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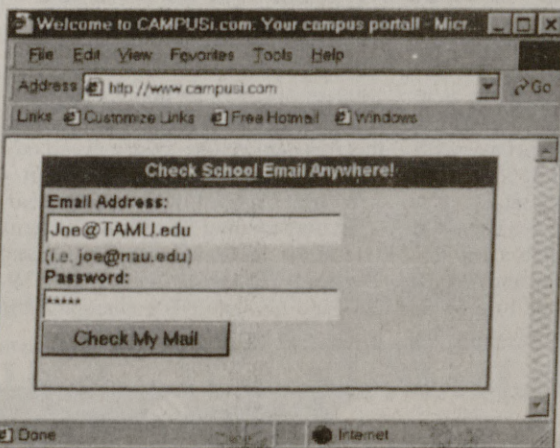
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WORLD

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THE BATTALION

Tuesday, April 25, 2000

Vietnam war photographers offer view from other side

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — The final, frenzied days of the Vietnam War were rich with dramatic images. Panicked Vietnamese scaled the walls of the U.S. Embassy. An American helicopter lifted off with evacuees still trying to climb aboard.

But these powerful images from April 1975 — and almost all of the conflict's best-remembered pictures — were taken by foreign and South Vietnamese photographers with access to only one side of the story.

Largely unseen to this day are equally striking images by North Vietnamese photographers, whose dangerous work enlivened otherwise drab communist newspapers but rarely reached the outside world.

A quarter-century after the war's end, a trio of leading North Vietnamese war photographers opened their dusty archives to The Associated Press and recounted tales of working under fire in steamy jungles.

Their photos, pulled from dog-eared scrapbooks and frayed folders, offer a dramatically different perspective on many aspects of the war, including the final day — April 30, 1975.

The enduring pictures by Western photographers that day in U.S.-backed South Vietnam were filled with unmitigated fear of the imminent communist takeover.

But Dinh Quang Thanh, who followed a North Vietnamese tank to the front steps of the Presidential Palace, captured a very different mood — throngs of South Vietnamese civilians cheering, waving and offering food to North Vietnamese troops entering Saigon, now renamed Ho Chi Minh City.

"We'd been listening to South Vietnamese radio saying there would be a blood bath if the communists took over," said Thanh, now 64 and retired. "We

knew this was propaganda, and I wanted to document the truth with my camera."

One photo shows four soldiers dashing inside the palace to hoist their flag in triumph. South Vietnamese troops and government ministers, who put up no resistance, wear a hangdog look of resignation, but there's no sense of terror.

The North Vietnamese photographers shared the same miserable jungle conditions as the soldiers, and saw themselves as full-fledged members of the guerrilla army rather than independent journalists.

"I considered myself a soldier, and the camera was my weapon," Thanh said.

Their state-controlled newspapers never published images that might have undermined the war effort. Still, the photographers insist their work was an accurate portrait of the tremendous hardships the northern soldiers and civilians endured during a war that claimed 3 million Vietnamese lives nationwide.

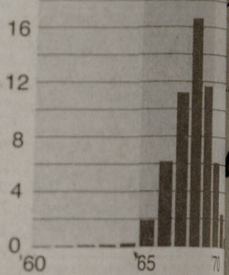
Trong Thanh spent five years working along the Ho Chi Minh Trail, the legendary network of mostly dirt paths that snaked through mountains and jungles, allowing communist guerrillas to ferry weapons and troops to the south.

When he headed out in 1968, Thanh carried three bulky cameras, 400 rolls of film and processing chemicals. He stored his negatives in a pouch that he wore like a belt — even when he slept.

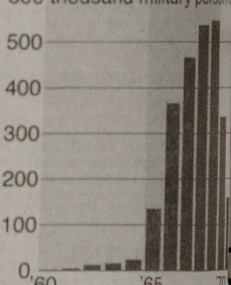
"The Americans sometimes bombed 24 hours a day. You never knew when you would have to run away. Many photographers lost their film and cameras this way," said Trong Thanh, 58. When he needed to move fast, he tossed out food or clothing — but never his irreplaceable photo gear.

