Thoughts -- Memorial Day 2025

Flawed, fake and false narratives denigrate the sacrifices of those who died…

The following talk was delivered in-conference at Hillsdale College, Washington, DC on April 30th, 2025. I had been asked to speak “about truths learned while writing fiction…” about the war in Vietnam and Cambodia, and about the war’s aftermath in America.

To me, to be true to the meaning of Memorial Day, one must understand the meanings behind the ultimate sacrifices of so many good men and women. To accept flawed or false narratives denigrates those sacrifices, and ignores the consequences produced by faulty story.

Synopsis: The war did not end 50 years ago. If that’s what’s being commemorated, I have no words that can be publicly spoken. What changed in April ’75 was the removal of any armed opposition to communist forces. The ensuing tyranny of the next ten years produced genocides, gulags, deaths at sea for those fleeing communist oppression—and likely twice the number of deaths compared to those who died from the wars - 1954 to 1975.

(The talk below was typed in Speechwriter mode (all caps), with bold for emphasis, and to make it easier for me to find my place when glancing back down at the podium.)

**. . . . .**

**ONE DOES NOT NEED TO BE NICE TO THE ENABLERS OF GENOCIDE.**

LET ME REPEAT THAT.

ONE DOES **NOT** NEED TO BE NICE TO THE ENABLERS OF GENOCIDE.

WE’LL GET BACK TO THAT THOUGHT, BUT FIRST LET ME TELL YOU A BIT ABOUT MY JOURNEY THROUGH WRITING FICTION, WHICH HAS BROUGHT ME TO THIS CONCLUSION.

PICTURE A CLASSROOM—LAFAYETTE COLLEGE--THE FALL OF ‘68. THE CLASS IS - *THE PHYSIOLOGY OF PSYCHOLOGY.* I’M APSYCH MAJOR. I’M HOPING TO FOCUS ON THE BIOLOGICAL CORRELATE OF BEHAVIOR. THE PROFESSOR IS YOUNG. **FIRST CLASS** OF THE SEMESTER HE PROUDLY ANNOUNCES HE CANNOT TEACH US ANYTHING BECAUSE ALL LEARNING CAN ONLY BE DONE BY THE STUDENT. HE CONTINUES, **THEREFORE I WON’T TRY**. **THE CLASS WILL BE AN OPEN DISCUSSION ON ANY TOPIC.**

THIS SEMESTER I’M WORKING FULL-TIME, THIRD SHIFT, AT THE INGERSOLL AND RAND PUMP FACTORY IN PHILLIPSBURG, NEW JERSEY. I’M A MATERIAL HANDLER SUPPLYING MACHINISTS WITH RAW CASTING. I CAN DO THE JOB IN ABOUT AN HOUR; THE FOREMAN ALLOWS ME TO STUDY OR SLEEP IN HIS OFFICE.

BACK IN THE CLASSROOM THE DISCUSSIONS ARE ABOUT THE WAR… ONLY ABOUT THE WAR! I DON’T KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT IT, BUT I’M CONVINCED THESE NITWITS KNOW LESS THAN I. **THREE CLASSES**, ALL THE SAME. I DROP OUT. TUITION THAT YEAR IS $3,000. I’M ANGRY, BUT I’M NOT FOCUSED. I DIDN’T FULLY REALIZE IT THEN, BUT THAT ANGER SET OFF IN ME A NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE REALITY OF THE WAR.

**THAT WAS THE BEGINNING.**  I GRADUATED IN June ’69; WASN’T DRAFTED UNTIL DECEMBER.

IN BASIC TRAINING AND A.I.T. THAT NEED BECAME A NEED TO MEET THE CHALLENGE, TO EXCEL, TO LEARN GOOD SOLDIERING. SOME WRITERS HAVE MENTIONED THEIR DESIRE TO WITNESS HISTORY. I CAN’T CLAIM HAVING BEEN THAT AWARE.

WHEN I ARRIVED IN VIETNAM—A REPLACEMENT SOLDIER, I WAS FASCINATED, PERHAPS NAÏVE. I WAS AN FNG, A CHERRY—DRIVEN TO DISCOVER ALL I COULD—FROM THE GROUND UP. MY A.I.T. TRAINING HAD BEEN AS AN INFORMATION SPECIALIST—JOURNALIST. PERFECT.

**LITTLE DID I REALIZE**—AND AT THE TIME, NOT THINKING IN THESE TERMS—THAT DISCOVERING VERACITY WOULD TAKE DECADES; THAT ANSWERING THE QUESTION: “WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE TRUTH IS DISTORTED?” WOULD REQUIRE A NEW PARADIGM; THAT REACHING CONCLUSIONS ABOUT ENABLERS OF GENOCIDE WOULD DEMAND A UNIFIED THEORY OF INDIVIDUAL AND CULTURAL NARRATIVES.

TRUTH IS DISCOVERED, OR UNCOVERED, IN LAYERS. FOR ME, THE FIRST ‘LAYERS’ OF TRUTH WERE MORE TACTICAL **THAN** STRATEGIC, POLITICAL, OR HISTORIC. THEY WERE MORE PERSONAL—MORE PHYSICALLY, TERRAINE AND CLIMATE PERSONAL. THAT WOULD LEAD TO AN AWARENESS OF PATHETIC ACCOUNTS OF ACTIONS WRITTEN BY NEWMEN, OR SPOKEN BY POLITICIANS, IN WHICH EVENTS DESCRIBED WERE OBVIOUSLY FLAWED, AS THEY WERE IMPOSSIBLE ON THAT TERRAINE OR UNDER THOSE WEATHER CONDITIONS.

MORE ON THIS AS WE GET INTO THE BATTLES OF THE THUONG SON CORRIDOR. WITHOUT AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELEVANCE OF THAT CORRIDOR FROM ‘41 TO ‘75, ONE CANNOT UNDERSTAND THE WAR.

A DIFFERENT TRUTH LAYER WAS PERSONNEL PERSONAL. WHO WERE WE, WE AMERICANS IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIET NAM? WHO WERE OUR VIETNAMESE ALLIES? ABOUT AMERICA, I WROTE THE FOLLOWING AS PART OF THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR’S NOTE FOR THE 13TH VALLEY:

In 1970 we were still dreaming the impossible dream, still fighting the invisible foe. We still believed we could bear any burden in the pursuit of liberty at home and overseas. We saw ourselves as an exceptional society with attendant obligations to right wrongs around the globe, **but the number of skeptics** was growing, and various elements in our society were bent on undermining our American character.

