



Phan Cong Ton (Tony Phan)  
Major  
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West Valley City, Utah

## Interviewer

Tell us not just the good things that America was doing, tell us what America was doing wrong in this war.

## Tony Phan

We not watch the American troop, but we work together with them. With artillery, with the armor, and with the infantry. They work with us, a Vietnamese Marine, in many years and in a lot of the different territories. So I can say that I know very well about the U.S. troops, you know?

What we love the U.S. troops is, they have the discipline to fight. And they well trained you know, very good. And they have the better weapon. And any time, if they need to support from the air or from the fleet, so they have right away. We love to work with the U.S. troop because any time we need to call the artillery or I need the helicopter to move all the wounded, all the dead people, they send it right away. And that the way, the American troops did the same. Very easy with the American people when they got any casualty. They mean the dead or the wounded people. And anyway, doesn't matter the situation. Very dangerous there, but the helicopter come in and to move them out. Something like that, you know?

But if all the Vietnamese troop working separately, it's hard to get their support. You know what I mean? In the case, I need the, like Air 19 observed in the area, you know? It's hard to get there. Or if I got like a strike that come in, it's hard to get it. Except, because like the Vietnamese Marine, we have all advisors go with us. Especially only for the Vietnamese Marine, all the American advisors, they go to company level. Never, ever in Vietnam like that. Only the Marine. So that time I was the combat commander and I got a group of the American advisors to go with us. So very easy when you need their support. You know, artillery or-everything. Tell us in the call, you have the support right away. You need the helicopter, you need the Air 19, you need the artillery support, something like that, you know, they can call and they have it right away. You know?

## Interviewer

There was criticism of the South Vietnamese government being corrupt. What do you think of that?

## Tony Phan

Well, when you see any corrupts government, so is came from a lot of different sources. During the Vietnam War, most of the military person who took any power in the country, you know, before, like under the Ngo Dinh Diem regiment, like if the chief of the province is a civilian, something like that.

But later on, from 1965 on, only the military officer who take care of the province. And even with the civilian officials, only the vice, the president or the second great under the military officer. So all the provinces in Vietnam are under the military commander. And they thought that this country, this South Vietnam is run by the military person. And even all the political politicians, they hate that. And the civilians, they hate that. They say, well, they look at us in the farm and say, well this guy is like the same side with the power of the country. But we need to know the situation there. If you got like the chief of the province or district, like a civilian, it doesn't work out. Because they cannot, or they don't know how to move the troop. Because during the war, every level from the village, from the city, there is a big fight almost every day. So you need to know about the military tactic to use the troops. But all these civilian leaders who didn't know how to use the troops.

**Interviewer**

So would it be fair to say there was an atmosphere where corruption takes place?

**Tony Phan**

Yes. The corruption, yes. The bad thing in South Vietnam at that time--because I heard something but this is the truth in Vietnam. Like you want to become like the province chief, so you have to pay something. Because I never pay anything because we are in Marine, we don't do anything like that. But we got some friend who knew that. So any position, they have to pay, due to the corruption.

**Interviewer**

We need some more personal stories. Give us your full name.

**Tony Phan**

Yes, my name is Phan Cong Ton. The Vietnamese way. In the State they call it Ton Phan. With the Vietnamese way, we say the last name first and then middle name and then first name. But the American way we go with the first name first and then middle name and then last name.

**Interviewer**

Can you spell that, please?

**Tony Phan**

Yes. Last name Phan. P-h-a-n. And middle name Cong, C-o-n-g. And first name is Ton, T-o-n. But they used to call me "Tony."

**Interviewer**

When were you born?

**Tony Phan**

I was born in the central Vietnam. Up to the north of the 17th parallel in the province named Nghe An in the central Vietnam. And I was born in May 24th, 1940.

## **Interviewer**

And tell us about where you grew up, your family. Give us a brief overview of who you are and what your background is.

