To shake off the fear that crept into our bodies, all we concentrated on was finding enemies to kill. This was an instinct to survive. But... As we became more experienced in battle and war, we turned into soldiers so terrifying that we made our enemies flinch in fear of us.

It has been more than 33 years, but when I think back to those times, my eyes get watery, with regret and anger. Private Oh was one of the many of my fellow soldiers I loved dearly. Before he got killed at the battle of Zha Binh Dong, he used to say, "Officer Kim! Lets fight like cowards and return home like heros!" He had majored in police administration at Dongguk University before entering the Navy. He kept repeating this saying, over and over as if in premonition of his own death. When I think back, many decades later, what he said was truly right. If we had fought cowardly to save our precious lives, then he would not have died in vain, and I would not have lived with so much guilt my whole life.

But we lived as if to ignore Private Oh's words. The battles became more frequent, and we began to lose our minds as we heard more and more frequently the soldiers cries as they died in our arms, with arms and legs torn from their bodies. But that was not the end. We had heard the tragic news that in only a few months nearly 3 batteries had been annihilated by the Vietcong, including the deaths of some of the others who had joined the war at the same time as we did. We were no longer the noble soldiers who had come to "protect freedom and democracy", we were turning into the war incarnates of hate and revenge.

At the time, we did not trust any Vietnamese, either young or old. We thought that they were all either family or allies of the Vietcong. We did not even trust the South Vietnamese soldiers or police officers. We thought that they were a corrupt people who stole weapons and sold them on the black market, or were traitors to the Vietcong.

Fellow soldiers! If you think that you don't know about this kind of thing because you were not a combatant, never mind what I am about to say. But, those of you who unfortunately were in the situation, where we killed continuously and got killed until the muzzles of our guns were red with blood! Did we really have the ability to reason

clearly and to judge who were Vietcong and who were civilians at the time?

Let's be frank about this. At the time, we were capable of killing unarmed civilians and we did kill them. We believed that they were same people as the Vietcong- only without the rifles.

Wasn't this the very story that angered Korean veterans who suffered from Agent Orange, after the civilian massacres by Korean troops became a recent issue recently? Especially the fact that those stories were being told by people who didn't even take part in the war made them more angry.

Fellow soldiers! It is alright. That was all we could have done at the time. That is what war is. Nevertheless, what we did not feel was that the war paralyzed our ability to reason and drove us into a state bordering insanity. Private Oh had sensed our fate that we were not going to escape from the madness of this war.

Fellow soldiers! I think I can say that I know how you truly feel. I know that you deeply regret that you killed children and elderly people who had no ability to resist. I believe in this, because everyone has a conscience.

Fellow soldiers who survived with Agent Orange! Were you that angry to hear about the Vietnam civilian massacres? Were you that enraged because you thought it would defame the glory of Vietnam war veterans? Fellow soldiers! Don't be so angry. Sadly, we were disgraceful troops to begin with. We found out later that the Vietnam war was a war to liberate the Vietnamese people. It was like assisting a fellow thief by going back into the house and beating up the owner while the real robber was getting chased out of the house.

We shouldn't have participated in a war that was wrong to start with. Nobody knew any of the truth, and we thought that fighting bravely was the only way to protect our country's glory, and the ideals freedom and democracy. But now they treat us as if all we had done was to massacre the civilians. Of course we feel angry to be treated this way. But even if we get angry, we are not going to regain a glory that was not ours from the beginning.

Let's acknowledge that there were the victims who suffered during the Vietnam war.

But we were beautiful young men with so many dreams and love, more than any other generation before us. Would there have been any other time like back then, when we had so much love for our family and friends back at home? When we had so many things to love, our fellow soldiers and our country, the Republic of Korea?

We truly and deeply loved our country, our families and our people. But at the same time, at a depth equal to that love, we were forced to hate a certain kind of people without any reason. We first have to acknowledge those who suffered living through misfortune and in pain, generation after generation for that ridiculous hatred. That is the only way to allow for the understanding that we too were victims of the war.

I have not been able to let go of the guilt my whole life, for what happened in the Vietnam war, thirty-three years ago. If there was a chance for me to ask for forgiveness, I think I would at least find peace within myself. Fellow soldiers! I believe that there are those among us who think the same way as I do among the 32,000 who participated. If you are one of them, let's do this together. If there were ten of us rather than one, or one hundred rather than ten, this will be more meaningful effort than just the hope of an individual. This will bring about a reconciliation and repentance between Korea and Vietnam, and lead the way towards movement for peace. Not only that, don't you think that we can find a way to be compensated for the youth we have lost against our nation? Don't be afraid. One that speaks the truth will always be forgiven.

When *Hankyoreh 21* interviewed me, I was able to confess what I could not say to my children. To tell the truth, it bothered me for my children to find out about this, especially my 31-year-old son, who I didn't always have a good relationship with. He always blamed me for making his mother endure a hard life. But the other day, on his way to work, he gave me a gentle hug and said "Father! You are a courageous person. I respect you very much." Ah! I was very thankful and moved...

Although the war turned people into animals, repentance is a noble effort to turn them into humans again. Fellow soldiers! Only true courage can preserve love and glory. Please contact me. (Tel: 055-222-7123.)

Kim Young-Mahn

August 23, 2000

<323rd edition of *Hankyoreh 21*>

Why He Had to Take Aim at His Own

**"I'd like to pray and lay flowers
for the broken souls of the innocent victims."**

**-Testimony by Platoon Commander Jae Joon Yoo
of the Blue Dragon Unit**

Hwang Sang Cheol in Pusan

Reporter for *Hankyoreh21*

In 1966, Jae Joon Yoo, now 61, was 3rd Platoon Commander, of the 6th Company, 2nd Battalion, Blue Dragon Unit assigned to Vietnam. He told affecting stories regarding the civilian killings by Korean soldiers. I met him when I was putting together the stories of the massacre in the hamlet of Tho Lam, Tuy Hoa town, Phu Yen Province. This incident, in which 46 residents died was covered by the January edition of a monthly magazine and by KBS 2, a major Korean TV network on February 10th.

"On May 14, 1966, the 1st Platoon, 6th Company, 2nd Battalion of the Blue Dragon Unit herded residents of Tho Lam village into one place and launched a search operation. It was 8:40 am. when 1st Platoon commander Woo Sik Choi approached a cave that was suspected to be a hiding place for the Viet Cong. As he drew near the entrance, grenades exploded suddenly injuring him. He was transferred to a hospital by helicopter. Angry and frustrated members of the 1st Platoon then indiscriminately opened fire at the residents...' The story by the monthly magazine and KBS TV documentary ended here.

In efforts to uncover the truth about the story, *Hankyoreh21 Weekly News*, was able to obtain the address of Jae Joon Yoo, then platoon commander whose platoon was sent to the site for a counteroffensive 15 minutes after Commander Choi was sent to the rear. Although his stories could not convey a complete picture about the mass killings, he spoke frankly about all of his experiences on the battlefield without trying to hide any of the details.

"Don't shoot, you bastard!" Platoon Commander Yoo pointed his carbine at the man. A

huge blaze was swallowing the village as it belched out black smoke behind them. The man Yoo aimed his gun at was not a Viet Cong. Neither was he a Vietnamese civilian. It was one of his Korean soldiers--an angry noncommissioned officer of the 1st Platoon with bloodshot eyes. "She is the wife of a Viet Cong. I have to shoot her." "No. Put your gun away!", ordered Yoo. In front of them stood a trembling 40-year-old woman, her face white with fear. An innocent looking girl, around the age of five or six, was standing next to her. Yoo warned the officer, "Don't act carelessly or I'll pull the trigger." The sound of a series of shots continued nearby causing the whole village to vibrate. Platoon commander Yoo kept his gun pointed at the soldier and eventually the noncommissioned officer put his gun down and left.

Everyone Was Going Mad

The eyes of the soldiers of the 1st Platoon were filled with rage. Four members of the platoon had been injured, including the platoon commander. "Everyone was hot for vengeance. So was that officer. He wanted to take revenge for the commander." Yoo saw a resident being shot to death as he tried to save his life by running away. Corpses were lying here and there but he doesn't remember how many dead bodies were there. "I wasn't keeping track of the dead. Neither was I able to do it nor was it necessary to do so. I didn't see the bodies gathered in one place." He presumes that civilians were killed, considering the situation back then. "Soldiers opened fire at anything that moved or ran. Sometimes, they shot dogs. If that woman and the girl tried to run away, soldiers would have shot them."

He relates that he didn't lose his mind. After the noncommissioned officer left, he told the woman to leave the operations area. She nodded and left with the girl. He watched them go until they were out of his sight. "I could see that she was grateful from her look. I am sure that they survived." Yoo said at a different time, he once let a boy run away from Korean soldiers in another village.

One day in October 1966, the 2nd and 3rd Platoons were supposed to attack a village after sunrise. Yoo showed the 2nd Platoon commander to the entrance of the village and was returning to the 3rd Platoon when there was the loud sound of an explosion. "Boom!" I checked over the radio and learned that one soldier had died and three, including the commander, were injured. Two Viet Cong that were hiding along a little stream had thrown hand grenades and escaped.

When it was bright, the troops entered the village, firing from some 50 meters from the

entrance. All of a sudden, soldiers shouted. "There is a boy running away!" They said a boy, seven or eight, ran into the forest. Some members of the platoon that had been searching the houses rounded up a group of seven villagers and gunned them down. The boy ran for his life when he saw that the soldiers were so enraged. The Korean soldiers tried to run after the boy but Yoo held them back. "We can't kill them all. Let him go so he can return to take revenge for his family later."

Yoo ordered his men not to kill recklessly. However, in order to survive on the battlefield, one must kill. "We were passing through a village when I heard a gun shot. One man shot an old woman in her 70s. 'Why did you shoot her?' I asked. He answered that she got in his way. It was a combat situation in wartime."

Yoo aimed his rifle at his men in order to save the lives of civilians in Tho Lam. However, that was only a very unusual situation. Often encounters with civilians did not end this way. He sometimes witnessed the deaths of civilians whose lives he had tried very hard to save.