FURTHER DOWN IN THAT NOTE I EXPLAINED A BIT ABOUT WRITING **The Novel.** In the LATE SUMMER of ‘72, five months after BEING discharged, I MOVED TO MAINE, LIVED IN A REMOTE FARMHOUSE, HUNTED IN THE MORNINGS, WROTE IN THE EVENINGS, INTO THE WEE HOURS. I WROTE FROM MEMORY, DREW MAPS FROM MEMORY, RAN OUT OF FUNDS JUST PRIOR TO CHRISTMAS, RETURNED TO MY FOLK’S HOME IN CONNECTICUT, AND STASHED MY MANUSCRIPT IN A DRAWER NOT TO BE LOOKED AT FOR NEARLY FOUR YEARS.

Late 1974— I was now living in California, selling real estate, managing an office, training agents—it was more than 18 months after the Paris Peace Accords… I had no thoughts OR worries about Southeast Asia…, but as life would have it, my next-door neighbor was the local Marine Corps recruiter. He asks me to tune back in.

HE TOLD ME There were inklings of a massive NVA offensive. Communist forces were bursting from the jungles of I Corps, from the red clays of the Central Highlands. The scenes in **CARRY ME HOME** about groups of veterans gathering, signing up with a vague private organization, volunteering to return to Vietnam, are based upon meetings we attended. The collapse came far more quickly than the organization was able to respond.

IN A BIT, WE’LL TAKE A PEEK AT THE LOGISTICS OF THAT ASSAULT; BUT WE‘VE A WAYS TO GO.

Summer ’75--refugees were streaming IN through Hamilton Air Force Base a mere three miles from my home. The LOCAL media were aflame with stories about American veterans. Most were partial truths focusing on drug abuse, atrocities, fraggings and racism. These were already cliches. That is, they had already become part of the standard narrative. The media were now reinforcing flawed, fake or skewed stories, **cementing into the collective American mind** what **IT** wished to have you accept as truth.

I DIDN’T DISLIKE SELLING REAL ESTATE. I WAS GOOD AT IT. I EARNED MORE MONEY IN SIX MONTHS THAN I HAD IN NEARLY THREE YEARS ACTIVE DUTY. I OWNED A HOUSE, A CAR, MOTORCYCLES, CAMERA EQUIPMENT. BUT SOMETHING WAS WRONG.

IN MID ‘76 I REOPENED THOSE OLD MAINE NOTEBOOKS**. I SOLD MY CAMERA EQUIPMENT.** I MADE CONTACT WITH DR. JOHN HENRY HATCHER OF THE CENTER FOR MILITARY HISTORY, WHO SUPPLIED ME WITH AFTER ACTION REPORTS FROM THE KHE TA LAOU BATTLE.

**I SOLD MY MOTORCYCLES.**

I OBTAINED ORIGINAL 1::50,000 TOPO MAPS OF NORTHERN I CORPS, WAS PROVIDED WITH NOTEBOOKS AND REMEMBERANCES FROM BOONIERAT FRIENDS.

AT THIS TIME I WAS **NOT** WRITING ABOUT AMERICAN FORCES IN GENERAL, I WAS FOCUED ON THE 101ST AIRBORNE DIVISION. I BELIEVED IT TO BE THE MOST ELITE DIVISION-SIZED UNIT IN THE WAR.

AS A MILITARY JOURNALIST I’D SPENT BETWEEN 100 AND 120 DAYS IN THE BOONIES WITH INFANTRY UNITS; LESSER TIME WITH ARTILLERY UNITS ON FIREBASES, OR WITH CIVIL AFFAIRS UNITS GOING OUT ON MEDCAPS OR DELIVERING DONATED GOODS TO ORPHANAGES.

AND THERE WAS OFF DUTY TIME SPENT AS A TOURIST IN THE VERY PEACEFUL CITY OF HUE, OR OUT ALONG QL 547 TO MINH MANG’S OR GIA LAI’S PALACE—AREAS WHERE HEAVILY ARMED UNITS FOUGHT A YEAR OR TWO EARLIER, **AND NOW** WHERE WE WENT—TWO GUYS IN A JEEP, UNARMED.

THOSE HISTORIES WHICH BASICALLY END AFTER TET OF ’68, COMPLETELY MISSED JUST HOW PEACEFUL THE LOWLANDS AND POPULATION CENTERS HAD BECOME.

DURING MY TIME IN THE FIELD I DID SEE INCIDENTS OF THE DRUG ABUSE AND RACISM, BUT THESE INCIDENTS WERE RARE AND IN NO WAY REPRESENTED THE ESSENCE OF THE EXPERIENCE. THERE WAS RACIAL TENSION, INTER-RACIAL VIOLENCE, YET THE GENERAL PATTERN WAS ONE OF **INTER-RACIAL HARMONY.** AT THE TIME, WE HAD A SAYING, **“An AK round don’t care about the color of your paint job.”** THAT’S A STORY THE MEDIA MISSED; AND IN ITS CURRENT FORM IT IS MORE PANDERING THAN REALITY.

INDIVIDUALLY AND CULTURALLY WE LEARN FROM NARRATIVES. THEY SHAPE OUR SELF-IMAGE, WORLD VIEW AND BELIEF SYSTEMS. OUR BEHAVIORS TEND TO BE CONSISTENT WITH THOSE IMAGES, VIEWS AND BELIEFS.

IMAGINE IF INTER-RACIAL HARMONY HAD BEEN THE STANDARD NARRATIVE FOR THE PAST 50 YEARS. WOULD RACE RELATIONS, TODAY, IN AMERICAN, BE DIFFERENT?

-----**NOW I WAS FOCUSED.** I RIPPED THE OLD MANUSCRIPT APART, RE-OUTLINED THE BATTLE, PLAYED SOME GAMES WITH THE NUMBER 13.

I ALSO FOUND A WAY TO RECOVER MEMORIES BURIED DOWN DEEP AMID THE GLIAL CELLS WHERE THERE ARE RECORDS OF THINGS YOUR EYES HAVE SEEN OR YOUR SKIN HAS SENSED, OF WHICH YOU WERE NOT AWARE.

IN DEEP, MEDITATION, ONE CAN SHAKE LOOSE THESE MEMORIES, CAN RE-FEEL THE BULLET THAT WENT INTO THE EARTH JUST BENEATH THE SOLE OF YOUR BOOT, OR RE-LIVE THE GLINT OF STEEL BEFORE IT PASSED YOUR HEAD.

I WROTE TWELVE HOURS A DAY, SOMETIME SIXTEEN.

**I SOLD** MY HOUSE TO KEEP WRITING.

THE MEDIA CONTINUED TO REINFORCE THEIR PREFERRED NARRATIVES; AND I ENDED UP WITH A MANUSCRIPT NO ONE WOULD READ.

LATE SUMMER 1980 – NOW HAVING MOVED BACK TO CONNECTICUT, NOW WITH AN AMAZING WIFE AND A SIX-MONTH-OLD SON, I THREW THE MANUSCRIPTS INTO A BOX, STUCK IT ON A SHELF, AND… WELL… ACTIVATE A CONNECTICUT REAL ESTATE LICENSE.