## **Tony Phan**

Well, at that time my father was a government employee. He worked for the forestry department. And at that time, meaning in 1940, 1950. So all the government employee, they became like at the employee for the whole of Indochina including Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

Interviewer

You're from where again? What province?

## **Tony Phan**

I was born in Nghe An, a province in central Vietnam and I was born in May 24th, 1940.

## **Interviewer**

1940? The Japanese are occupying your country?

## **Tony Phan**

Yes, by that time the Japanese occupied the Vietnam, yes.

## **Interviewer**

So you were born during the war?

## **Tony Phan**

Uh-huh. But I didn't know anything about the province where I was born because, like I told you lately, my father was the government employee, he worked for the forestry department and he moved to Da Lat. Da Lat is a very famous city in Vietnam, a tourist city in Vietnam. And when I was less than one years old I was in Da Lat. So on the paperwork I was born in this Nghe An in central Vietnam, but I never know and I have no idea about the place where I was born.

## **Interviewer**

So you grew up in Da Lat?

## **Tony Phan**

Da Lat, yes. Everybody in Vietnam who know very well about Da Lat is it's a tourist city. Up a mountain, the weather there is fine. Not very cold, not warm all year round. And it is a tourist city, very famous in Vietnam.

## **Interviewer**

Did you have a big family?

## **Tony Phan**

Well, yes, it's a big family. My parents have nine children. My only brother die when he was a kid, I don't know. And my sisters die too. I mean when I was in Da Lat about less than one years old there, so, and when I grew up I still

remember that only me, the only child in the family. And my next brother would be born in 1948, eight years difference.

## **Interviewer**

So you remember the French being there as a young boy?

## **Tony Phan**

Yes. When I grew up and you know, by that time, most of the people who work for the government or with the educated person who speak French. And like my parents, who speak French. And then, when they grew up and he send me to the French school. You know, in Da Lat is very famous city and the Dr. Yersin, the French doctor who found out that location and they built a French style city. Very famous and very beautiful city with all the building on the French style, everything like that.

And when I grew up, what I still remember about five, six years old till now, I know about-and they call Da Lat is my city because I live there from my childhood. And I went to French school and of course in school I speak French with my teacher and my friends until 1954 with the Emperor Bao-Dai, who allowed to build two Vietnamese school named Phuong-Mai, is one of the Emperor Bao-Dai's daughter, they bear the name Phuong-Mai, like the Princess Phuong-Mai. and the Prince Bao Long. At that time Bao Long school is for like a men's school. And Phuong-Mai school would be the mix, both man and woman together.

So the reason why I quit the French school, after I finished the (elmet? 16:27) school, and one day, a group of my friends, we loved to play soccer and we went around looking for a job where we could play soccer. And we found out at that school, the school under rebuilding, they built a new school, and not Viet. But the very interesting thing is we saw a soccer field there. And a group of my friends, about ten guys, who decided to make the exam, like the entry exam to the school, and we said, well, we learned from the French school and we speak French and Vietnamese at home. But anyway, we don't know much about the Vietnamese culture and how we can join the Vietnamese school. But anyway, because the love of soccer, very exciting and we decided okay, we try to take the exam to go to the Phuong-Mai school. Somehow we can play the soccer there with the soccer field. And about ten of us took the exam to this school but only three pass. And me is one of three who pass the exam and we attend the Vietnamese school.

## **Interviewer**

So you grew up in Da Lat and this school and --?

## **Tony Phan**

Well, in 1959, after I got the high school graduation, at that time, due to the late President Ngo Dinh Diem, the order at that time was you have to register at the age of 18 years old. To be 18, 19, and 20, every kid need to register and they give you the number. And at that time, everybody need to be draft. So, they just based on what the age you

are. They don't care about what the education you got. Even you graduate from the high school, but you still be draft and to be like a soldier.

### **Interviewer**

Register for a military draft?