Lamenting the Souls of Three Vietnamese

In November of the same year, the Blue Dragon Unit carried out a large scale mopping-up operation named the 'Mission Yong An' in Son Tinh, Quang Ngai province. On the third or fourth day of the operation, the 3rd Platoon delivered an attack on a village. People ran about in confusion and were all rounded up. There was a mountain path leading to the next target but it seemed that they could easily be attacked on that trail. Yoo selected three men in their thirties from among the villagers. He ordered each of them to bring a sickle and placed them at the head of the group to lead the army. After climbing for some time, they came to a board placed under a rock. He could feel the warmth through the board. It was great vantage point for a sharp shooter, but Korean troops were able to make a safe passage because of the three Vietnamese at the front.

That day in the afternoon, a man from the 3rd Platoon was wounded. He was shot in the anus so it was not possible to give him a morphine shot. Other soldiers tore down a door, laid him on it and the three Vietnamese and one member of the platoon carried him. Yoo ordered the platoon to move to the road. When the situation had calmed down a bit the three men begged Yoo to free them. "You'll die if you go now. Just wait a little longer." He told them. There was high possibility that the Korean soldiers on the

mission would shoot them. Yoo wanted them to live and in order to calm their fears, he wrote them letters of personal reference. "These men cooperated with Korean soldiers. Let them live." He wrote. He signed the notes and handed them to the men telling them to show them to Korean soldiers when they come across them.

At that moment, 1st Platoon commander Kim (first name unknown) who was fighting some 100 meters away from Yoo radioed him. Kim said that his platoon was coming to join Yoo's platoon. Two or three men of the 1st Platoon carried a corpse on their shoulders wrapped in a blanket with blood dripping down. Commander Kim who arrived with them glanced at those three Vietnamese and suddenly picked up his M16. It all happened so quickly. "These are damn Vietnamese...!" Then he gunned them down. There was no time to stop him. The helpful Vietnamese villagers fell to the ground drenched in blood. "You, son of bitch! Stop it!" Yoo jumped up infuriated but it was too late. "1st Platoon, retreat!" Kim ordered as he ignored Yoo and went down to the company base. (We asked around to find the then 1st Platoon commander Kim. We were able to talk to him on the phone a week later. "That never happened", he said strongly, denying the incident. In response to this, Yoo said "Would you want to admit that you killed people? But I saw it with my own eyes.")

The three Vietnamese did not die instantly. "They were twisting their bodies in pain like snakes; that's how I can describe it." An artillery man liaison officer who couldn't bear to see them suffering any longer pulled his trigger. "Bang! Bang! Bang!" went the gun. He chose to give them painless deaths. "They died because I held them back." Yoo said. Kim had been blinded with anger because he had lost some of his own men. Yoo recalled that he had witnessed the same kind of revenge the day before.

The 1st and 3rd Platoons had teamed up and were heading for the next target. They placed a rocket bomb in a cave presumed to be a Viet Cong stronghold and blew it up with TNT. The two platoons met with fierce resistance from the village. The 1st Platoon went into the village. Yoo led a squad to surround the village and delivered an assault from all sides. Troops killed five or six men escaping the village and seized a rifle. They were wearing military uniforms similar to Korean troops. A machine gunner and an assistant to the 1st Platoon died during the combat in the village. The 1st Platoon Commander came to a corpse of a Viet Cong. "His lips turned blue with anger. He fixed a bayonet on his rifle and threw it at the dead body. The rifle stood up stuck in the corpse and he ripped its stomach. He was so enraged and frustrated."

I Want to Meet the Girl

On the evening of the day the three friendly Vietnamese villagers died, Yoo had to experience the tragedy of war again. He was sitting with his soldiers down at the company base when he heard a gunshot. Yoo instinctively got down on the ground. "Where did it come from?" Soldiers were mumbling with confusion as they covered their faces. Then he saw that one of his men's hands was bleeding. "Are you shot?" "No, sir." The soldier had shot himself in his hand. Yoo was shocked. "Why did you shoot yourself?", he shouted angrily and told the soldier that he would never be transferred to the rear. Yoo posted him on sentry. The wounded man walked away bleeding. When he was gone, the 1st squad commander came up to Yoo and pleaded with him, "He is an only child." The soldier was later sent to a hospital. When Yoo came back to Korea, he met the soldier at Jinhae Hospital. When they came face to face, the soldier tried to avoid him. "Don't hide. This is not a battlefield." Then the man reluctantly came up to him and greeted him.

Five years ago Yoo had gastric cancer and underwent an operation in which part of his stomach was removed. He spent all the money he had saved from working on an ocean liner on the operation. When he fought in the war in Vietnam he was in his mid-twenties, but now he is over 60. He didn't try to cover up the killings of civilians by Korean soldiers with the excuse that it was hard to tell civilians apart from the Viet Cong.

"Facts should be told honestly without anything being hidden. There were good things and bad things people did as human beings. It was wrong to shoot noncombatants. I hoped that they could dodge my bullets but as a soldier, I had to fire. There must be people who were killed by my men... I did things I should not have done as a human. When I think of the victims, I regret and repent my behavior. Many years have passed and those who killed innocent people should be able to pray and lay flowers for the broken souls so that they can rest in peace."

Yoo said he would like to meet the girl he saw in Tho Lam if she is still alive. He asked us to find the girl for him. "I don't know what I should say to her if I got the chance to meet her. She must be deeply hurt with the scars of the war still with her and I can't tell her that she's alive because of me..."

<296th edition of Hankyoreh21/Feb 14, 2000>

Emotion-Filled Reunion In Vietnam

Korean People's Efforts to Acknowledge and Repent for Civilian Killings Transforms Korea's Image in Vietnam

Koh Kyoung Tae in Ho Chi Minh
Reporter for Hankyoreh21

"Does someone have old scores to settle with Koreans living in Vietnam?" asked Mr. Park (38), a Korean businessman in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. He couldn't understand why that would be the case. He thought that the weekly news magazine in Korea was making a fuss out of things that were not worth mentioning. It was a bit more bearable when an issue was made of "New Lai 'dai-hans'" back in May last year. There were realities about Korean society in Vietnam that deserved to be written about. However, in less than six months, the magazine again published the "Civilian Massacres by Korean Soldiers During the Vietnam War. This time, some of the local newspapers including a weekly in Ho Chi Minh, reported the entire story. It took no longer than a month for most of the Vietnamese living in Ho Chi Minh to read or hear about it. "I don't see any point in bringing up an issue that has not been mentioned for more than 30 years...It doesn't do any good for anyone..." Park added. In the minds of government officials he was correct. A special piece on Vietnam titled, "The secret tragedy of Vietnam" published in the 273rd edition of Hankyoreh21 (Sept. 2, 1999) is now the main topic of discussion everywhere in Vietnam. I met a sophomore majoring in mass communications at Ho Chi Minh National University. The student carried a copy of the article in his pocket diary. "When the article was first published, whenever more than two people got together, they only talked about the civilian killings by Korean soldiers. People from the north said 'we've never heard of this before'. However, those from the central regions where the actual massacres took place, said, 'these are familiar stories', and took up the story for three consecutive weeks. As the daily newspapers followed suit the story gained more attention. Everywhere, among the cyclo (bicycle-type rickshaw) drivers, in the marketplaces, and in the beauty saloons there was talk about the tragic incidents during the Vietnam War.

Korean Youth Bow their Heads in Shame

Civilian Killings by Korean Soldiers. Is bringing this issue up really so detrimental to

Koreans living in Vietnam? Among those Vietnamese I met during my travels, there were many who had different opinions. "I never realized what sincere people Koreans are." "I can now understand how Korea was able to achieve such great economic development in such a short period of time." Some might dispute this as being exaggerated praise. However, the truth is, it is not. Many Vietnamese are now praising Koreans for their open and genuine response. Why are they doing so? There is one thing I need to make clear. It is not exactly "Civilian Killings by Korean Soldiers" that is the issue in Ho Chi Minh. The Vietnamese people are touched that Koreans have voluntarily and honestly made an issue of their past to repent and have made an apology. It is more meaningful because this issue was something that even the Vietnamese media never paid attention to. Vietnamese are surprised to hear that a 'Donate to Repent' campaign is going on in Korea. On Sunday, November 28, at 3PM a forum was held in the Exchange Room on the second floor of the Ho Chi Minh Youth Cultural Center. Up until now, various kinds of similar forums and events involving foreigners have been held here but this one was the first of its kind. The name of the forum was "Interview with Su-Jeong Ku", the Ho Chi Minh correspondent who wrote the hotly debated article titled, "On-site Report On Civilian Killings by Korean Soldiers" published in 273rd edition of Hankyoreh21. "Why did the Korean mercenaries have to be so cruel? Why did they have to be so out of their minds to kill even new-born babies? "Is Korea still subordinate to the U.S?" "If Koreans are demanding compensation from the U.S. for the alleged massacre in Nogun-ri, then shouldn't they be making compensation to Vietnam for their own wrongdoing?" The questions, shouted by some 200 young Vietnamese people that had crowded the room, were serious and sober. However, the words from the writer's heart touched their souls. "It gave me great pain to reveal the blunders of my own people. However, if I hadn't done it, somebody would have done it in the near future. The past cannot close the door behind itself." The representative of the Korean students studying in Vietnam read a letter of apology and bowed his head in shame. "We love your courage," responded the Vietnamese students. "We are always ready to forgive you," they added. The sons and daughters of the two nations had inherited the pain and shame of their parents. On that day, some thirty years after their fathers had fought against one other, they opened up their minds and embraced each other with understanding and reconciliation.