THEN—ON THE 29TH OF DECEMBER, A NEW YORK AGENT—GIVEN CHAPTERS OF THE MANUSCRIPT VIA FRIENDS IN SAN FRANCISCO—CONTACTED ME. FROM THAT MOMENT THINGS MOVED DIFFERENTLY.

THE 13TH VALLEY WAS PUBLISHED IN THE SUMMER OF ‘82. I HAD BECOME CONVINCED BY THE MEDIA OF THE VETERAN STEROTYPES, BUT I WAS CERTAIN THOSE STORIES WERE ABOUT MARINES OR OTHER ARMY DIVISIONS.

I BEGAN RECEIVING LETTERS. LOTS OF LETTERS. MORE THAN 3000. THEY CAME IN TWO WAVES. FIRST FROM VETERANS WITH LINES SUCH AS, “THAT’S THE WAY WE OPERATED. WE’RE YOU WITH MY UNIT?” OR “I’VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO TELL MY WIFE WHAT IT WAS LIKE. I GAVE HER YOUR BOOK AND SAID, THIS IS WHO WE WERE. THIS IS WHAT IT WAS LIKE FOR ME.”

SOME OF THE LETTERS WERE FROM VETERANS OF THE 101ST. THAT I EXPECTED. MOST WERE FROM GUYS FROM OTHER UNITS—EVEN MARINES. LOTS OF MARINES.

THE LETTERS SET OFF A DEEPER ROUND OF DISCOVERY. I READ MORE, RESEARCHED MORE. I INTERVIEWED MORE VETERANS, AND NOW NUMEROUS SOUTHEAST ASIAN REFUGEES. I BEGAN TO REALIZE HOW NEARLY UNIVERSAL WERE THE VALUES AND POSITIVE BEHAVIORS OF AMERICANS; HOW CLOSELY THOSE OF US WHO FOUGHT EXAMPLIFIED THE ALTRUISTIC IDEALS BUILT UPON HEROIC NARRATIVES FROM WW II; IDEALS THAT WERE REFLECTED IN THE NATIONAL CHARACTER OF OUR YOUTH, AND THAT WE CARRIED WITH US INTO SOUTHEAST ASIA.

LET’S LOOK AT THE RELEVENCE OF THE BATTLE FOR THE 13TH VALLEY. NOT JUST THAT BATTLE, BUT ALL THE BATTLES FOR THE TRUONG SON CORRIDOR. THEN WE CAN LOOK AT LAOS AND CAMBODIA—THEATERS OF THE WAR SINCE 1952, PERHAPS EARLIER.

1941: THINK BACK TO THAT TIME. THERE WAS NOT ONE VIETNAM—THERE WERE FOUR FRENCH PROTECTORATES OR ADMINISTRATIVE ZONES: TONKIN IN THE NORTH, ANNAM IN THE CENTER, AND COCHIN CHINA IN THE SOUTH.

THE MAIN ROAD CONNECTING NORTH, CENTRAL AND SOUTH WAS THE COASTAL ROAD QL 1. IN 1941, DURING THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION, THAT COMMAND SAW THE STRATEGIC VULNERABILITY OF THE COASTAL ROAD, AND ORDERED FRENCH ENGINEERS TO LAYOUT AND BUILD NEW ROADS TO THE WEST.

THE FIRST ROAD WAS LAID OUT THROUGH THE FOURTH ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE, **THE CROWN DOMINION LANDS**—GENERALLY IN THE AREAS WE CALLED THE CENTRAL HIGHLANDS. IT BRANCHED OFF QL 13 north of Saigon, then RAN NORTH up INTO THE WILDERNESS, TO BAN ME THUOT, DAK TO, KHAM DUC--MONTAGNARD AND CHAM TERRITORY. [Gordon Hedderly Smith: The Blood Hunters]

BAN ME THOUT, THE LARGEST CITY IN THE HIGHLANDS, IN ‘41 HAD A VIETNAMESE POPULATION OF 25.

FURTHER SOUTH, 1949: MENTIONED HERE BECAUSE OF PARALLELS WE’LL SEE IN A MOMENT… 34,000 SQUARE MILES OF THE MEKONG DELTA—HISTORICALLY KAMPUCHEA KROM, LOWER CAMBODIA—WERE LOPPED OFF FROM THE KINGDOM AND MADE PART OF COCHIN CHINA, **PRIOR TO** CAMBODIA BEING GRANTED DU JOUR INDEPENDENCE WITHIN THE FRENCH UNION.

BACK TO THE RELEVENCE OF THE CORRIDOR… 1953-56: VIETNAM IS DIVIDED INTO NORTH AND SOUTH. IN THE NORTH, TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POWER, THE VIET MINH LAUNCHED A LAND REFORM CAMPAIGN AIMED AT LIQUIDATING THE FEUDAL CLASS, REACTIONARIES, AND TRAITORS. THE NUMBERS OF THOSE EXECUTED VARY. APOLOGIST HISTORIANS HAVE ATTEMPTED TO ESTABLISH THE NUMBER AT 5,000. THE CIA ESTIMATED 30,000 TO 100,000. SOME NORTH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS, “AFTER THE WAR”, INDICATED 500,000.

USE A LOW FIGURE—75,000. WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY MEAN? KINDLY UNCLE HO, YOU KNOW, THE GEORGE WASHINGTON OF HIS COUNTRY, ALONG WITH ASSOCIATES, MURDERED, WITH THIS **REFORM**, THE EQUIVALENT IN TODAY’S AMERICA OF NEARLY 2 MILLION PEOPLE.

THIS DOES NOT INCLUDE THE MILLION NORTHERNERS WHO FLED SOUTH—ABOUT 8 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION— U.S. EQUIVALENT 26 MILLION. SOME ACCOUNTS INDICATE ANOTHER MILLION ATTEMPTED TO ESCAPE BUT WERE FORCED TO STAY.

AND WHERE DO YOU SUSPECT MANY OF THOSE WHO FLED SETTLED? MAYBE IN THE LOWER DELTA, OR IN THE HIGHLANDS? HOW DO YOU THINK THE INHABITANTS OF BAN ME THUOT FELT WHEN THE VIETNAMESE POPULATION OF THEIR CITY WENT FROM 25 TO PERHAPS 2,500, MAYBE 25,000?

NORTH VIETNAM WAS GOING THROUGH **TERRIBLE** TRANSITION PAINS FROM A FRENCH PROTECTORATE TO LIFE UNDER A STAR PUPIL OF JOSEPH STALIN; WHILE IN THE SOUTH, UNDER PRESIDENT NGO DINH DIEM, THE ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE WERE EXPANDING. BUT WHAT WAS THE MEDIA’S FOCUS? – UNREST IN THE HIGHLANDS AND IN THE LOWER DELTA?

