

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 16THE VILLAGE VOICE
3-9 February 1982

The War Is Never Over

The Case of 'Agent'

Alexander & James
Cockburn Ridgeway

The Joint Asset

They led David Truong and Ronald Humphrey away in manacles and leg irons from a Virginia courthouse a week ago last Monday to begin 15-year jail sentences for spying for Vietnam against the United States. Two people will now waste in prison for insubstantial offenses which had only the remotest connection with espionage, in a case which could set dangerous precedents for journalists trying to report on the operations of the U.S. government, and which in addition appears to make charges of espionage almost a matter of Justice Department whim.

Like almost all dealings of the United States in relation to Vietnam, this sad story involves the pitting of one Vietnamese against another. It begins with Dung Krall, a Vietnamese woman who came to this country after the war in Vietnam ended and who worked as an agent for the CIA and informant for the FBI. She was the principal government witness in the trial against Truong. Without her testimony, it is hard to see how the government would ever have brought charges.

The family from which Dung came had split loyalties. In the 1960s, her father, Dang Kuang Minh, whom she had not seen since 1954, became an important diplomat for the Provisional Revolutionary Government—the NLF body—representing the PRG in Moscow. Dung and her mother sympathized with the Saigon regime and lived in that city.

Sometime in the early 1970s, Dung met and married John Krall, a lieutenant commander in U.S. Naval Intelligence. In 1975, when the couple were living in Honolulu, she approached the CIA and offered her services. On the basis of the Truong-Humphrey trial record, it seems that Dung Krall suggested that she could be of value. Although she had not seen her father in many years, the relationship could, she indicated, prize open important doors in postwar Vietnamese politics.

The CIA evidently had some doubts about Dung Krall. She claimed her dreams furnished her with valuable perceptions. Dreams aside, the connection between Dung Krall and the CIA was established on the foundation stone of money. As time went on, her needs for money grew more pressing as she struggled to finance the extrication of relatives from Vietnam. Before Dung Krall's service to the Agency was concluded, a reluctant CIA had

So Dung Krall became a CIA agent, with the official code-name "Keyseat." Inside the Agency she had another code name, possibly more revealing of the relationship: "Tu-Indenture."

The trial record shows that Dung Krall set about restoring relations with her father. Unbeknownst to him, the CIA provided the funds for an air ticket which Dung Krall provided so that the two could meet in London. In this meeting she urged her father to quit politics and reunite with his estranged wife. Dang Kuang Minh refused his daughter's invitation, which could have been crudely construed as a recommendation to defect.

In 1976, Dung Krall moved to Washington. There, given prohibitions on domestic CIA activity, she became a "joint asset" of both the CIA and the FBI, reporting to her CIA case officer, Robert Hall, and FBI agent William Fleshman. She infiltrated Vietnam peace groups in the Washington area and made several trips to Paris at the direction of the CIA, where she was instructed to infiltrate the Vietnamese delegation, target certain members discussing reparations and normalization with the U.S., and told to "get next to" chief negotiator Pham Van Dong, if possible.

In Washington at that time, there were two main pro-Vietnamese groups: the Indo-China Resource Center, whose major function was research and lobbying with the press and Congress about Vietnam, and the Vietnamese American Reconciliation Center.

The Reconciliation Center was trying to keep open lines of communication between Vietnamese who had fled to the U.S. and those who had remained behind. An ancillary function was to help acclimatize Vietnamese arriving in this country. This was the group with which David Truong was associated.

Truong had left Vietnam in 1965 at age 19, and had come to the U.S. as a student at Stanford. Truong's father, Truong Dinh Dzu, ran for president in South Vietnam in 1967 as a peace candidate and won 47 per cent of the vote. He was promptly arrested by the Thieu regime and spent the next five years in Devil's Island Prison.

ington, was often seen on the Hill and was, by all accounts, a widely known and well-regarded figure. Truong sent information around the world to other Vietnamese groups, including the Association of Vietnamese in Paris.

Three Paths Meet

In the late summer of 1976, three paths converged, in two cases disastrously. Dung Krall met David Truong, and, as an operative for both the CIA and the FBI, she began to take an interest in him. That August, Ronald Humphrey went to the Reconciliation Center, met Truong, and discussed with him a personal problem. Humphrey had a Vietnamese wife, Kim, whom he wanted to get out of Vietnam.

Humphrey was a watch officer for the U.S. Information Agency, and had thousands of cables from overseas government posts coming across his desk, which he rerouted to appropriate officials. From time to time, in the months after their first meeting in August 1977, Humphrey gave Truong some of the cable traffic he considered to be of interest, cutting off the cable classifications and pasting the cables themselves on pieces of paper.

In April 1977, Dung Krall was sent by the CIA on her mission to Paris. Before she left, she asked Truong if he had anything he wanted taken there. Truong gave her a bookbag, which apparently contained, in addition to books and other reference materials, copies of diplomatic and economic information, mostly of cable traffic from U.S. consular officers in Southeast Asia, with the classifications and sources of origin removed.

Before leaving, Krall gave the bookbag to the CIA, which passed it on to the FBI, which inspected the contents, returned them with the bag to Krall, and wished her Godspeed to Paris.

CONTINUED

family and some type of moral values are very important. I think she lost pretty much all that."

The Justice Department said Krall, the wife of an American naval officer, who would not agree to testify at the trial until questions of her espionage pay were resolved, has left the Washington area and was unavailable for comment.

"This case is a funny case because you can write it from one of two angles and you could be very convinced both ways," says former prosecutor Cummings, now in private practice in Alexandria. "[Truong's] story is not that unpersuasive. This was not a guy who was out, I'm convinced, to do in the government of the United States. And we never contended that he was. He was not a guy who was hoping to get the atom bomb to Hanoi so they could kill us all.

"On the other hand, he clearly knew that what he was taking was clandestine and secretive."

While Humphrey has worked since the trial running a summer camp and recreation programs for Calvary Baptist Church, 755 8th St. NW, Truong has traveled the country giving speeches and raising money to pay his legal costs.

He is soft-spoken and articulate, with apparently strong convictions about the future of Vietnam and his own prospects after prison.

"I think at this point, if given the choice, I probably kind of would like to leave [the United States]," he says. "I'm not going to contribute anything further over here in terms of helping the normalization take place because that's way down in the priorities. It's time to let the dust settle where it has to settle."

He has considered resettling in

France, and wants to visit his parents in Vietnam. His father, once an affluent Saigon lawyer, spent five years at hard labor after his unsuccessful bid to replace then-President Thieu in 1967. He is now living in retirement in Ho Chi Minh City, partially crippled, Truong says, as a result of his treatment in prison.

"From one generation to the other in my family everyone has been in jail for political reasons," he says.

When he last talked to Humphrey, at the trial, Truong says he told him: "I just hope he—he has [four] half-Vietnamese children, you know—I told him I hoped that he and his wife would be able to raise their children so they would not be against what has happened, or against Vietnam . . . To raise kids like that is not easy because they have seen the war . . . I was more or less telling him that he should not, if he could avoid it, raise kids that would continue to fight that same old war forever."

For his part, Humphrey spent the final days of freedom preparing his household "as if I were terminally ill," he says, giving some driving lessons to the family, filing his income tax, tutoring the children in English. Under federal prison guidelines both he and Truong will have to serve at least five years in order to be eligible for parole.

Eight days ago the Humphreys were driving home from church and crossed the 14th Street bridge as a wing of the crashed Air Florida jet was being raised from the Potomac River. "Daddy," Humphrey says his 12-year-old daughter cried, "What if you'd been on that airplane. Then you'd never be coming back to us."