### **Tony Phan**

Yeah. So 1959, I was 19 years old, and after the high school diploma, I have to choose either if I let them draft me, so I become like a private, or at that time I can join through the Thu Duc military school. If I joined there, so the course would be a year and after that I will become the warrant officer, one grade under the second lieutenant. Because in Da Lat they have the Da Lat Military Academy, a very famous academy in Da Lat. But at that time, between the class already so I cannot join the Da Lat Academy my home town. So I decided to go to Thu Duc Academy. So I would become the reserve officer, not a regular officer because Thu Duc is the executive officer school. And my class is nine Thu Duc reservation school started in October, the 7th, 1959. I joined in and on schedule, only one year. But something happened during the Ngo Dinh Diem President. In October 1960, a group of the Airborne officer who want to make the turnover Ngo Dinh Diem, but they fail. You know that, in November 1960. They fail.

### **Interviewer**

This was a coup?

### **Tony Phan**

The coup, yes, the coup belonged to the Airborne officer, some general. And Airborne Lieutenant Colonel, he was the chief of my regulation exam in Thu Duc school at that time. But he joined to the Airborne general to make the coup but they fail. So, by that reason we have to stay in school for more than a month. I graduate after 13 month instead of 12. Anyway, I volunteered to join the Vietnamese Marine. At that time, either if you want to volunteer to join in Marine or Airborne or Ranger. So you say and they will pick you up and put you in any infantry division. But at that time, I mean 1960, two division that are famous in Vietnam, like the Airborne and Marine, you know? And one of the attractive to me, I heard that, because one officer from the Vietnamese Marine came to the Thu Duc school and they show us something about the Vietnamese Marine. One was very attractive to me was after you join the Marine, you have the chance to go to United States for training. So that's the reason why I chose Marine instead of Airborne. Because both Airborne and Marine are very famous division in the South Vietnam. So I made the decision to join the Vietnamese Marine. By that way I will have the chance to go to United States I really love.

### **Interviewer**

Did you make it to the United States?

### **Tony Phan**

Yes. So when I joined in the Third Vietnamese Marine before Christmas of 1960, I joined the Third Marine Battalion. And then in 1963 I went to the United States for the very first time. And I took the class in the U.S. Marine Corps

School in Quantico, Virginia, a famous school. At that time I was a second lieutenant and I took the class there from '63 to '64. And then after school I got back and going on with the operation in front, something like that.

### **Interviewer**

So by the time in '63, it's just starting up, isn't it?

### **Tony Phan**

Yes. Let me tell you a story. The colonel of the Marine Corps school at that time, because I was the leader of a group of five officer in my team and I was the leader. And everything I need to report to this school everything, you know, all activity, about their learning and everything, with my group, you know?

And I remember one day the colonel of the school called me to go to see him and he asked me everything. And one thing, the very first time I heard about the preparation of the U.S. troops will plan to go to Vietnam. And he asked me about that. He say, "Lieutenant Ton, how do you think about if the U.S. troops go to Vietnam?" And at that time it was a surprise to me. And I explained to him that, "Colonel, I'm only a second lieutenant and I been the platoon leader." The platoon gather about 40-45 people. "So I don't know much about the political situation in Vietnam." And I left the country about six or seven months-I don't know for sure about the situation there in Vietnam. But anyway, do you know Mrs. Ngo Dinh Nhu? Ngo Dinh Nhu is the President Diem's older brother. And his wife is like a first lady in Vietnam at that time, Mrs. Ngo Dinh Nhu, very famous lady. At that time, Mrs. Nhu was in the United States. She used to go to some university to get the briefing, something related to the situation in Vietnam. Because at that time in Vietnam, they have the big problem between the Buddhists -

### **Interviewer**

The monks.

### **Tony Phan**

The monks, yeah. They do something against Ngo Dinh Diem regiment.

### **Interviewer**

They were setting themselves on fire.

### **Tony Phan**

Yeah. And some monk who burned themselves. At that time, when I was in State and I watching TV and I knew that. So we recognize that we have a big problem in South Vietnam at that time during the Buddhists and the Catholic because Ngo Dinh Diem belonged to the Catholic and all the Buddhist monk, you know, they did something against the government. With the people in South Vietnam at that time, they think, this is a fight between the Buddhists and the Catholic that's the problem.