Something Even Difficult to Imagine

"It was the first time that this center held a forum on such a sensitive political issue," Nguyen Xuan(42), the Chairman of the Hochi Minh Youth Cultural Center commented

after the young Vietnamese had requested that such an event be held. "After the article was published, many called to ask how they could reach the writer. It was the hope of the center that Vietnamese youngsters could learn something by meeting and talking to her." Thanks to her article and the forum, the correspondent became a celebrity in Vietnam. She was regarded as "a person that represents young Koreans." As her picture appeared often in the papers, many people, including a waiter in a hotel coffee shop recognized her. The waiter refused to charge her for her drinks. She was sometimes surprised when even people in Nha Trang and Ninh Hoa in the central part of Vietnam recognized her.

Thuy Nga(37), a reporter, said that after writing the article introducing the original article from Hankyoreh21 and reporting on the ongoing campaign in Korea, he received 'The Reporter of the Month' award. He was selected for the honor by other staff reporters in the newspaper agency and, as financial compensation, his salary for that month was doubled. "The articles totally changed the notions the Vietnamese had of Korea and its people. Deep in the bottom of the Vietnamese people's hearts were still feelings of hatred for the Koreans. Korea's role in the Vietnam War had damaged Korea's image as well as the recent incident in which the managers of Korean businesses were found to have beaten local workers.

Despite these incidents, Korean soap operas that started to be shown in Vietnam just a few years ago are playing a diplomatic role in enhancing Korea's image in Vietnam. These days they have greatly increased in popularity. Imported Korean dramas are shown on prime time on Hanoi Broadcast and Ho Chi Minh Broadcast, as well as the local broadcasting systems. "Korean TV dramas only partially improved the impression we had of the Korean people. However, recent news of the campaign to 'Donate to Repent' completely transformed the images of Koreans here in Vietnam." analyzed Thuy Nga. From Korean people's attitude to repent and confess their sins of the past, the Vietnamese could see the 'beautiful potential' that is within them. The same thing happened at the former scenes of the civilian massacres. Tram Thi Due, who is now an old lady, was breast feeding her baby at her home when Korean soldiers came into her house and raped her. She also had to watch as her husband, who was not a Viet Cong but worked for the U.S. military, was shot to death. When she recently heard about the campaign in Korea, she couldn't believe her ears. Her eyes were wide with doubt and surprise, and she said it was something impossible for her to imagine. Perhaps this was because the Koreans are remembered as terrifying figures. Reuters expressed its interest

in the topic with the article 'Civilian Killings by Korean Soldiers' The story from their Ho Chi Minh article is now traveling by word of mouth and heading north, moving quietly but with speed from the south to the central and northern regions of Vietnam. It might be heading to other parts of the world, attracting more attention. Reuters media agency is showing further interest in the issue. They are scheduled to interview correspondent Su-Jeong Ku soon and start reporting on the issue in mid-December. "Some 1000 people died in Vin Dinh province? That is hard to believe... Even during the Mai Lai Massacre, the number of death toll was 504. How could killings involving such a large number of people remain unheard of for so long?" Reuters inquired with shock. "Nevertheless, our objective is not to expose the past atrocities of the Korean people. It is of much greater significance that Koreans themselves voluntarily brought this matter to light. We want to show the world the good side of Koreans."

Now, everything depends on the Korean government. The government's failure to make a sincere apology to Vietnam and its people will leave them only with feelings of betrayal and continuing hatred. However, the Korean government is worried about the potential for these stories to become a 'Vietnamese version of Noguiri' and is concentrating on keeping the facts obscure. A wind carried the article titled, 'Civilian Massacre by Korean Soldiers' from Korea to Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi. It has become a gale heading toward the rest of the world. Someday it may develop into a huge hailstorm and return to rain down upon the Korean government.

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Words of Condemnation and Drinks of Reconciliation

At a Massacre Site in Vin Dinh Province, All 380 Residents Became Corpses Within An Hour.

Ku Su Jeong in Vin Dinh
Correspondent in Vietnam

*Remember the peak of An Khe in Vietnam, comrade?
The place we regained against a shower of bullets
With our strong will to fight and our blood
The warriors of the Tiger Unit
Shine with the merits in military history*

This song was sung by the members of the Tiger Unit to celebrate the victory of one of the fiercest battles of An Khe. The aim of this battle was to secure Road 19 that runs from the east, the American military port of Quy Nhon through the central part of Vietnam to the west end at the Cambodian border. Tay Vinh village in Tay Son, Vin Dinh province was the town located closest to Road 19.

A Mother Who Lost Her Legs Because of a Hand Grenade

At the entrance of Tay Vinh village, if you climb up the road three old trees come into sight. Across this wide open space where the trees grow, stands a shabby building. The building is about the size of an average community center in Korea. This building was the official residence of the People's Council.

On a wall of the office was a big poster titled, 'Names of Victims Killed by the South Korean Military in Binh An Village in February, 1966'. It was the only notice in the office. It must have been written quite some time ago since the paper had turned yellow. On the left, numbers were written and right next to them were the names in tiny letters. The numbers ended at 646. The Chief Secretary of Tay Vinh village, Nguyen Tan Lan pointed to Number 316, Nguyen Thi Kim Huong (then 41). It was his mother. His name also appeared on a different list, one for the survivors. "My mother lost her legs because of a hand grenade. She was lying on the ground and crying out loud. I was in an underground tunnel and had to listen to her painful screams all through that night. It was like hell listening to her agonizing voice. There was nothing

I could do. Nothing."

At 2 AM on February 15, 1966, there were the first sounds of gunfire in Tay Vinh village in An Vinh. Lan quickly hid himself in an underground tunnel in his house with his mother and sister. At 10AM the boom of guns became louder and around noon, the cannon's roar that was first heard from the Phu Phong and Phu Cat area could be heard from the neighboring region, An Vinh. "I think they are going to move into the village today", said his mother. Lan's family came out of the tunnel to have lunch before the soldiers came into the village. When they came out of the tunnel, their vision was obscured by the smoke from cannons and burning houses. At the time, they heard a number of shots and saw helmeted soldiers wearing navy blue uniforms 700 meters northwest of the tunnel. The Korean soldiers took his family to the rice paddy in Le Khanh.

"There were many people in the paddy. The soldiers made people bury their faces in the ground and lie down on their stomachs. Around 3 PM they started shooting magazine rifles and throwing hand grenades. A M46 grenade was thrown in his direction. He sprang up and ran three or four steps as the grenade hit the ground. His mother lost her two legs and his sister died instantly. Lan passed out but regained his consciousness and crawled along the fences, until he found an underground tunnel and hid himself in it.

In Tay Vinh village in Tay Son, Vin Dinh province, between January 23rd and February 26th of 1966 (by the lunar calendar), mass killings by three companies of the Tiger Unit were carried out in 15 places. The number of people who died amounted to some 1,200, including those who disappeared. Among them 728 were identified and officially confirmed as dead. The number includes 166 children, 231 women, 88 senior citizens of aged between 60-70 and 8 cases in which all the members of one family were killed.

People Shot One by One Outside the Underground Tunnel

I got in a van with the chief secretary to head for the Go Dai Memorial Tower. After two-minute ride, the car brought us to Tay Vinh Junior High. "It was 1984 or '85 when I wrote a letter to a Korean governmental organization. I informed them about the slaughter in Tay Vinh village and made a request from them to build a school for us here as a part of a restitution effort after the war. The organization responded positively and we prepared a site and paper work for the construction of the school. Later on, site

inspectors from Korea arrived but their assessment was that this place was too remote and decided to build a school along Road 19 near Tay Xuan village. If only the Koreans had built the school for us here we would not have kept such grudges against them. So the people of our town collectively used their money to build this school."

We drove for ten more minutes and arrived at the Go Dai Memorial Tower. The names of the victims were engraved in minuscule red letters. The site of the largest killings among Binh An civilian massacres happened at Go Dai, in which 380 residents lost their lives within an hour, without leaving a single survivor.

To meet another survivor, we got back in the van and drove for another ten minutes along the road that goes through the village. Soon we came to a river as calm as a lake. There were a few boats and hundreds of ducks swam together. It was the Con River. Thirty-three years ago, soldiers from the Tiger Unit crossed this river to enter An Khanh village. "We saw the Korean soldiers coming so we hid in an underground tunnel. They threw tear gas into the tunnel. People were drenched with tears and were gasping for breath. When they couldn't bear it anymore, they crawled out of the tunnel onto the ground, only to be shot by the soldiers. Phan Thi Vui, now 76 years old, was shot in the head when she crawled out and she fell back into the tunnel. Among the 13 people that were in the tunnel, only she and her daughter Le Thi Xuan, now 58, survived. Phan Thi Vui lost her granddaughter and grandson and her mother died on that same day in a different tunnel. She has a bullet hole in her left temple and a bullet wound on her back. She still can't use the arm that she broke when she fell back into the tunnel.

I was listening to the grandmother's stories in her yard when her son-in-law suddenly appeared. He was shouting and pointing his finger at me. "Dai-hans killed my two children! If my children were alive, they'd be your age by now. You want to hear the story?! Damn you!" His wife Le Thi Xuan, startled by his sudden actions, ran up to him and tried to take him out of the yard. He shouted louder as he pushed her away from him. "The eldest was only seven years old and the younger only three. Dai-hans shot carelessly into the tunnels and threw grenades. I picked up the pieces of their torn flesh and smashed up bones that were scattered everywhere and buried them. How can I not have spite against them? If I were to vent my grudge, it wouldn't be enough for me to stab you to death!"

Toasts to "Share the Grief"

Only after many people including the chief secretary and neighbors held him back,

Nguyen Van Gio calmed down a bit and apologized to me. "I am very hot-tempered. During the past thirty years, no Koreans ever came to visit this place again. For all those years my feelings of hatred had grown and grown. Now that you've come here, I think I can begin to let go. I know I should forget it. I tell myself to erase it from my memory. Yet, please tell your fellow Koreans that our people have been living with this for all their lives."