FOREIGN OBSERVERS REPORTED THIS AS ANTI-DIEM PROTESTS. COULD IT BE THAT THE REPORTERS MISUNDERSTOOD? AFTER ALL, DIEN WAS A CATHOLIC… CERTAINLY THAT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE FACT THE REAL ESTATE OF THE INDIGINOUS POPULATIONS HAD BEEN OVERRUN.

HANOI, JANUARY 1959: FIVE YEARS AFTER VIETNAM WAS DIVIDED INTO TWO AUTONOMOUS STATES, THE POLITBURO APPROVES PLANS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THREE INVASION ROUTE [**YES, INVASION**—LET’S NOT ENABLE A FALSE NARRATIVES BY USING A ‘SOFTER’ TERM] – ESTABLISHED INVASION ROUTES INTO THE SOUTH, INTO LAOS, AND INTO CAMBODIA.

THIS WAS ESSENTIALLY A DECLARATION OF WAR. THE ROUTES 559, 759 AND 959, WERE NUMBERED FOR THE MONTH AND YEAR OF INCEPTION—MAY, JULY AND SEPTEMBER ‘59. 559 OVERLAPPED THE ORIGINAL INLAND ROAD LAID OUT IN ‘41 BY FRENCH ENGINEERS.

POLITICAL CADRE, ASSASSINS, AND SABOTURES WERE FURTIVELY TRANSPORTED DOWN THESE LINES OF ADVANCE. IN 1960 100 SOUTH VIETNAMESE OFFICIALS—VILLAGE TO PROVINCE LEADERS, WERE MURDEREDED EACH MONTH. BY ’62 THAT FIGURE GREW TO 1000/MONTH—OVER 20,000 IN THREE YEARS…. U.S. EQUIVALEN OF NEARLY HALF A MILLION MURDERED. AN EQUAL NUMBER ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN “DISAPPEARED.”

ANYONE **THINK** THAT PERHAPS COUNTER-MEASURES WERE MORAL? HOW IS IT THAT THE STANDARD NARRATIVE LABELS THIS WAR IMMORAL?

EIGHT YEARS LATER, IN **THE 13TH VALLEY**, BROOKS, EGAN AND CHERRY ARE SITTING ATOP THE **REAL HILL** 848, LOOKING EAST TO THE SOUTH CHINA SEA, AND WEST INTO LAOS. HAVING AMERICAN TROOPS ON OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS IN THESE JUNGLED MOUNTAINS IS A POLITICAL FOOTBALL.

Senator Ted Kennedy criticized battles in this region in a speech before Congress: “I feel it is both senseless and irresponsible to continue to send our young men to their deaths to capture hills and positions that have no relation to ending this conflict.”

Contrary to Kennedy’s assessment, AS WE WILL SEE, these battles had everything to do with ending the conflict.

BEFORE WE LOOK AT THAT FINAL OFFENSIVE, LET’S SPEND A MOMENT LOOKING INTO CAMBODIA.

WHEN I WAS WRITING ***FOR THE SAKE OF ALL LIVING THINGS*** –-THE TITLE COMES FROM THE KHMER PRECEPT***, I WILL BECOME ENLIGHTENED FOR THE SAKE OF ALL LIVING THINGS—***I REALIZED THAT TELLING THE STORY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PHNOM PENH COULD ONLY REINFORCE THE PATHETIC ERRORS COMMON TO NEWS OF THE TIME AND TO LATER POLITICAL HISTORIES.

THE ORIGIN OF THE GENOCIDE WAS NOT TO BE FOUND IN THE CAPITAL, BUT IN REMOTE AREAS, IN THIS CASE IN THE NORTHEAST PROVINCES OF RATANAKIRI, MONDOLKIRI AND STUNG TRENG. IT IS HERE THAT THE FIRST COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALIST---THIS IS PRE-1954, PRE-THE BATTLE OF DIEN BIEN PHU, HERE IN THE HIGHLAND BORDER AREA WHICH MERGED WITH **THE CROWN DOMINION LANDS** — HERE AT A TIME WHEN DIEN BIEN PHU WAS A VIET MINH TRANS-SHIPMENT CAMP FOR VIET AND CHINESE AGENTS AND MATERIELS **NOT** **INTO** VIETNAM BUT DOWN FROM THE CHINESE BORDER TO DIEN BIEN PHU, THEN ONTO THE PLAIN OF JARS. …

**THINK ABOUT THIS:** THE FRENCH DIDN’T TAKE OVER THE VIET MINH BASE AT DBP TO KEEP INSURGENTS OUT OF VIETNAM, BUT TOOK IT OVER TO DISRUPT AND DESTROY THE VIET MINH AND THEIR CHINESE ALLIES WHO WERE SPREADING COMMUNIST REVOLUTION AND TYRANNY INTO LAOS AND CAMBODIA.

**THESE WERE EARLY MANUEVERS BY THE INTERNATIONALIST ATTEMPTING TO ESTABLISH COMMUNIST HEGEMONY OVER ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.**

IN ***FOR THE SAKE…*** AND WITH THE HELP OF CAMBODIAN REFUGEES LIVING IN DANBURY, CONNECTICUT, THE TINY, FICTIOUS VILLAGE OF PHUM SATH DIN, AND THE FAMILY OF CAHUOM CHHUON, WERE CREATED. CHHUON IS A SMALL-TIME RICE MERCHANT WORKING FOR HIS BROTHER’S LARGE COMPANY LOCATED IN STUNG TRENG CITY, BUT WITH TIES TO NATIONAL BUSINESSMEN IN PHNOM PENH.

IT IS NOW AUGUST 1968.

IN CHAPTER TWO WE FIND CHHUON, WITH TWO OF HIS CHILDREN, DELIVERING RICE TO A JARAI TRIBE. NVA MILITRAY SCRIPT, NOT THE CAMBODIAN RIEL, IS THE CURRENCY OF TRADE.

THROUGH A SERIES OF EVENTS THE FAMILY IS SPLINTERED. ONE SON IS CAPTURED BY THE KHMER ROUGE; THE ELDEST DAUGHTER IS MARRIED OFF TO THE SON OF A WEALTHY RICE MERCHANT IN PHNOM PENH. FROM THESE PERSPECTIVES—A RURAL VILLAGE, A SMALL PROVINCIAL CITY, THE HIGHLANDS, AND THE CAPITAL—THE STORIES OF THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNIST INVASION, THE RISE OF THE KHMER ROUGE, THE FINAL GENOCIDE AND THE DEMISE OF CAMBODIA, ARE TOLD.

A FEW POINTS.

1954, PRINCE SIRIK MATAK—PLEASE REMEMBER THAT NAME—WAS THE DEFENSE MINISTER UNDER PRINCE NORODOM SIHANOUK. 15 YEARS LATER—APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS BEFORE SIHANOUK IS REMOVED BY A VOTE OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY—MATAK HAS RISEN TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER.