I'll go back to the colonel of the school ask me about how do you think the U.S. troops going to Vietnam. I still remember I told him that, "Colonel, I'm sorry about that. I never imagined that someday the U.S. Army send some

troops to the Vietnam. But this is a very first time I heard about this new from you. But to me, like I told you lately, I only the second lieutenant and a platoon leader. I don't know for sure about the political situation in Vietnam right now. But right now, even before I left the country to join here in the U.S. military school, we need to go out in the operation to fight with the guerillas." And we never get any big fights so far. The maximum is at the company level or sometime one or two time all of the battalion level. Not a big war yet. So I don't think, why, the U.S. government need to send the troops there. What for? And to my civilian, we need to know about the guerillas. Completely different with the usual war.

### **Interviewer**

Were they called Viet Cong at this time?

### **Tony Phan**

Yeah, the Viet Cong, yes. You know the word "Viet Cong" mean "Vietnamese Communist." The word "Viet Cong" - "Viet" mean "Vietnamese," and "Cong" mean "Communist." So they use the combined name, "Viet Cong." And even at that time, we need to go out on operation for again, the guerillas, not the regular war at all. And so I answered to my commander of school, I doubt about that. Why they need to send people there?

### **Interviewer**

So you go back to Vietnam and you begin a military career. Tell us about how this is all escalating, how this is getting bigger and bigger and how your country's changing.

### **Tony Phan**

Step by step, year by year, when I get back to Vietnam and I still keep going on the fighting again because I was in the Marine Battalion, the fighting battalion. Usually we have to go out to fight. And at that time, the Airborne Division and the Marine Division were the reserve unit of the South Vietnam government. Wherever they had the big fight, they sent us to there. So they called us the reserve division. And usually why Airborne and Marine were famous because we were at the big fight. With the infantry and the local forces, they do something again with the guerillas, the communists' element. But if something wrong, they cannot win the war so they call the reserve division in there and we have to do that.

### **Interviewer**

So you're watching this expand and you're watching more Americans coming in.

### **Tony Phan**

Well, I tell you this. The very first thing, when I get older and older and I become the rank higher and higher, I need to go on the frontline every day so I can observe. And some times, many time we work together with the American troops; we were together in the operation unit. So I know for sure. One thing I can recognize that the American troop who, if they got the big war with the clear objective so very easy to win. Because due to the tactic I learned from the school, this is the objective. So before you go to see the best objective, you know, artillery, bombing, everything like that before you go to attack the objective and you can see easily. But guerilla's completely different.

Completely different. And I can say that most of the American soldier and American unit, they don't know where about the guerillas. The reason why, I tell you this: Guerillas were the people who wear like the civilian clothes, you know, the farmer's clothes in the farm country. At daytime they live in the villages like the civilian people as a farmer. But at nighttime they become the guerillas with the weapon. And even when you attacked a village, that's the reason why some American unit who kill, who bomb the whole village and kill a lot of people there, including civilian, you have the lady and the kid, everything-die. But that's the truth in Vietnam War. The reason is, they used the front support. Not very good. And when they reached to the edge of the village and they recognize some spy from the village, they call the artillery or airstrike to strike in the village. That way, they killed the civilian. But guerillas is not a lot, they're some squat or two squats and they're high in the (inaudible 34:59). They're not harm. But the people living there is the victim of the war.

### **Interviewer**

So how does that make those people feel about the guerillas?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, I tell you, the people there, during the Ngo Dinh Diem regime, they have the strategic hamlets. Strategic hamlet is like the top national strategy from Ngo Dinh Diem.

### **Interviewer**

A strategic hamlet?