The chief secretary took me to his house and treated me with 'Bao Da', the traditional village rice wine. Slices of lemon were served as side dishes and the drink was put in a military flask with USA marked on the bottom. Bao Da tastes sweet at first then bitter when swallowed. It reminded me of Makkoli (unstrained Korean rice wine) and Kaoliang (Chinese traditional wine); a mixture of those two would have tasted just the same. We continued drinking without saying much, pouring drinks into each other's glasses. Soon, the sun hung low on the horizon and we ran out of Bao Da. He pulled my hands, suggesting that we go for some more drinks as a gesture of reconciliation. I couldn't refuse his suggestion because of the word 'reconciliation' so I followed him. We ended up drinking at Le Van Hoa's (31) place. He had also lost his mother, brothers and sisters. One by one, others from the village came to Hoa's house. Soon, the whole village was drinking together and doing 'Chia Doi. 'Chia Doi' is a Vietnamese tradition in which everyone shares a huge glass together or one person drinks half of a small glass and offers the rest of it to the next person. I couldn't refuse these drinks either. "Cheers!!", we toasted each other.

The hands of the clock pointed to nine and it had become pitch-black outside. The chief secretary stood up and proposed a toast for the last time. Then he extended hands of reconciliation. I held his hands tightly. "There has never existed an occasion like this before. Now the massacre is a thing of the future. (He was really drunk.) Let bygones be bygones. There is tomorrow. Now hold out your hands..." He broke down into tears and couldn't finish his words.

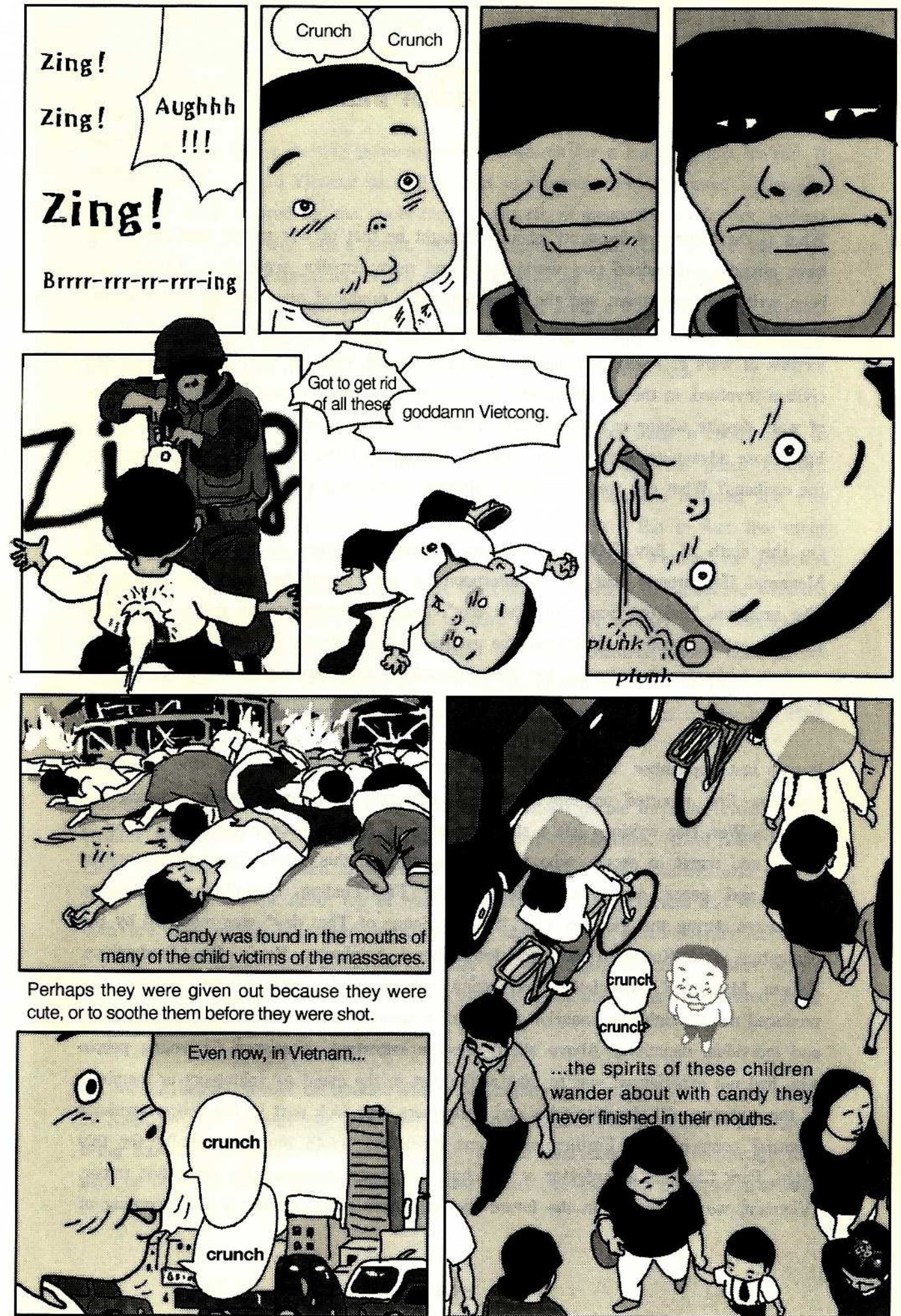
The war is over and there are no more killings. However, for those who have been through it, it is never over. War creates irreparable discontinuities and wounds, and leaves marks that cannot ever be erased. The night sky was filled with tearful stars.

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Candy

by Cho Nam Joon



* "Daihan" was the name given to the ROK soldiers by the Vietnamese.

Candy was found in the mouths of many of the child victims of the massacres.

Perhaps they were given out because they were cute, or to soothe them before they were shot.

...the spirits of these children wander about with candy they never finished in their mouths.

Saigon: Songs of that day

Yoo Hosun

KHIS volunteer

What is the history of humanity about? It might be that of war rather than peace. We have already experienced two world wars and many smaller scale wars. History has been written around them and the wars have also produced many heroes and heroines respected by their contemporaries and descendants. However, we forget or overlook the victims of wars so easily and quickly like those of the Vietnam War. Obviously, for the civilian involved, in the end there are no winners or losers but just pain from the scars of wars despite whatever intended aim of the war. What was the aim of Vietnam War? For whose advantage was the war fought? And what of the pain and scars suffered by the civilians? What can we learn from reflecting on the war today?

On the sixth of July 2000, the audience started to gather in the Han Kyung Jik Memorial Hall around four in the afternoon for the concert for peace with Vietnam. The program, "Saigon: Songs of That day", began at seven in the evening. We had time for introspection to think over the events of the Vietnam War while watching the concert, performances, viewing the photo exhibition and souvenirs and eating Vietnam food.

It was last September, when a journalist by the name of Ku Su-Jung who studied in Vietnam, first reported on the massacres committed by Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War. Her writings left a strong impression Korean society, evoking a sense of shame and regret in people, who were moved to plan this event. Thus, eleven human rights and peace organizations formed the Fact-Finding Committee on Civilian Massacres during the Vietnam War. "Saigon: Songs of That day" was managed by the committee, and Korean House for International Solidarity, Kim's One Productions, Korean Musicians' Association and many volunteers. In addition, the concert was produced not through the financial support of a company but through fundraising efforts and individual donations. Above all, it was an important experience for young people who had not experienced war to take active part in the event as volunteers or members of the audience. All the musicians and performers also took part in the concert without financial compensation. Furthermore, some musicians wrote music especially for this event. Park Chi-Um, a professor at Sunchun University composed the dedication music, "Vietnam, we are sorry". In the future the organizers plan to make a CD recording of

the songs, deliver it to Vietnam and to sell it in Korea.

This event was just a starting point towards the search for a true and just history. It was also an apology to Vietnam as well as part of the movement for peace in the 21st century. It was inspired by the publication of reports of genocide by Korean soldiers during the Vietnam War. As a result, many thoughtful people came to see the event and take part in the expression for the desire for peace as well. The organizers plan to contribute all profits from the event to the campaign to build a Memorial Peace Museum the victims of the massacres by the Korean soldiers. The museum will be dedicated to the remembrance of a true and just history in honor of those who died.

In the spirit of peace and hope for the future, one grandmother made a contribution to the movement that will be remembered by all who attended the peace concert. Grandmother Moon Myung-Kum, was eighteen-years-old when she believed she was going off to work in a factory to earn wages for her family. But in fact, like other young women before her, she was forced to become a "comfort woman" for Japanese troops for ten years. Despite the hardships she endured, Moon still empathized with the sufferings that others too have known on account of war. In apology and remembrance of the atrocities committed by Korean troops to the Vietnamese, Moon donated the money she had received (43,000,000 won), from the government for the time she was forced to be a comfort woman to the Fact-Finding Committee. This money has been used as the start-up funds for the Memorial Peace Museum.

During the Vietnam War from 1965 to 1973, about 41,400 people including civilians and soldiers were killed in conflicts involving Koreans and Vietnamese. About 5,000 among them were innocent Vietnam civilians, while about 4,687 Korean soldiers also died in battle. Even though the death toll in war was similar between Vietnam and Korea and both are also victims sacrificed by Cold War ideology, the characteristics of death between fallen soldiers and deliberate genocide should be distinguished. In other words, intentional and systemic genocide should be apologized for and never be repeated under any circumstances.

All human beings should be treated with equal dignity as human beings, as according to Kant, we can manage our lives well as rational actors. Furthermore, every human being has a different but universal potential -despite their condition, even though they may be disabled, suffering from illness or war. Thus, we each can have our own way

to live. It is obvious that every human being ought to have equal and just human rights and be treated with the respect they deserve. It is time to listen attentively and to the voice of conscience and justice. Only if we try to do this, can the concept and validity of human rights be accepted as a universal value.

Now, the voice of conscience requires us to disclose this sad and shameful history and to apologize to the people of Vietnam. It will be significant opportunity towards supporting the movement for human rights and peace in Korea so that we may pass down a true and just history to our descendents.