America in Vietnam

The Vietnam War was the first in which America has ever lost. The United States got involved in 1965 and withdrew in 1973. Communist forces captured Saigon and the war ended. An estimated 58,000 U.S. military personnel died in the war and about 58,000 to 20 thousand deaths.



President Johnson sent the first ground troops to Vietnam in 1965. The number of U.S. military personnel peaked at 543,400 four years later. A cease-fire was arranged in 1973 and the last American troops left two months later.



Note: All figures are for December except which was for June, and 1969, which was for January.

Source: Department of Defense

Zimbabwe violence continues

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP) — Mobs assaulted and threatened black workers on white-owned farms Monday and set fire to a tobacco farm, said farmers' leaders, a continuation of the political violence that has plagued Zimbabwe for over a month.

An unspecified number of workers were being treated at a hospital in the provincial center of Marondera, 45 miles east of Harare, the Commercial Farmers Union said. The extent of their injuries was unclear.

"It seems the intention now is to intimidate workers," said Tim Henwood, head of the union that represents white farmers. It was not known what had happened to a worker abducted Sunday evening by the squatters.

Tension over who has the right to Zimbabwe's farm land has raged since armed squatters began taking over white-owned farms in February. Police had been ordered by the government not to intervene in the illegal occupation of land on more than 1,000 white-owned farms.

This morning, police were escorting a convoy of about 45 farmers and their families back to the Macheke district near Marondera. The convoy stopped at each farm to ensure it was safe for the family to stay before moving on.

The rest of the about 80 families who evacuated Macheke

after the abduction and shooting of farmer David Sibusiso on April 15 stayed away from their homes.

Armed farm occupiers withdrew today from a farm near Mvurwi, 75 miles north of Harare, freeing those who were trapped in the overnight, Henwood said. The occupiers were unharmed.

Also, the government said it was behind a bomb attack on the office of the Independent newspaper, which we're only independent newspaper. The Independent newspaper was a small explosive device that blew through a window of a gallery of offices of *The Daily News*, which has been sharply critical of the government for not clamping down on political violence. No one was injured.

"The blast was done by people who wanted to tarnish Zimbabwe internationally," said Information Minister

Chen Chimutengwende.

Editor Geoff Nyarota said in Monday's edition that he received a written death threat last week. The newspaper's coverage of political violence has been criticized for "lack of respect" and attempts to ridicule President Mugabe.

"It is a cornerstone of our editorial policy that every opinion shall be encouraged, but no one feels safe in the circumstances," he said, adding that the paper would promote the voicing of different opinions.

"The blast was done by people who wanted to tarnish Zimbabwe internationally."

— Chen Chimutengwende
Information Minister

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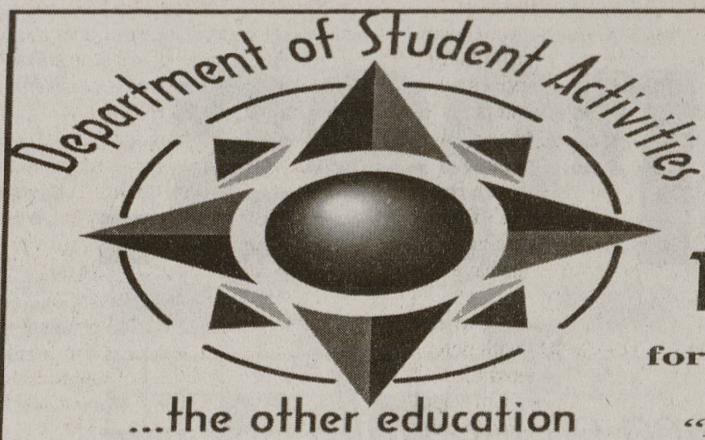
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