### **Tony Phan**

They mean everybody living in the hamlet and they surround it, by the front and everything, and you get in and out with the control of the guard there. By that way, the Viet Cong cannot get in the hamlet. And they really hate that way. So, it surprised me, after the Ngo Dinh Diem government fell and they don't keep the hamlet, the strategic hamlet anymore. So people from the hamlet, they can go out in the far country and live there. That way we fall to the Viet Cong what the Viet Cong want because they want that way. If the people living in the hamlet, under the control of the government guard so they can do anything. But now if it is that way, so very easy, guerillas can join in with them and to receive all the food, everything they need in the evening.

### **Interviewer**

And how was your country changing?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, almost 5,000 American soldiers there.

### **Interviewer**

What year was this?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, I tell you, there were a lot of big fights and like I told you lately, I worked together, we went out on the frontline together with the American troops and we knew that they were a good fighter, very good. But the weak side was



they don't know who's the civilian, and who's the Viet Cong, you see? With us, we can recognize about 80 percent. When I look at you I can recognize you the civilian, a farmer, or you're guerillas. I can recognize very easy. But the American people who don't.

### **Interviewer**

What are the things that tip you off? What are the things that you see?

### **Tony Phan**

Yes. Actually in the face I can recognize because the farmer, they never lie; they tell you something truthfully. And the farmer, they're never scared of you. They treat you friendly, something like that, you know?

But guerillas are different because I can say 90 percent, if I met with the guerillas and the guy say, "Well, I'm a farmer, I'm working here," I ask a question and I recognize, no, you're not the farmer by the way you tell me. By the way you look at me. You watch everything and you ask some question, I know that you're not the farmer. The farmer never ask stupid question like that, for example. And like the farmer never know, "How long you stay here? What are you coming for?" But the guerilla's different. They say, "What you in it?" What you battalion? Why you come here? How long you stay here? What kind of weapon you got?" Something like that, you know? So I recognize this is a guerillas, not the farmer.

And also, when I look at their clothes, some of that, I can recognize you're not the farmer. Even though they wear, look like the farmer's clothes, but I can recognize easy, guerillas. And some special word they use, I can recognize. But the American how do they know the Vietnamese language? They never know, you know? Sometimes the guerillas use the word like the Communist word, you know? But the American, how they know? See? And so with us and we got a lot, a lot of experience dealing with the farmers and we can know who's the farmer and who's not the farmer, guerillas, we got experience with that.

### **Interviewer**

So did you have a family at this time?

### **Tony Phan**

No. I was single until the end of the war, April 30th, 1974, I was still single.

### **Interviewer**

Some of our vets talked about going into villages and helping them. Were you part of that team who tried to win the hearts and minds of the civilians?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, psychologically, when the American troops came into any village, the villagers loved them very, very much. Especially for the kids. The kids came up to the American soldier and they ask something because usually the American soldier give them some food or cookie, candy, something like that, you know? They love chocolate and

when the Vietnamese kid came to him, "Oh, chocolat, chocolat." They mean, "Chocolate, chocolate," you know? And they give them some of that. Actually the American soldier, they made a good friendship with the villagers. Due to what the support for the people in the village, they give them some food or everything they need, they give them. Then that's a good thing for the U.S. troop. They're helping people there in the village and the true villager, I mean the real villager, they really love the American troops except untrue villager, they mean the Viet Cong. Viet Cong, they get into the village and the American soldier think that he's farmer, some of that, you know? But they're not. So that's the disadvantage for the U.S. troop in Vietnam.

### **Interviewer**

Were you in the United States when Kennedy was shot?

### **Tony Phan**

Let's see, yes, uh-huh.