Moon Myung Kum Halmonie

Grandmother Moon Mung Kum was born in a very small hut in the mountains near, Kwangyang city, in Chonnam province. Like much of the Korean population during the Japanese colonial era, her family was so poor that she and her family suffered from malnutrition. At the age of eighteen, because of her father's illness, she traveled to Hadong city to earn money to pay for his medicine. On the train to Hadong, she met a Japanese man who promised her employment in a factory in Heilongjiang Province, China. When she arrived at the location, it was no factory but instead a "comfort house" for Japanese soldiers. She was forced to work as a "comfort woman", slave to the Japanese army for ten years.

After obtaining her freedom she heard word of a Korean-Chinese village in the countryside and went there to live. In the village she met a Korean man there whom she came to live with. However she was unable to bear children because of the abuse she had endured as a comfort woman. Also the man with whom she lived with passed away after a short time. Following his death, she wandered from place to place for several decades, finally settling down at a nursing home for the elderly.

In April of 1998, she was found in the countryside in a nursing home, by the Buddhist monk Hye Jin. Through his efforts she was able to come to Korea and regain her nationality in September of 1999.

This year, on April 18th she received ₩ 43,000,000 from the government and civil organizations in financial support for the comfort women who suffered under the

Japanese Army. After receiving the funds from the government, Grandmother Moon wanted to quickly find a way to pass the money on to those in greater need than herself.

Always concerned about the problems of other people, she has a quiet and gentle personality. Watching T.V., she is easily affected by the misfortunes of others and becomes teary-eyed in sympathy. After she heard about the Fact-Finding Committee for the Truth of the Massacres in Vietnam, she made a visit to the committee this past June. At that time she contributed all the financial support she had received from the government for the construction of a Peace Memorial Museum.

As she presented her donation to the committee, she made a statement, "When I was young, I had a hard time. But thanks to the help of some people I was able to return to my mother country. I was even able to receive funds from the government. But how can I spend this money properly, only on myself? Now I have enough to eat and live. I would like to donate it to the Vietnamese people who are still suffering from the aftermath of war." Listening to the words of Grandmother Moon, we know that it is her wish to see Koreans apologize to the Vietnamese for what we have done and attain a mutual peace between our peoples.

The Korean Movement for Peace and Reconciliation

:Vietnam War in Retrospect

Soo Sun Choe

KHIS Staff

During the Vietnam War, Korean troops were said to be brutally efficient in their operations. As the second largest contingent of forces supporting the South Vietnam government after the Americans, they were bound to be responsible for a large proportion of the civilian casualties. Yet, how did it come about that the Korean troops committed near systematic massacres in the hamlets which they were to secure? The answer is more complex than merely attributing the tragedies that happened to the brutality of Korean soldiers.

In a report published by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in 1975, a young Vietnamese woman gave a very practical explanation for the actions of the troops: "Korean mercenaries...have no ideology. They get paid a lot of money by the Americans to come to Viet Nam and kill people, and the more people they kill, the more money they will get. That is the basic nature of mercenaries." Maximizing damage to the perceived enemy while minimizing their own losses, were tactics for survival in a war where the Koreans fighting were minimally informed about the country-- knowing only that they were there to battle against communism and for the glory of their country.

What was it that defined some of the acts of Korean troops to be more brutal than those of others during wartime?

Because of the large number of reported massacres, we feel it would be unrealistic to describe them all as mistakes or exceptional cases of misbehavior by individual South Korean soldiers...in the majority of cases, the people told us that as far as they knew there was no fighting nearby on the days of the massacres, "not the shot of a single gun," no mines, no Korean casualties. In almost every case we were told that most of the victims were women, old people, and children... The recurrence of particular details in the reports we heard suggests that the ROK forces employed tactics of deliberate brutality to deal with the noncombatant rural population in their areas of operation.(American Friends Service Committee Report, 1975)

Nevertheless, we must also take into account the fact that Korean soldiers were used as ground troops which meant that they were subject to more frequent face-to-face encounters with both the National Liberation Front (NLF) and civilian population, inevitably resulting in misunderstandings and conflicts. That the fierceness and brutality of Korean soldiers was well known at the time of their participation in the war indicates complicity of higher authorities in allowing the massacres to occur.

These explanations are not to excuse the civilian massacres by the Korean troops, but in order to view the incidents in the context of the timeframe of their occurrence. According to the AFSC report in 1975, many of the Vietnamese interviewed perceived the Koreans to be just paid mercenaries for the Americans. In fact, it was suggested by a Buddhist monk "that the Americans deliberately used the Koreans "to make the Americans look good." (AFSC report, 1975) Since the Koreans acted so brutally, the Americans by comparison would look better to the people. As the Americans are the real conductors of this war, the monk continued, they have to worry about their image as well as military strategy."

"If mercenaries are to be shunned and loathed as hired killers, how should we regard the men who hire the guns?" (Frank Baldwin, AFSC report) The employment of Korean mercenaries, out of view of both Congress and the American public was a deliberate deception by the US government. In using Korean troops for combat missions, but giving them free rein to conduct them as they saw appropriate. Using hired muscle to do the dirty work diverted attention from the boss who gave the orders in the first place.

There has been testimony of deliberate placement of African-American soldiers in areas of strong resistance with the knowledge that they were less likely to be killed by the NLF, who didn't regard them as real representatives of an American imperialist government. Because of the widely known strategy of Korean troops, of harsh retaliation on the nearest village for the loss of their own, it was said that the NLF even tried to avoid encounters with ROK troops.

While taking a taxi to Tangsan station I found myself in a conversation with the driver on the civilian massacres in Vietnam. At first when I had gotten into the taxi I had been slightly irritated at the driver's laid-back attitude to the road, in comparison to the normal driving behavior of Seoulites all around this. But once we started talking, I didn't mind at all. As an older man, from the Cholla-do countryside he mentioned, in

passing his service in Vietnam. I asked him gently, what he thought of the movement to apologize to the civilian victims of the massacres. He told me, "Yes, we did commit some wrongdoings. But when you see your senior get killed before your eyes, then you just kind of lose it." Our conversation moved on to other topics, but I wondered at his calm admission of his past history and that of his former companions.

Some of the former soldiers, like my acquaintance above, who went to Vietnam, took a brave stance and were frank about what went on during the time they served are cognizant of the tragedy in which they took part. Nonetheless the reaction from veteran groups in Korea to the threat posed to their reputations by the movement for peace, has ranged from merely threatening to violent. It is an ugly and unfortunate fact that we must admit.

In the tightly government-controlled media during the war, there were no reports in Korea of Korean casualties or set-backs. War was perpetual glory in the struggle against communism and the filling of the regime's coffers with US cash. Between the years of 1966-1969 it has been estimated that Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War contributed to 7-8% of the annual GDP.

After the Hankyoreh²¹ correspondent, Ku Soo Jeong began reporting on the dark side of the Vietnam war, a story that had been ignored or suppressed in South Korea for years, veteran groups reacted angrily, attempting to disrupt her presentation at a human rights conference. Veterans also tried to set a fire in the parking garage of the Hankyoreh newspaper building, as well as making demands that the concert for peace "Saigon: Songs of that Day", to be cancelled.

As a result there was a heavy police presence at the event. The twenty-five or so veterans who gathered outside the building, sat peacefully on the benches for most of the time preceding the event. However about thirty minutes prior to the beginning of the concert, a black SUV drove up, outfitted with police lights and a wailing siren. It plowed through the crowd outside the hall, backed-up, knocked over two of the glass framed photographs that were being exhibited. The SUV then reversed gears and sped forward, knocking over a table where a grandfather was eating a bowl of pho (Vietnamese noodle soup), before driving a short distance after which it was surrounded by police. Fortunately no one was injured, and the concert went on as planned without further incidents.

But in the face of such occurrences, it is notable that the commitment of those supporting the movement for peace did not falter. At "Saigon: Songs of that Day", no

one made an issue or fuss over the angry reactions of the former soldiers. When the photographs were knocked over and glass broke, volunteers and audience members came together to pick up the pieces, helping one another with consideration.

The grievances that the former soldiers aim to voice are in many respects, not in conflict with the movement for peace and reconciliation. The veterans and their children have suffered from the aftereffects of exposure to Agent Orange and receive minimal pension benefits from the government. In the US, there has been much talk about post-traumatic stress syndrome, which as far as I am aware, is a topic that has never even been raised in Korea. For several decades, even if veterans had wanted to speak out about Vietnam in any way counter to the official accounts by the authoritarian regime, there was no means to do so. Meanwhile, their economic contributions to South Korea's development helped to jump-start the economy, while the express highway stretching from Seoul to the southern port of Pusan was built with their contribution of blood and tears.

It is only on the question of disclosure of the truth of the massacres that took place that there is real disagreement between the two sides. But even in this matter, some of the veterans have begun to step forward to join hands with others in the desire for reconciliation and to apologize for the pain they caused to the Vietnamese civilians.

Naval Officer, Kim Young Mahn in his letter to Hankyoreh 21, encouraged other veterans of the Vietnam War to come forward and speak openly and admit the past pain and suffering the Korean troops caused to our Vietnamese neighbors and make amends. We must follow his lead, in order to end cyclic patterns worldwide of tacitly government approved atrocities in war, followed by selectively amnesiac recollection or outright denial in hindsight of having authorized or allowed such tragedies to take place.

The movement to acknowledge the civilian massacres in Vietnam is important not only for Vietnamese and Koreans, but also has relevance for like tragedies that have happened this past century around the world.

As Hankyoreh reporter Koh Kyoung Tae noted, the importation of Korean soap operas and pop music can only go so far in generating a positive image of Korea for the young people of Vietnam. For an older generation that experienced the war and in particular for the civilians in villages that suffered from excessive atrocities committed during the Korean missions, such memories cannot be eased by T.V. programs or hit

songs.

A Korean movement for peace and reconciliation with the survivors of the civilian massacres is a precedent for other movements to follow. Pressuring the Korean government to issue an official apology is necessary to one's belief in justice. Not to do so, would also be an invalidation of like requests that Korea has made of the US and Japan.