RECALL ‘69—THERE WAS MUCH DEBATE— AND DENIAL—ABOUT NVA TROOPS BEING IN CAMBODIA. YET WE’VE LEARN THAT PRINCE MATAK, IN ’69, SECRETLY VISITED HANOI, MET WITH COMMUNIST LEADERS, AND ATTEMPTED TO FIND **A SOLUTION WHICH WOULD REMOVE ALL NORTH VIETNAMESE TROOPS FROM CAMBODIAN SOIL.**

DAVID CHANDLER, IN **A HISTORY OF CAMBODIA**, WROTE MATAK **WAS FURIOUS** “WHEN [AT THIS MEETING] HE WAS SHOWN DOCUMENTS **SIGNED BY** [PRINCE] SIHANOUK, AGREEING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORTH VIETNAMESE BASES, AND THE TRANSPORTATION OF VIETNAMESE SUPPLIES THROUGH CAMBODIAN PORTS.” (Wikipedia)

SIHANOUK KNEW, MATAK KNEW, MANY PEASANTS AND ROYAL TROOPS ALONG THE BORDER KNEW, THAT NORTH VIETNAM HAD CONQUERED MUCH OF EASTERN CAMBODIA.

FROM HERE THE NOVEL MOVES FORWARD.

DAILY, I READ ACCOUNTS OF BRUTALITY AND TORTURE.

DAILY I’D COME ACROSS NEW FORMS OF SADISM. MEN DISEMBOWELED AS THEIR CHILDREN WERE FORCED TO WATCH; MOTHERS HAVING THEIR INFANTS SNATCHED FROM THEIR ARMS THEN SWUNG BY THE ANKLES UNTIL THEIR HEADS IMPACTED ON TREES AND EXPLODED; CHILDREN KILLED BY HAVING CHOP STICKS DRIVEN THROUGH THEIR EARS AND INTO THEIR BRAINS.

THIS WAS NOT TENS OR HUNDREDS OF ACCOUNTS, BUT THOUSANDS OF THE MOST VICIOUS MURDERS CONCEIVALBE.

DID IT NEED TO HAPPEN? WAS IT THE SIDESHOW OF AN UNWINNABLE WAR? OR WAS IT ENABLED BY OMISSIONS FROM PUBLIC DISCLOSURE?

MAJOR INCIDENTS HAPPEN IN KOMPONG THOM CITY. THE CITY IS ACTUALLY A SMALL, RURAL TOWN LOCATED CENTRALLY EAST TO WEST, AND ABOUT HALFWAY NORTH BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND THE BORDER WITH LAOS. THE AREAS AROUND AND NORTH OF THE CITY ARE RURAL.

IN **FOR THE SAKE…** THIS INCIDENT HAPPENS IN ‘71, BUT AFTER READING **FINAL DAYS OF HEROES*,*** A BOOK BY CHIP BECK ***PUBLISHED*** TWO YEARS AGO… BECK WAS THE US EMBASSY’S LIASION FOR REFUGEE AFFAIRS IN KOMPONG THOM… I REALIZED MY TIME FRAME WAS OFF. THE EVENTS BEGAN IN ’71, BUT CLIMAXED IN ’74.

IN THE RURAL COUNTRYSIDE, THE KHMER ROUGE HAD ESTABLISH A “CAMP” FOR CAPTURED CITIZENS. THE NUMBER IMPRISONED GREW TO OVER 40,000.

WE ARE NOW IN THE PERIOD AFTER SIHANOUK’S OUSTING… LON NOL IS PRESIDENT, SIRIK MATAK IS PREMIER—BATTLES RAGE IN MANY AREAS OF THE COUNTRY AS KHMER ROUGE SOLDIERS, SUPPORTED BY NORTH VIETNAMESE UNITS WITH HEAVIER ARMS, ATTACK UNITS OF **FANK**, THE REPUBLIC OF CAMBODIA’S ARMED FORCES.

BECK DESCRIBES THE KHMER ROUGE AS “VULTURES HOVERING IN TREES AWAITING DEATH AMONG A FLOCK OF SHEEP…” AND AS “SOCIOPATHS FROM THEIR PROFESSIONAL LEADERS ON DOWN TO THEIR ILLITERATE FOOT SOLDIERS.”

SOME PEOPLE ESCAPE FROM THE CAMP—AGAIN BECK: “THESE VICTIMS FROM THE EMERGING KILLING FIELDS WERE CAUGHT ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE COMMUNIST CONTROL… MEN AND WOMEN BEATEN, HACKED, AND CHOPPED UP BY KHMER ROUGE ASSAILANTS…”

IN ‘74, 40,000 ESCAPED EN MASSE. THEY FLOOD THE SMALL CITY, NOW AN ISOLATED ISLAND OF SAFETY IN A TURBULENT SEA WHICH PROMISED PAIN AND TORTURE. SOMEHOW, WITH THE SUPPORT OF FANK, KOMPONG THOM HELD ON. --- BUT WHAT WAS REPORTED BY THE WESTERN MEDIA? WE’RE WE ALERTED TO YET ANOTHER POTENTIAL GENOCIDE? WERE THERE BANNER HEADLINES COMPARING WHAT WAS COMING TO WHAT HAD HAPPENED UNDER STALIN OR MAO?

SYDNEY SCHAMBERG, THE NEW YORK TIMES CORRESPONDENT WHO WOULD LATER SEEM HEROIC IN THE FILM **THE KILLING FIELDS,** A GUY WHO HAD VISITED CHIP BECK IN KOMPONG THOM, AND WHO HAD BEEN BRIEFED ON THE TACTICAL SITUATION… THAT IS, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE HE WAS UNAWARE OF THE MURDEROUS REALITY SURROUNDING HIM… WROTE, LESS THAN A WEEK BEFORE THE KHMER ROUGE EMPTIED THE CAPITAL AND INSTITUTED THE NATIONWIDE TERROR:

“WARS NOURISH BRUTALITY AND SADISM… BUT IT WOULD BE **TENDENTIOUS** TO FORCAST SUCH ABNORMAL BEHAVIOR AS A NATIONAL POLICY UNDER A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT…” [PAUL KENGOR; PRAGER UNIV.; 3/17/24]

TENDENTIOUS, SYDNEY?! I HAD TO LOOK THE WORD UP TO MAKE SURE I UNDERSTOOD WHAT THIS GUY WAS SAYING. BIAS, PREJUDICE, PARTISAN. AS IF THERE HAD BEEN NO ABNORMAL BEHAVIORS UNDER STALIN, MAO, AND VIRTUALLY EVERY COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT THAT HAD COME TO POWER SINCE 1917. AS IF THOSE GENOCIDES WERE NORMAL! **DID THE NEW YORK TIMES REPORT THE ATROCITIES AT KOMPONG THOM? PERHAPS THEY WERE HOLDING THE STORY… SAME WAY THE TIMES HELD THE STORY IN THE MID 1930s ABOUT STALIN’S FORCED STARVATION OF 4 MILLION UKRAINIANS.**