### **Interviewer**

Are you seeing some things that are beginning to worry you because America's not doing it correctly or they're not listening?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, politically I think the late President Kennedy who didn't want to send the U.S. troops there to Vietnam. But all the politicians, they want that, you know? The late President Kennedy was shot about more than a month after Ngo Dinh Diem get killed in Vietnam. And at that time I didn't know, but later, a few years later I recognized that the reason why the late President Kennedy was killed. Because he did something against the ruler of that time. A lot of people at that time, they want to send the American troops into Vietnam. And to my experience, I learned something about the war there because all the American politicians, they want to send people there to use our weapon, own weapon, because they produce a new weapon, but how about the stock of the old weapon so we need to make a war. So go to Vietnam and use them. That's the reason. At that time, I didn't know. But later on, I recognized that. And not only me, but a lot of people in Vietnam thought they recognized that. We have to know for sure that either in the United States between the republic and the democrat, two party. But only the top two party, you know, for sure that the power, the control of that two party. And when those people at the top, they won. So either you belong to Democrat or Republican, you have the order and you have to do that. If you do something against them so you can get killed like President Kennedy.

### **Interviewer**

In Vietnam you're watching this build up and build up so when the Americans come in we have tremendous resources. How is this changing your country?

### **Tony Phan**

Well, change a lot of things. About the human being life change. Because the more American troops went there, they make the economy going up, of course; they spend a lot of money and the dollar's easy to spend. It's a good

thing because when you make the local economy go up, it's a good sign for the people. And everywhere they build new building, a lot of bar, dancing club, everything. People, you got the money from the U.S. soldier because the dollar, they pay very easy, you know? That's the good thing for the Vietnam economy at that time, it's a good thing. The bad thing, something they made, the people in some big city-but I think it was inevitable because they make something like prostitutes, some of that. Because of course, half a million people there so they need the girl, of course. I was a Marine, I know that when you go out to any city, they want to have some girl, some of that. So the American soldiers the same way. So half a million of American soldiers was there so they attract a lot of girls, they become these prostitutes. These thing is the bad thing of that.

### **Interviewer**

Drugs and things like that?

### **Tony Phan**

At that time we didn't have a lot of drugs like now. But yeah, some. Some drugs there. And the presence of the U.S. troops there make some good thing and some bad things, but in a way we have to accept that about the war. The first thing is are the good weapon and very good support when they went out on the operation. So the American troop did a lot of good thing, make the fighting with the Communist very good. But we have to accept some case happen like they couldn't recognize who's the farmer, who's the VC, and they called all the artillery support there to destroy the whole village or something like that.

But in general, I think, we really didn't need a lot of the U.S. troops in Vietnam by that war because doing again, the guerilla's completely different with the big war because we don't have the front, we don't have the objective, that's the big thing. Another thing is, when the U.S. Army sends the U.S. troops to Vietnam, so I can listen to radio, the Communist radio in the North and they say now the American came into seize Vietnam so we have to pull more people to-they invade South Vietnam-something like that. Just kind of the propaganda of the North Vietnamese government.

### **Interviewer**

So that would escalate?

### **Tony Phan**

Yes, correct. The more people, the more U.S. troops in Vietnam, the more they penetrate in through the Ho Chi Minh Trail through the South. And the level of the units upgrade too. Before, like I told you lately before, the platoon, the company level, but later on, battalion division, something like that. And before guerillas they have the rifle only, but later on they send to the tank in. So that means that makes the war bigger and bigger. And with the free world, when they learn about that, due to the North Vietnamese Communists' propaganda, they say now we have to go and send our troops to Vietnam to free the Vietnam under the control of the American. That's a bad thing.

## **Interviewer**

Did you see, as a South Vietnamese, and an officer, did you see influence from China or Russia on this war?

## **Tony Phan**

Yes, of course, we did. Actually, when we seize any prisoner from the North Vietnamese prisoner and we ask them, they say something interesting to us. And even though some North Vietnamese soldier, they wear like the uniform, like what they call the South Vietnam Liberation Front-this was a Communist-they didn't use the word "communist" in there-"South Vietnam Liberation Front." So this kind of propaganda was in the South Vietnamese people. They think, oh, this is the people from the South Vietnam; they want you to liberate the South Vietnam out of the U.S. Something like that, you know?