It is too easy for a government to exploit legalities, such as a "statute of limitations" as a means to avoid assuming responsibility for past crimes against another people. In the case of the massacres by Korean soldiers it is a people-to-people acknowledgment of a truth that is mutually understood, even without recognition of the courts. The "statute of limitations" is essentially a legal stamp that approves a government's right to keep its dirty past in the closet after enough time has passed. It does not serve the ideals of either peace or justice, just the interests of the state. In the case of Nogun-ri, this was just the response that was given to petitioners by the South Korean government's Compensation Committee. The Japanese government in various suits filed against it, too has exploited similar legal loopholes to assert their impunity from prosecution by the comfort women.

However as was suggested in the The Principles to Combat Impunity submitted to the UN Sub-Commission of the Human Rights Commission, "the victims of serious crimes under International law have three rights which must not be ignored: the right to know the truth, the right to justice and the right to reparation..."¹⁾

A painful history that tells the truth is far more important for our children to learn than an embellished nationalistic narrative that does justice to none of the actors. On the wall of a small museum at Mangwoldang, in memorial to the citizens who died in the Kwangju Massacre are the words: "History that is forgotten is certain to be repeated". To pursue a lasting peace for the future we must not ignore the lessons of the past, given to those who came before us.

1) *Women's International War Crimes Tribunal on Japan's Military Sexual Slavery (Dec. 7-12, 2000)*,
VAWW-NET, Japan Chairperson Yayori Matsui.

Interview with John Feffer AFSC Japan

<East Asia Quaker International Affairs Representative
American Friends Service Committee>

Korean People's efforts to apologize for the civilian massacres in Vietnam are a step on the path to real democracy.

Hankyoreh21 interviewed John Feffer from American Friends Service Committee during his visit to South Korea this past July. He visited Korea for the workshop on 'German Reunification and Conflict Resolution' organized by *Women Making peace*. At the time he showed a special interest in the Vietnam Campaign being conducted by *Hankyoreh21*. In 1975, AFSC published a report on research conducted during 1972, during the war concerning Vietnam civilian casualties and injuries in the areas covered by the operation of Korean troops' operations. AFSC is one of the largest American peace and human rights organization. It was established in 1917 by Quakers in order to help civilian victims of the first world war all over the world. From these origins, AFSC continued to work for various anti-war peace movements for the dignity of humanity. He said, "The very efforts to find out the truth about Vietnam War is the way for Korean society to proceed towards democracy". However he also pointed out that Korea has a dilemma to solve concerning the fact that for Korea, it was actually American soldiers who were the main agency for the Vietnam War on the Korean Peninsula.

-I heard that you are very interested in the campaign by Hankyoreh21 and Korean human rights groups to apologize for Vietnam massacres.

-Korean NGOs have raised issues in the past, like those of the comfort women enslaved by Japan, and the unjust SOFA arrangement between the Korea and U.S. which AFSC worked on together. And now they recognize that Korean soldiers and government have also done harm to other countries too. It is very important and has a significant meaning. This effort to find out what truly happened in Vietnam by South Korea is a step on the path to real democracy.

-This campaign is a very sensitive issue in Korea society. There are very strong parties resistant to it.

-In America, the NGOs trying to establish the truth about the Vietnam War and American veterans have developed and continue to have a good working relationship. That's why the relationship between Vietnam and America is not limited to a definition in opposition, like Vietnam vs America. There is a triangle between American NGOs, American veterans and Vietnam. So anti-war activists can have a strong impact on society. Of course the tradition of the anti-Vietnam war movement as the mainstream issue of the anti-war movement in America played a significant role too. Also in Korea the Vietnam War itself alone is not the only problem. Weren't some of the veterans who were in Vietnam involved in the Kwangju massacre as well?

-Do you mean the history of Korean Military and military culture?

-Yes. In Korea society, the military culture is much more severe than American society. Every man is required to perform military service and there are many effects on society as a result of this military culture. Aren't the operations of the Chaebol carried out in militaristic style? That's why the peace movement is isolated and faces many difficulties in Korea. The stationing of American soldiers in Korea is one of the main causes for the military culture that exists in Korean society. Consequently, those who try to find out the truth concerning Korea's participation in the Vietnam War have to face two issues. The first one is the responsibility of Korean soldiers during Vietnam War and the second one is the situation that was created by the U.S. military, the main instigators of Vietnam War, still stationed in Korea. So this creates an increased burden for peace activists.

But fortunately as relations between the North and South are getting better, I feel that the militarist tensions in South Korea are weakening. These developments give hope to the peace movement in Korea. With these changes, finding out the facts of the Vietnam War will be easier. If the threat of conflict and tension is lessened and the need for military power is decreased, I think the Korean veterans will feel more free to talk about the Vietnam War.

-Please tell me more about American Veterans' activities in the peace movement.

-For example, 'Vietnam War Veterans' Committee for Peace' is very active in the peace movement. One of veterans visited where he served in Vietnam and planted trees there. The most important thing is that many veterans of the Vietnam War joined peace and

anti-war actions that extended even beyond the Vietnam War itself. For example the Center for Defence Information (composed of former members of veterans' organization) is working for the reduction of armaments and the strengthening of controls over military operations. They raise public awareness of these issues and are working to oppose the American military from pressuring other countries to accept TMD (Theater Missile Defense).

-What do you think is the most serious barrier to peace in East Asia?

-The first is the history of Japan's invasion and occupation of East Asia. Second, the presence of the American soldiers in East Asia. And the third is the fear which is related to the above two matters. The divisions on the Korean peninsula and between China and Taiwan are not ideological any more. It is the matter of entrenched military power. For example, even if the American military were to leave Asia right now, these divisions would still remain. No party would want to surrender their power or military position. That is the fear, I mean, of losing their military primacy.

-Are there any parties which try to hinder or obstruct the peace movement in America?

-Of course conservative groups exist. But even those people support the reconciliation of U.S.-North Korea and U.S.-Vietnam. Rather the more serious problem is posed by those like the Vietnamese community in America. Many of them are the former government officials and boat people who escaped from South Vietnam just after the Vietnam War. Some have even killed peace activists who supported normalizing relations between the U.S. and Vietnam and did work for the anti-war movement. Many take an extreme position on anti-communism. However this generation is getting older now. And the second generation don't care about these matters. So I believe their influence will decrease over time. Also, the official position of the US Government is that the "Vietnam War was necessary". They never say, "It shouldn't have been happened". Still, the Vietnam War is a significant component of American myth of imperialism. They would never admit that the Vietnam War was a war for freedom.

-How can Koreans help pay for the legacy of the Vietnam War? What is your opinion?

-I think *Hankyureh21's* building a hospital in Vietnam campaign, and the work by *The*

Fact-Finding Committee for the Civilian Massacres for the Peace Memorial Museum in apology for Korean actions in Vietnam are very important. You need more various activities similar to those. Americans in the past, have mostly focused on medical aid, agricultural support, and reconstruction for war damages.

-What do you think the Korean Government should do?

-I know Korean NGOs insist on an official apology from the Korean government. It is no surprise. But it is also very difficult to realize in actuality. The South Korean Government has always wanted to receive an official apology concerning the Japan Government's past of colonization and the comfort women matter, but it didn't get any yet. Also, it is notable that the American Government has never apologized for the slavery of African-Americans. What the Korean government should do right now is to open all information and records they have to the public. At the same time, Korean government should also provide some support programs for veterans, for example compensation for victims of Agent Orange. Of course this is work that the American Government should take care of also.

-Our Vietnam campaign started 24 years after the end of Vietnam War. Don't you think this is too late?

-It can never be too late. No fact-finding effort can be said to be late. Still, there are many things which happened during the second world war which remained unexamined. Also Nogun-ri happened 50 years ago. Even the massacre of Native Americans committed by whites in 1868 began to be examined not so long ago-after more than 100 years have passed! So fact-finding can never be said to be too late in any case.

And a Massacre Bred a Massacre

Han Hong Koo

Sungkonghoe University

It must have been so. All villagers seemed to be Viet Cong, when even a seven or eight-year-old kid would throw a hand grenade and run away after getting a bag of candy as a gift. A war without a frontline! A guerrilla war in which villagers and Viet Cong could not be distinguished by appearance! Korean soldiers were haunted with extreme panic and fear in the tropical jungles of Vietnam. Nevertheless, this kind of situational excuse cannot justify mass killings of unarmed civilians. We can find abundant parallels of wars without a frontline or wars in which villagers and guerrillas could not be distinguished by their appearance in modern Korean history. The Peasant Uprising of 1894, the Righteous Army Movement, the nationalist independence army movement, and the communist anti-Japanese guerrilla struggle were examples of such wars.

I would like to believe that the alleged mass killings of Vietnamese civilians by ROK soldiers must have been different from the Japanese atrocities in the Yanbian area in the early 1930s, when the Japanese turned the region into a 'sea of blood,' shouting, "if you kill one hundred Koreans, there will be at least one communist!". Yet the excuse that mass killings by Korean soldiers were not "intentional and planned massacres" or that there was difficulty in distinguishing local inhabitants from enemies cannot assuage the deaths of several thousand innocent civilians.

The atrocities by Korean soldiers in the jungles of Vietnam reflect the tragedies of modern Korean history. Among the Korean soldiers dispatched to Vietnam, most company leaders were born between 1935 and 1940, and the privates were born around 1945. They lived through the bloodbath of the Korean War at a very young age, and were indoctrinated that all the misfortunes they had suffered was caused by the Reds. The South Korean education system constantly brainwashed students that Reds were not human beings. Reds were not their compatriots. Reds were just Reds. They were taught that it is all right to kill Reds. No, You have to eliminate Reds. Repeatedly baptized with extreme anti-communist ideology, a whole generation of the ROK soldiers in Vietnam had psychologically prepared themselves for hunting Reds. These soldiers were the poor sons of an ill-fated Korean people, who themselves had been victims of massacres during the colonial period, then rapidly growing up to become victimizers

themselves having experienced the inter-ethnic massacres during the turbulent years of the Korean War.