Ahh! BUT KOMPONG THOM… ONLY 40,000 PEOPLE. HEAVEN FORBID, SYDNEY, YOU MIGHT SAY SOMETHING; HEAVEN FORBID YOU MIGHT CAUSE YOUR READERS TO BE PREJUDICIAL! AND THE GRAY LADY, SO ELEGANT AS TO PRINT ALL THE NEWS THAT’S FIT TO PRINT, BUT TOO ELEGANT TO BE TENDENTIOUS AND SUGGEST THAT THOSE WHO HAVE DEMONSTRATED SOCIOPATHIC BEHAVIORS YESTERDAY MAY DO SO AGAIN TOMORROW?

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WE HAVE MORE ITEMS TO COVER. WE’LL GET BACK TO SIRIK MATAK, AND TO THE TRUONG SON CORRIDOR, BUT PLEASE ALLOW ME TO TAKE A SIDE TRIP INTO THE LIVES OF AMERICANS.

IN **CARRY ME HOME** I GET INTO PTSD, AGENT ORANGE, THE EFFECTS OF COMBAT, AND OF RETURNING TO PARADES OR LATER TO BE SPIT UPON… BUT THAT’S FOR ANOTHER TIME.

I’VE BEEN WRITING ABOUT THE RAMIFICATIONS OF SKEWED NARRATIVES FOR HALF A CENTURY. **MORE RECENTLY I’VE COME TO UNDERSTAND HOW EXTREME PARTISANSHIP IS A BELIEF SYSTEM BUILD UPON FALSE NARRATIVES; AND HOW FALSE NARRATIVES ALLOW MANY TO BELIEVE IN THEIR OWN GOOD AS THEY, PERHAPS UNKNOWINGLY, ENABLE HATE, BUTCHERY, SLAVERY, ASSASSINATIONS AND GENOCIDE.**

CHAPTER 32… **CARRY ME HOME**: *OPENING AND CLOSING ARGUMENTS… OF* ***THE GREAT MEDIA TRIAL****.*

ONE OF THE DOCUMENTS I WAS GIVEN WAS COMPILED FOR **VIETNAM: A TELEVISION HISTORY**, THE 13-PART PBS SERIES PRODUCED IN 1983 BY WGBH-TV, BOSTON. THE DOCUMENT: **NETWORK EVENING NEWS COVERAGE OF THE VIETNAM WAR: 1963-1977**, IS A COMPUTER PRINTOUT, LISTING, BY CATEGORY, EVERY EVENING NEWS BROADCAST ABOUT THE WAR BY NBC, ABC AND CBS.

THE VETS HAVE THIS PRINTOUT. THEY HAVE ANALYSED IT FOR USE IN THEIR EDUCATIONAL EXERCISE, A MOCK TRIAL. THE TRIAL IS FICTIOUS, BUT THE DOCUMENT AND THE NUMBERS INCLUDED ARE ACCURATE.

MY FOCUS IS ON ATROCITIES, MORE SPECIFICALLY ON THE LOP-SIDED REPORTING OF AMERICAN ATROCITIES VERSUS COMMUNIST ATROCITIES; AND THE EFFECT THAT REPORTING **HAD** ON VETERANS.

ATROCITIES ARE THE TURNING POINT. IT IS HERE WHERE THE DOCUMENT FROM WGBH, BECOMES RELEVANT.

THE MY LAI MASSACRE OCCURRED ON MARCH 16TH, 1968, BUT WASN’T EXPOSED UNTIL NOVEMBER 13TH, 1969.

FROM ‘63 TO ‘77, THE NETWORKS BROADCAST A TOTAL OF 9,447 EVENING NEWS STORIES ABOUT THE WAR. OF THAT TOTAL, 473 OR A BIT OVER 5%, DELT WITH MY LAI. BUT IF ONE LOOKS AT THE NUMBERS FROM THE TIME OF THE FIRST EXPOSE, THAT PERCENTAGE LEAPS TO NEARLY 9%. THAT IS, IN THE TIMEFRAME LATE ’69 TO ‘77, 1 OUT OF EVERY 11 STORIES IS ABOUT AN AMERICAN ATROCITY.

IT IS NOT MY INTENT TO DOWNPLAY WHAT HAPPENED IN THOSE HAMLETS. SOMEWHERE BETWEEN 347 AND 507 UNARMED, NON-COMBATANT VIETNAMESE CIVILIANS WERE MURDERED BY AMERICAN TROOPS. HORRIBLE! ENRAGING!

BUT, **IT** **IS** PROPER TO RECOGNIZE THE ABBERANT ATROCITIES OF ONE ARMY VERSUS THE PURPOSEFUL ATROCITIES OF ANOTHER.

---COMMUNIST ATROCITIES FROM ‘60 TO ‘62 ARE 40 TIMES HIGHER THAN WHAT HAPPENED AT MY LAI. COMMUNIST ATROCITIES-BY-QUOTA AT THE BATTLE FOR HUE IN ‘68 ARE 12 TIMES HIGHER. COMMUNIST ATROCITIES DURING THE ‘72 EASTER OFFENSIVE ARE PERHAPS 70 TIMES HIGHER. THESE ARE BARELY MENTIONED IN THE EVENING NEWS.

--- THEN THERE’S THE TESTIMONY OF A VIETNAM VETERAN BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS.

--- ON 22 APRIL ‘71, JOHN F. KERRY SAID:

--- “…SEVERAL MONTHS AGO IN DETROIT, WE HAD AN INVESTIGATION AT WHICH OVER 150 HONORABLY DISCHARGED AND MANY HIGHLY-DECORATED VETERANS TESTIFIED TO WAR CRIMES…, NOT ISOLATE INCIDENTS BUT CRIMES COMMITTED ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS WITH THE FULL AWARENESS OF OFFICERS AT ALL LEVELS OF COMMAND….” HE CONTINUED, “…IT’S IMPOSSIBLE TO DESCRIBE… EXACTLY WHAT DID HAPPEN IN DETROIT… THE FEELINGS OF MEN… RELIVING THAT ABSOLUTE HORROR OF WHAT THIS COUNTRY… **MADE THEM DO…” MORE KERRY:** “…STORIES… PERSONALLY RAPED, CUT OFF EARS, CUT OFF HEADS… CUT OFF LIMBS, BLOWN UP BODIES, RANDOMLY SHOT AT CIVILIANS, RAZED VILLAGES IN A FASHION REMINISCENT OF GENGHIS KHAN… AND GENERALLY RAVAGED THE COUNTRYSIDE…”

**NO WONDER**, WHEN WE CAME HOME, PEOPLE CALLED US BABY KILLERS. AND NO WONDER OUR COUNTRY DIDN’T WANT TO CONTINUE SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS TO STOP THE COMMUNISTS FROM TAKING OVER ALL OF SOUTHEAST ASIA!