But when we kept some soldier from the guerillas and we asked them and they told us the true story. They're communists and some of them came in from the North. But they wear the uniform of the South Vietnam Liberation Front. And the hat different too. Something like that. But when the war increased, bigger and bigger and the North Vietnamese, they couldn't hide anything, and they used all the big troops like at the division level and they used the tank too. Anti-tank, artillery, everything. They pour in through the Vietnamese trail into the South. So that was the reason why the Tet Offensive in 1968, we got in a big fight with the communists there and all the prisoners we took from the North Vietnam. How the South Vietnam, they have the tank? From the North. And through the investigate and through the asking of the prisoner and they're from the North. That result was because the people in the North Vietnam, they say now in the South the Americans sees the South so we have permission to liberate the South for the freedom. And the poor people, people every day like that, you know?

## **Interviewer**

What were the years that you were serving?

## **Tony Phan**

From October 1959 until April 30th 1975.

## **Interviewer**

The whole war?

## **Tony Phan**

The whole war, yes. I spent like 15 and a half years in Marine.

## **Interviewer**

What was your rank on April 30th?

## **Tony Phan**

My last rank was Major.

## **Interviewer**

Was the Vietnam War a fight against communism or a civil war in your opinion?

## Tony Phan

Well, if looking at the (inaudible 56:46) they saying all civil war because North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese, they fight each, civil war. But, they forgot one thing. Because North Vietnam belong to the Communism and South Vietnam belong to the Republic, freedom. So they need to know to the truth of the war. That means the war between the Communists against the freedom country. They say, "Well, you're the friend, you're brother in one family, why you fight each other?" Not like that. Not like probably in the family fight each other. No.

But this one is the Communists and Not-Communists. So a lot of people, like the other in the eastern country, they don't know for sure about the situation in Vietnam and they think why the American people get into Vietnam to make the war there? Because they are probably in the family, each other why we join in. But they don't mention about the communism. And the Vietnamese Communists were strongly supported by the Russians and the Chinese. And we knew for sure that without this support from the communists, meaning the Russians and the Chinese, the North Vietnamese Communists cannot do anything with us, you know?

I'll give you an example like the Tet Offensive, they mean the Tet of 1968, I think the secret thing is why did all of the U.S. forces didn't do anything about three, four, or five first days of the war of the Tet Offensive? So, we found out what the answer was.

At that time, during the Tet Offensive, probably the U.S. government try to let the North Vietnamese Communists to come over to the South if they want that war so they can seize the South Vietnamese in 1968. That's the reason why about first three, four, five days, all the American ally stay there. They don't do anything. And when, after the first week, the South Vietnam want the war. And then the American troop support us. This lesson was learned after the war and we can recognize, why, yes. At that time the U.S. troops, they called them, they didn't do anything. Why? Until, when they recognize that all the South Vietnamese element who can beat up the North Vietnamese troop. Especially, at that time, the Tet Offensive, I see the old city in Hue, the old capital in Hue-28 day and night we fought there. And do you know, they see if they are very strong. And we fought 28 days and night. And after that, like the first week, the American troop never help us anything. But after a week or so we can call them, they sent us all those, and some of that help for us. At that time we didn't know why they didn't do anything to help us. But after a week or so, they help. And even the other cities the same way.

## Interviewer

And this was because --?

## Tony Phan

Okay, I tell you. Probably, I think 80 percent or 90 percent is the truth-the American government want to let the North Vietnamese penetrate in and seize all the city in South Vietnam. If the Communists want that game, meaning they can seize the whole Vietnam, so that's okay with the American. So they don't need the Paris agreement at all. Because at that time it's 1968, see?

## **Interviewer**

There's the other argument that we could actually see them as units and fight them to eliminate them. What do you think of that point of view?

## **Tony Phan**

Well, argument is argument because sometimes they discuss this way, sometimes other way, it depends on your position, right? So to our position, meaning the Vietnamese people, and we're a soldier and we know, you know? And actually, during the war, during that fight, we hid the truth. Like I told you lately, why the American troops didn't do anything for the first three, four, or five days? Nothing. They mean let's free like that. If the North Vietnamese took over the South, that's also okay.