The problem lay in the fact that these soldiers who were prepared for Red hunting were thrown into a guerrilla war of national liberation without proper education. The panic of the battlegrounds and the vengeful spirit from the death of comrades easily escalated the logic that it was all right to kill Reds, into becoming an obsession that if I failed to kill Reds, then I would get killed. Of course, former Korean commanders or veterans of the Vietnam War emphasize that they did their best to protect the Vietnamese civilians, citing the Public Service Regulations which ordered that a Korean soldier should save a civilian even if he were to lose one hundred Viet-Congs. Nevertheless, as can be seen in the testimony of Mr. Kim Ki-tae, a former company leader of the Korean Marine, soldiers executed arrested villagers in spite of his order to release them. If it was a real situation, then there would be no room for the elegant teachings of the Public Service Regulations.

However, if you attribute the causes of the massacre to the psychology of soldiers, it would be misleading because it ignores the structural problems that the ROK soldiers faced. The tactics of Korean armies in Vietnam usually combined combat activities with pacification campaigns. The pacification strategies in the Vietnam War was to eliminate dispersed villages which might be used as bases for guerrillas, and to separate people from guerrillas by evacuating residents of dispersed villages to strategic hamlets which were called "New Life Villages." This strategy resembled the one adopted by the Japanese in Manchuria in the 1930s against the Korean and the Chinese anti-Japanese guerrillas. The Japanese campaigns of separating people from guerrillas was carried out with extreme force producing ceaseless atrocities.

Unfortunately, the top commanding posts of the Korean Army were filled with former Japanese and puppet Manchurian officers. Markedly, those who served in the Kando Special Unit, a counterinsurgent battalion purely composed of Koreans, occupied strategic posts in the commanding structure of the Korean army. Then, it was not accidental that the pacification campaigns of the ROK army dispatched to Vietnam had the Japanese legacy of relentless killing, burning, and destroying.

The *Battle Instruction Series* published by the Republic of Korean Army, Vietnam in 1966 emphasized that the villages were the base of all enemy activities, that the supply

of resources, personnel, and information came from villages. The *Series* also taught that the infrastructure of Viet Cong lay in villages and residents. Unfortunately, these teachings reflected the reality much better than the noble Public Service Regulations did. When the soldiers entered into a village with these teachings in mind during the pacification campaign, it would be rather abnormal if there had been no atrocities against the villagers who were regarded as potential enemies.

We have to remember that the Korean troops in Vietnam, compared to their American counterparts, were extraordinarily frequently mobilized for small-scale pacification campaigns against villages. In November 1961, Park Chung Hee, Chairman of the Military Junta at that time, suggested to Kennedy to send the Korean troops to Vietnam to alleviate the excessive burden of the United States. The tasks allocated to the "Korean mercenaries" who were sent to abate the excessive burden of the United States, as many critics abroad degradingly called them, were onerous pacification campaigns which had high possibilities of causing not only casualties but also mass killings of civilians.

Five thousand, the number of alleged civilian victims by the ROKA atrocities, is not a great number when considering the total number of victims of the Vietnam War which surmounted several million. The absolute majority of the civilian casualties were attributable to the carpet bombing of the U.S. Air Force. In the scale of the deaths, the carpet bombing was much more brutal than the alleged atrocities by Korean troops. Yet, the Korean atrocities left deeper scars because they were done face to face while the carpet bombing took place from a distance. The disgraceful position of the Korean troops as 'mercenaries' gave birth to a dishonorable history of mass killings of Vietnamese civilians.

Many observers claim that the Korean involvement of the Vietnam War served as a cornerstone for the rapid economic development of Korea. It is a repugnant thought to take advantage of other people's misfortune for economic opportunity, but let's put aside moral questions and examine the validity of their logic. However, I cannot agree that the dispatch of Korean troops to Vietnam brought massive economic benefits to Korea. It is true that Korea gained about a billion dollars through the war, but the costs were uncountable: five thousand young men got killed in alien jungles; ten thousand injured; twenty thousand veterans suffering from the side effects of Agent Orange; and Korea carries the dishonor of the mass killings of civilians. It is true that the one billion

dollars from the blood of young soldiers in the jungles of Vietnam contributed greatly to the economic development of Korea. However, the annual economic gains of Japan, which did not send any soldiers, was much higher than Korea's earnings during the same period. Taiwan, which sent a merely symbolic twenty soldiers gained slightly less than the amount Korea procured. Singapore and Hong Kong, which did not send any soldiers to Vietnam, were not excluded from the Vietnamese boom or access to the American market.

The *Battle Instruction Series* published by the Republic of Korea Army, Vietnam ironically taught that Korea's involvement in the Vietnam War itself in which Korean soldiers had to face most Vietnamese people as potential enemies was a wrong decision. The main villains of the Kwangju massacre in 1980, including Chun Doo Whan served in the Vietnam War as battalion commanders. Is it a leap of logic if we find a correlation between the Korean experience of the Vietnam War in which most citizens of Vietnam were viewed as potential enemies and the Kwangju massacre which aimed guns at the hearts of the citizens?

It was indeed catastrophic that massacres of Vietnamese civilians were caused by Korean soldiers, of all people. Historically, Korea and Vietnam shared many things. The two small nations were proud peoples who had endeavored to preserve their independence. They had been influenced by Confucianism and invaded by foreign imperialists in the late nineteenth century. Vietnam lost independence before Korea did, and the record of the tragic history of Vietnam, *the Ruining History of Vietnam*, became a must-read among Korean nationalist intellectuals. Some scholars and politicians argue that Park Chung Hee was a nationalist. If Park was a genuine nationalist and succeeded in keeping alive the memory of the Korean nationalists who had read *the Ruining History of Vietnam*, and regarded the ill-fate of Vietnam as a coming misfortune of their own nation, he would never have sent Korean youths to the battlegrounds to alleviate the burden of the Americans in their fight against the Vietnamese people who were struggling to achieve liberation from the imperialist invasion.

The assertion of the mass killings of Vietnamese civilians by Korean troops cannot be avoided any more and we have to face this. It is a crucial problem in that the Kim Daejung government claims to have raised Korea to the level of an advanced country in terms of human rights, while Korean civil society has recently emerged from the

oppression of the military dictatorship. Fortunately, the reporters and civil right activists who visited the spots of mass killings in Vietnam said that there was no anti-Korean sentiment. On the contrary, the Vietnamese people they met were surprised at the recent movement in Korea to reveal their own shameful history of mass killings. If the Korean government wastes this opportunity and adheres to the empty words that Korean soldiers did their best to save a civilian even if it meant losing one hundred Viet Cong, then it means that the government imputes the responsibility of the massacre to the individual veterans. If the government merely apologizes for the Korean soldiers' activities and does not take decisive action to dig out the truth, then the atmosphere in Vietnam could rapidly turn against us, just as we get angry with vacant apologies of Japanese politicians for the atrocities of the Japanese soldiers during the colonial period.

The experience of a massacre breeds another massacre. Now is the time to end the vicious cycle of massacres.

Contributions in Remembrance of the Victims of the Korean Troops

Collecting 100,000,000 won to build a school for children
in the areas where the areas took place

-We are responsible for this shameful history: it's time for the people to take the initiative to apologize. We think of the massacre this way, so what should be done?

An interim report on the results of the fundraising campaign

On October 10, 1999 in the 280th edition of Hankyoreh21 we launched a campaign for disclosure of the truth of the massacres of Vietnamese civilians by the Korean soldiers during the war. Since then, thanks to your thoughtful participation, we were able to collect 65,600,000 won. Over 750 contributions were deposited to our account and over 3,000 readers were believed to have participated. A young father donated all the money his mother-in-law gave him celebrating the birth of his baby, and grandmothers from the home for former comfort women, sent us what little money they save to make kim-chi for the coming winter. Churches, temples and schools, Christians, Buddhists and teachers and students, all joined together for this movement. 5,000 won, 10,000 won, 50,000 won, 100,000 won, 500,000 won, 1,000,000 won and 10,000,000 won. Whether big or small, all these contributions show that the Koreans still have a strong social conscience. And with these results, the time has come for our government to do something about the wrongdoings we committed with our own hands.

This campaign will continue until the 25th anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. With the money collected, Hankyoreh21 will found a school, in one of the areas where the massacres took place. We've come to this conclusion after considering several ways for us to show the Vietnamese our efforts to compensate for the tragic past. This campaign has symbolic significance to that end. Our Vietnamese counterparts, who had worked with us for the campaign, also advised us that children in the rural areas definitely need better school facilities.

Thus, Hankyoreh21 will continue this movement to collect funds for the next two months until the 25th anniversary. Our goal is to collect 100,000,000 won. However, our goal doesn't appear easy to achieve. In actuality, this campaign has features distinctive

from others in the past. One notable difference is the fact that politicians and businessmen have been reluctant to participate. This partially explains the limited flow of donations. This difference is more marked, when compared with the results of our campaign to help the women who had been drafted to work as "comfort women" by the Japanese troops during WWII, which we held from November 1996 to May 1997. The total sum of the money contributed then reached 300,000,000 won. Cardinal Kim Soo-hwan as well as then prime minister, Yi Soo-sung, and Yi Hui-chang, now the leader of the opposition party, willingly joined the movement. But the situation is different in this case. There has been no participation by any politicians since this campaign was launched. Government officials and most businessmen have even flinched at the mention of the word, Vietnam. Any issue involving the dark side of the Vietnam War is still taboo in this society. It will be a tough challenge for us to overcome this kind of attitude. However, even more so for these reasons, the amount of money, 64,000,000, thus far contributed seems much more valuable because of the heartfelt wishes of the donors.

Meanwhile we hope our efforts in this campaign will be a further step to eradicate the brutality and savagery of our society. This movement is as important as campaigns to help the poor in our own society, and no less significant, even compared with the campaign to helping the Korean former comfort women. So your contribution is very meaningful for this historical effort. If you haven't joined yet, stop by your local bank to make a donation. (You can also do so through the internet as well.) Please recommend it to your relatives and friends as well. We think that our sincere efforts will set a good precedent for those in other countries, who have committed war crimes, to follow. Keep this in mind; we are taking a step others never dared to do before.