OF COURSE, AS MOST OF YOU KNOW, KERRY’S “INVESTIGATION” WAS HIGHLY FLAWED. SOME MEN CAME FORWARD AND SAID KERRY HAD COACHED THEM ON WHAT TO SAY. OTHERS WHO HAD BEEN QUOTED SAID THAT IMPOSTERS HAD USED THEIR IDENTITIES, THAT THEY WERE NEVER THERE. OF THE 150 HIGHLY-DECORATED VETS, ONLY A HANDFUL WHO HAD ACTUALLY SERVED IN THE U.S. MILITARY, AND OF THOSE, PERHAPS ONLY HALF HAD SERVED IN VIETNAM, AND OF THOSE, I SEEM TO RECALL, LESS THAN FIVE WERE COMBAT VETS.

WHAT EFFECT DO YOU SUPPOSE THIS STANDARD NARRATIVE HAD ON HONORABLE VETERANS, ON MEN BEING CONFRONTED BY A SEEMINGLY HATEFUL NATION? WHAT DID THIS NARRATIVE DO TO THEIR SELF-IMAGE? PARTICULARLY IN THE EARLY YEARS AFTER RETURNING? WHAT DID IT DO TO THEIR MARRIAGES? TO THEIR FAMILIES? TO THEIR CAREERS, THEIR FINANCIAL STATUS? THEIR HEALTH?

AND WHAT EFFECT DID THESE FLAWED STORIES HAVE ON PUBLIC OPINION AND ON POLITICAL DECISIONS, WHEN, IN THE POST-PARIS PEACE ACCORD PERIOD, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE, TIME AND AGAIN, BROKE THE AGREEMENT BY SENDING MORE ARMS AND MORE MEN DOWN THE AVENUES OF ADVANCE?

-----------SCHAMBERG’S AND KERRY’S ROLE IN ESTABLISHING FLAWED NARRATIVES CAME LATE IN THE WAR. MUCH EARLIER THERE WERE MEN LIKE DAVID HALBERSTAM—LIKE SHAMBERG A CORRESPONDENT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES.

I MET DAVID IN LATE 2000 AT A CHRISTMAS PARTY IN NEW YORK. AT THE TIME WE WERE BOTH WORKING WITH BOB BENDER, A SENIOR EDITOR AT SIMON AND SCHUSTER. AFTER SHORT PLEASANTRIES, MR. BENDER ASKED HOW MY WRITING WAS GOING. I EXPLAINED THAT I HAD BEEN CORRECTING TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS I’D RECEIVED REGARDING A BATTLE DURING MINI-TET ’68; **AND THAT THE TRANSCRIPTS WERE HORRENDOUS**. THE TRANSCRIPTIONIST HAD LEFT OUT OR CHANGED WORDS, PARTICULARLY NEGATIVES—NOT JUST HERE AND THERE, BUT HUNDREDS OF TIMES IN EVERY TAPE, THOUSANDS OF TIMES FLIPPING THE MEANING OF THE SENTENCES. I HAD OVER 60 HOURS ON TAPE; IT WAS TAKING ME MONTHS TO CORRECT THEM.

I ASKED MR. HALBERSTAM IF HE HAD EVER HAD THAT PROBLEM? “NO,” HE ANSWERED. I INQUIRED A BIT FURTHER, SAID THAT AS A NOVELIST I WANTED TO HEAR THE ERGS AND UGS, THE PAUSES, THE INFLECTIONS. HALBERSTAM REPLIED HE NEVER RECORDED AN INTERVIEW. I ASKED IF HE TOOK DETAILED NOTES. NO, HE ANSWERED, HE SIMPLY WROTE DOWN KEY WORDS, AND HIS SECRETARY THEN TRANSCRIBED HIS JOTTED LIST. FROM THAT HE WROTE HIS STORIES.

NOW, I CANNOT VERIFY THAT HE WAS TELLING ME THE TRUTH, BUT I DO REMEMBER THINKING, THAT CERTAINLY GAVE HIM AN AWFUL LOT OF SLACK TO MANEUVER THE WORDS TO FIT HIS OWN BELIEF SYSTEM.

OF THAT SYSTEM… FROM THE NEW YORK POST: “…IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE WAR… HALBERSTAM WORKED VIGOROUSLY TO EFFECT WHAT HE THOUGHT TO BE THE ONLY WAY FORWARD FOR AMERICA… THE OVERTHROW OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT LED BY NGO DINH DIEM.”

EARLY NARRATIVES HAVE CONSEQUENCES THAT PLAY OUT IN EACH SUBSEQUENT ACTION. HOW DIFFERENTLY MIGHT THINGS HAVE TRANSPIRED HAD HALBERSTAM RECORDED INTERVIEWS. PERHAPS WE WOULD NEVER HAD HEARD OF SCHAMBERG, PERHAPS KERRY WOULD NEVER HAVE CONDUCTED THE WINTER SOLDIERS FIASCO; **PERHAPS** LYNDON JOHNSON WOULD NEVER HAVE BECOME PRESIDENT!!!

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN TRUTH IS DISTORTED, WHEN BEHAVIORS ARE BUILT UPON FALLACIES, ON FALSE OR FLAWED NARRATIVES? HOW DID ALL THESE LIES EFFECT THE FINAL OFFENSIVE?

MUCH IS KNOWN ABOUT THE FINAL COLLASPSE. LESS IS KNOW ABOUT NVA STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL MANEUVERS, OR ABOUT THEIR MASSIVE LOGISTICAL OPERATIONS AND ENGINEERING FEATS.

A QUICK STEP BACK… BEFORE THE ‘73 PEACE AGREEMENT, THERE WAS ALREADY A CONSERTED CAMPAIGN IN CONGRESS TO DEFUND OUR ALLY. POST-SIGNING, THE DEFUNDING WENT INTO HIGH GEAR. THE U.S. BUDGET FOR ‘74-‘75 WAS ONE QUARTER OF THE BUDGET OF FIVE YEARS EARLIER.

SOUTH VIETNAM WAS IN AN ECONOMIC DEPRESSION. INFANTRY DIVISIONS DIVERTED BRIGADES TO TRUCK FARM IN ORDER TO FEED THE BRIGADES WHICH REMAIN IN COMBAT POSITIONS.

WITH EACH COMMUNIST MILITARY ESCALATION THAT WENT UNANSWERED —IGNORED BY AN AMERICAN GOVERNMENT THAT HAD AGREED TO INTERVENE—THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST COMMUNITY BECAMES EMBOLDEN.

THAT’S AN UNDERSTATEMENT. THE INTERNATIONLIST COMMUNIST BUDGET FOR THE YEARS OF THE FINAL OFFENSIVE WAS FOUR TIMES THEIR PREVIOUS HIGH BUDGET FOR ‘72.

THOSE GUYS IN HO CHI MINH SANDLES AND BLACK PAJAMAS DIDN’T ACTUALLY HAVE 500 SOVIET T-54 TANKS SITTING AROUND IN THEIR GARAGES; NOR 400 130MM ARTILLERY PIECES, OR 18,000 MILITARY TRUCKS! AS FAR AS PIPES WENT, IT’S UNLIKELY THEY DISMANTLED 900 MILES OF OIL AND GAS PIPELINES, WHICH WERE THEN LAID DOWN IN THE TRUONG SON CORRIDOR.

THE PORT OF HAI PHONG MUST HAVE BEEN TREMENDOUSLY BUSY. DOES ANYONE RECALL AERIAL PHOTOS OF THE DELIVERY OF THIS EQUIPMENT? EASY TO RECALL THE PHOTOS OF MISSILES ON SOVIET SHIPS NEAR CUBA TAKEN A DECADE EARLIER; BUT OF TANKS, HUNDREDS OF MILES OF 12-INCH PIPE… DID OUR INTELLIGENCE SERVICES FAIL, OR IS IT A MATTER THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE MEDIA SIMPLY BOWED TO THE PRESSURE OF PREVIOUSLY ESTABLISHED NARRATIVES?

THE PIPELINES ARE AN AMAZING CONSTRUCTION FEAT, BUT, OF COURSE, IF YOU’RE GOING TO BE USING 18,000 TRUCKS TO TRANSPORT 400,000 TROOPS—PLUS ALL THE SUPPLIES—FOOD, AMMO, WEAPONS… 413,000 TONS OF MATERIEL—YOU MIGHT NEED MODERN PIPELINES.

NVA FORAYS AGAINST ARVN TROOPS INCREASED THROUGHOUT ’73 AND ’74. THE UNDER-SUPPLIED ARVN WAS THINLY STRUNG OUT IN AN ATTEMPT TO COVER THE DMZ AND THE ENTIRE WESTERN BORDER. NVA UNITS NOW, BECAUSE OF CORRIDOR IMPROVEMENTS, HAD THE ABILITY TO MASS QUICKLY AGAINST LIGHTLY DEFENDED ARVN OUTPOSTS. THE ARVN HAD DIFFICULTY RESPONDING.

IF WE WERE TO TALK OF THE ATROCITIES OF THIS MASSIVE FORCE, THE MULTIPLIER OF THE NUMBER AT MY LAI WOULD NOT BE IN THE TENS, BUT IN THE HIGH HUNDREDS.

AND THE ATROCITIES WERE JUST BEGINNING.

-----APRIL 12TH, ’75, CAMBODIA: THE U.S. EMBASSY BEGAN OPERATION ***EAGLE PULL*,** THE EVACUATION OF AMERICANS, AND OF KHMERS THOUGHT TO BE POSSIBLE TARGETS OF COMMUNIST RETRIBUTION. LON NOL SOUGHT SANCTUARY A WEEK EARLIER. SOME OFFICIALS AND MILITARY LEADERS WERE EVACUATED FROM PHNOM PENH BY HELICOPTER. SAREN THACH, THE ACTING HEAD OF THE CAMBODIAN SPECIAL FORCES, RECOUNTS THIS PERIOD IN HIS RECENTLY PUBLISHED MEMOIR, **NO GREATER LOSS**.

PRINCE SIRIK MATAK…WAS ALSO OFFERED TO BE EVACUATED ON APRIL 12… BUT HE REFUSED. HERE IS HIS LETTER TO U.S. AMBASSADOR JOHN GUNTHER DEAN:

**DEAR EXCELLENCY AND FRIEND,**

**I THANK YOU VERY SINCERELY FOR YOUR LETTER AND YOUR OFFER TO TRANSPORT ME TOWARDS FREEDOM. I CANNOT, ALAS, LEAVE IN SUCH A COWARDLY FASHION. AS FOR YOU, AND FOR YOUR GREAT COUNTRY, I NEVER BELIEVED FOR A MOMENT THAT YOU WOULD HAVE THIS SENTIMENT OF ABANDONING A PEOPLE WHO HAS CHOSEN LIBERTY. YOU HAVE REFUSED US YOUR PROTECTION, AND WE CAN DO NOTHING ABOUT IT.**

**YOU LEAVE, AND MY WISH IS THAT YOU AND YOUR COUNTRY WILL FIND HAPPINESS UNDER THIS SKY. BUT MARK IT WELL, THAT IF I SHALL DIE HERE ON THE SPOT, AND IN MY COUNTRY THAT I LOVE, IT IS TOO BAD, BECAUSE WE ALL ARE BORN AND MUST (ONE DAY) DIE. I HAVE ONLY COMMITTED THIS MISTAKE OF BELIEVING IN YOU THE AMERICANS.**

**. . .**

THE WAR DID NOT END FIFTY YEARS AGO. IF THAT’S WHAT’S BEING COMMEMORATED… I HAVE NO WORDS THAT CAN BE PUBLICLY SPOKEN.

WHAT CHANGED IN APRIL ‘75 WAS THE REMOVAL OF ANY ARMED OPPOSITION TO COMMUNIST FORCES. THE ENSUING TYRANNY OF THE NEXT **TEN YEARS** PRODUCED GENOCIDES, GULAGS, DEATHS AT SEA FOR THOSE FLEEING COMMUNIST OPPRESSION, **AND MORE MURDERS** THAN THOSE KILLED IN THE WAR YEARS - 1954 TO 1975.

TODAY DOES NOT MARK THE END OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM OR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT MARKS THE DAY THE SOUL OF AMERICA WENT DARK. SOUTHEAST ASIANS CALL IT **THE DAY OF INDIGNATION**.

LET US NO LONGER BE NICE, BUT LET THIS DAY, TODAY, BE THE DAY THE ENABLERS OF GENOCIDE ARE NO LONGER IN CONTROL OF THE AMBIENT CULTURAL STORY. LET IT MARK THE DAY FALSE NARRATIVES ARE EXPOSED, DISTUPTED AND DESTROYED; THE DAY FLAWED HISTORY IS NO LONGER TOLERATED.

AND MORE SO, SO EVER MUCH MORE SO, LET IT MARK THE DAY WHEN THE SOUL OF AMERICA RESURRECTS; WHEN FALSE NARRATIVES ARE NO LONGER USED FOR NEFARIOUS OR PARTISAN PURPOSES.

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