Letters to the Editor of Hankyoreh21

The Penitent Voices of the People

Word from America

I'm a Korean living in America. When the alleged massacre of civilians by U.S. soldiers at Nogun-ri became known, Korean organizations here also raised their voices and protested on the streets. There has been, however, no action taken whatsoever for the massacres of Vietnamese civilians by Korean soldiers during the War. It seems that all our attention is focused on the upcoming parliamentary election.

Our people have lived through difficult times. We've experienced several foreign invasions and even colonization by the Japanese imperialists. But if, despite these bitter experiences, we, Koreans won't admit the truth of the massacres and try to pretend as if it had never happened, how can we say that we are different from the Japanese imperialists who won't recognize the existence of the Korean women drafted for sexual slavery, and what lessons do we learn from the American government which sent a committee to find out the truth about the massacre at Nogun-ri. Furthermore, it is an insult to the Korean women sacrificed in the comfort houses by Japan and the people massacred in Nogun-ri if the Korean government remains silent on the massacres committed during the Vietnam War.

Isn't true courage the ability to ask forgiveness, especially when not forced to do so?

-Anonymous

I felt ashamed but also proud

For 28 years, I never felt proud to be a Korean. Even the brilliant achievements abroad of athletes like Hwang Young-jo, Park Chan-ho, Park Se-ri and Kim Mi-hyun didn't make me feel so. I just thought that those were the fruits of their own efforts.

But when I read the article in Hankyoreh21 about the massacres during the Vietnam War by Korean soldiers, I felt ashamed but also proud that I am Korean. Seeing many Koreans recognize our wrongdoings and sincerely apologize to the Vietnamese people, for the first time in my life, I felt proud to be a Korean. It would be much better, I think, if the government were to send an official committee to admit and formally apologize for the massacres committed by Korean soldiers.

I contributed 10,000 won. I don't expect this small amount of money can be enough

compensation for the terrible things that were done by us. It is all I can do right now, though. I want you to continue paying attention to this injustice. It is shameless to say that we've done enough with only one gesture of apology. The wound is much deeper than that. It requires our ongoing efforts.

Once again I want to offer my sincere apology to the Vietnamese, as a Korean whose people massacred civilians during the war.

-Yi Tae-woo.

Looking Towards the Future

Your Excellency,

How do you do, Mr. President? I'm Ji Soo-hui, a senior at Young-hoon High School. Since middle school, I have learned about the history of our country and have been told that our people hate war and love peace and all the wars in history that occurred were the result of the inevitable need to defend our people and territory against foreign invasions. However, as for the historical fact that our people also tried to invade the land of others, we also idealized the purpose of territorial expansion or increasing our wealth.

In elementary school, I learned that it's better to admit my faults and sincerely apologize than to try to lie and conceal it. But if the very government, which taught us so, behaves to the contrary, what lessons could students like myself learn from it, and with what hopes should we live.

I'm not insisting that we make material compensations for the Vietnamese massacred during the war. To demand that we apologize doesn't mean that we submit to others or lose face. Only one with a generous heart, can ask forgiveness for what he has done. Greeting the 21st century, I hope that by offering an formal apology to the Vietnamese, a new peace movement will be launched in the region around the Korean Peninsula, and that in Korea, young students like myself will lead a proud country where even the human rights of the weakest are fully respected.

I wish you good health and hope that everything goes well with you.

-Ji Soo-hui

Mrs. Sook Kyung Kim

The Committee for Civilian Massacre during the Vietnam War.

3F, 8-29, Myungryundong 2ga, Jongnogu, Seoul

Fax: (02) 3673-5627

Dear Madam,

First of all, I would like to express my honour and sincere thanks for your goodwill and for activities carried out by NGOs of the Republic of Korea, including your Committee, to help healing the wound of the Vietnam War.

As You know, the Vietnamese people have fallen victim to many wars of foreign invasion, of which the war waged by the United States was the most destructive and brutal. The United States had mobilized large number of military forces and used varieties of the most advanced killing weapons; bombs used by the American during the war had exceeded the amount used by all countries during the World War II. As a result, nearly three million of Vietnamese people were killed, and over four million were wounded, especially those affected by Agent Orange. The material losses suffered by the Vietnamese people were extremely great. Regrettably, the Republic of Korea and some other countries had directly involved in the war, leaving an unhappy time in the history of relations between Vietnam and those countries.

We never forget atrocities occurred during the war in our country. Although 25 years have elapsed, serious consequences of the war are still being felt in all parts of our country. Yet, as a nation who has the tradition of humanitarianism, tolerance and reconciliation, the Government and people of Vietnam advocate to temporarily put the past aside and look forward to the future in order to normalize and develop friendly relationship with countries that had waged and participated in the war. However, we believe that those countries should take concrete measures to help overcome the

aftermath of the war. This conforms to normal morality. On this basis, we noted that, the people and Government of the Republic of Korea, since 1992 when diplomatic relation between the two countries have been established, have expressed regrets of the unhappy past and have made efforts to contribute to overcome consequences of the war, to develop Vietnam's economy through humanitarian aid programs and cooperation on economic, trade, investment and labour on the basis of mutual benefit.

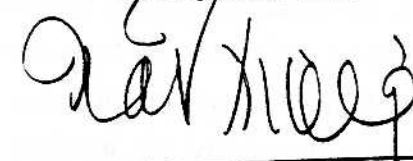
At present, many organizations and individuals from different level of society of the Republic of Korea, including your Committee, are also actively participating in activities to help the Vietnamese in some local areas who have suffered seriously from the war by concrete and various ways and means.

Having smooth settlement of problems left over by the past and further development of the cooperative and friendly relation between Vietnam and the Republic of Korea in the new millennium conform to the desire and interest of the two peoples and are in accordance with democratic and humanitarian values of the mankind.

On this occasion, we sincerely wish the Committee realistic results in her profoundly significant activities.

Please, accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Seoul, May 15, 2000



Nguyen Van Xuong

*Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam
Seoul, the Republic of Korea.*

Korea and the Vietnam War

A Letter of Solidarity

Before there can be reconciliation there must be truth. The work of the Korean House for International Solidarity and other organizations to uncover the truth of Korean responsibility in war-time massacres in Vietnam is extremely important and extremely valuable. Before the countries of Asia can cooperate on an equal basis, the painful episodes of the past must be exposed and discussed. As representatives from European and Asian countries come to Seoul this month for the 3rd ASEM, it is useful to remember that European integration after WWII was made possible by a frank discussion of historical wrongs.

The American Friends Service Committee has worked for many years to uncover the full truth of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. It is the particular responsibility of U.S. organizations to investigate the U.S. role in wars and conflicts in the Asia-Pacific region, including the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Kwangju Uprising, the Indonesian repressions of 1965, and the US occupation of Okinawa. By challenging U.S. conduct in the past, we can find clues to understanding an alternative and peaceful role for the U.S. in this region.

Just as it is the specific responsibility of U.S. organizations to scrutinize the U.S. role in the war, it is the specific responsibility of Korean organizations to investigate Korean participation. Koreans have been terribly victimized during the 20th century -- colonized, drafted into sexual slavery, imprisoned by authoritarian governments. But history does not divide people into simple categories of victim and victimizer. So it is a difficult and challenging task that you have taken upon yourselves -- to paint a more complex picture of Korea and the role Koreans have played in the region. As Korea examines and takes responsibility for its own actions, the movement calling for US accountability for its actions on the Korean peninsula is thereby strengthened.

The Vietnam War was a shameful episode in both U.S. and Korean history. We join hands with you in solidarity -- for greater truth, peace, and reconciliation in this region.

John Feffer and Karin Lee
American Friends Service Committee/Tokyo, Japan

The Fact-Finding Committee for the Civilian Massacres during the Vietnam War (FFCC)

Secretariat: Korean House for International Solidarity (KHIS)

This committee was founded with the purpose of pressuring the Korean government to research the truth of the incidents and to make a formal apology for the massacres of Vietnamese civilians during the war. The Fact-Finding Committee also aims to bring about greater public awareness of the events that occurred, through a symposium, lectures and presentations at schools, as well as through publication of materials. It is composed of a coalition representing eleven civil organizations. The Fact-Finding Committee provides mutual assistance for the activities of each participating organization, and engages in publicity work, research, fund-raising and field studies to strengthen solidarity among the participating groups.

Publications:

Apologizing for Our Shameful History:

A compilation of articles concerning the Vietnam War, Korean soldiers and massacre victims. (174 pages, in Korean)

₩ 10,000

Seeking Pardon for Our Shameful History:

Educational material for teaching purposes on the Vietnamese civilian massacres by Korean soldiers and the Korean movement to make an apology.

₩ 3,000

Schedule for Year 2000

<Spring and Summer 2000>

Concert for Peace

Saigon: Songs of That Day a night of poetry and music

Aim: Inform people of the truth of the massacres of Vietnamese civilians during the war, and reflect on the lives lost in the war. Confirm our commitment to reconciliation of the past and celebrate our wish for peace for the future. Earnings from the ticket sales will be used to build a hospital in one of the areas where the massacres happened.

<Fall and Winter 2000>

Speaking Tour by the Victims of the War

Aim: Inviting the victims of the war to let the Koreans know the truth and realize the importance of the human rights and peace, and establish a foundation for solidarity work between Koreans and the Vietnamese.

Symposium

Aim: Conduct a comparative analysis of the Korean War and the Vietnam War and publish the proceedings of the symposium.

Supporting our Campaign for Truth and Reconciliation

Funds raised will be used for the construction of
a Memorial Peace Museum in Vietnam

Donations can be sent to our account
Hanvit Bank Account Number: 512-47713902-001
Account Holder's Name: Kang Jung Koo

Thank you for your help! We appreciate your efforts very much.

Sincerely,

Kim Soogyung
Coordinator, FFCC

Member Organizations of the Fact-Finding Committee for the Civilian Massacres During the Vietnam War

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Korean House for International Solidarity
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Japanese "Comfort Women" History Museum
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Solidarity for an Open Society and Hope (Masan)
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