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April 27, 1967

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*to Christian Science  
Monitor -*

*P.S. included  
to aversus Weekly*

SAIGON, VIETNAM--The story of Ho Xuan Phuc--which means Spring Luck-- is typical of many Communist defectors.

The 25-year-old artist, now sick and haggard-looking, was born in Binh Dienh Dinh province of South Vietnam. In 1955, at the age of 13, he went to the North with a group of youngsters from ~~high~~ his province when Vietnam was partitioned. He attended high school in Haiphong and at 19 entered some of his art work in a contest. His talents were recognized. He was given a scholarship to study and later to teach in the school of fine arts at the University of Hanoi.

He found the students actively interested in politics/ and during breaks from classes they eagerly discussed Soviet-Red Chinese political ~~differe~~ differences. "Most of the students were for Red China," he explained, talking softly, but confidently. "People in North Vietnam say the Russians want us to lay down our arms. But the Red Chinese don't want the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese to stop fighting. They want to fight on and win. In North Vietnam, ~~one~~ only a few are on the Russian side, but these are high-class people.

"Most people think China will determine whether North Vietnam wins or loses the war. The students and people in North Vietnam often talked about atomic bombs. They think the United States will never, never ~~er~~ <sup>JARE</sup> drop an atomic bomb on North Vietnam. And they think the Russians and Chinese have more atomic bombs than the Americans."

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Phuc ~~son~~ volunteered to return to his native province as a civilian propagandist. In 1966, during the New Year truce he began the long trek South, leaving his mother in Hanoi, ~~and~~ while his younger brother ~~was~~ trained as an electrical engineer in North Korea. Gradually, however, <sup>he</sup> found that North Vietnamese propaganda was untrue.

"They told me four-fifths of the South Vietnamese people and territory were controlled by the Viet Cong," he explained, flexing his thin, bony fingers. "They said the Vietnamese government army was already disbanded without headquarters or camps and that they would join the Viet Cong to fight ~~it~~ against the Americans. <sup>They</sup> said ~~the~~ Americans did not fight so well as government soldiers.

"But once in the South, I saw things were different. I had to live in the jungle and hide all the time; ~~four-fifths~~ four-fifths of the area and people were not controlled by the Viet Cong. I was an artist, but had no materiel to work with. I heard airplane bombs and mortars everyday; bombs dropped 15 meters from me. After seven months I thought all of us would be killed and the North Vietnamese defeated."

He rallied to the government side, bringing a package of Viet Cong documents with him.

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Today, Phuc is drawing propaganda leaflets to be dropped to his former comrades by a joint American-Vietnamese psychological warfare battalion in the U. S. Marine headquarters city of Danang. He has also drawn an oil portrait of President Lyndon B. Johnson, which was hand-carried to Washington and ~~presented~~ presented to him by a visiting Texas Congresswoman. The American First Lady sent Phuc a cordial letter of appreciation.

Phuc is one of 60,000 persons who switched sides to join the Vietnamese government's Open Arms program, called Chieu Hoi in Vietnamese. It is one of the most promising and potentially significant operations in the country. Under the program, full-time or part-time Communists, or other government dissidents in alliance with them, are promised humane treatment, a partial amnesty, full citizenship rights and ~~re~~ resettlement in South Vietnamese society if they stop fighting or undermining the Vietnamese government.

The program serves as a political escape hatch for those weary of fighting in the Communist zones--and government officials are heartened by the increase in ~~mm~~ the numbers ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> ~~them~~. In 1966 alone, 20,242 persons defected from the Communist zones in South Vietnam--which is equal to one-third of all Communists killed or captured by all Allied forces during the year. The 1967 figures are ~~expecg~~ expected to double to more than 40,000.

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The program has assumed a high-priority status; it was a significant part of discussions at the seven-nation Manila Conference last October and at the Guam Conference this spring where President Johnson met Prime Minister Nguyen Cao Ky and other ~~Sgt~~ South Vietnamese government leaders. On the battlefield, Vietnamese and American troops are constantly ~~being~~ urged to treat Open Arms returnees humanely. South Korean commanders have also emphasized the program; a South Korean and South Vietnamese officers nearly came to blows once to see who would gain credit for one returnee. U. S. Marines grant their troops a five-day leave out of country for each prisoner or war or Open Arms returnee they bring in alive. Defection itself is a dangerous business. For example, one fed-up guerrilla shot his way out of the Communist zone, killing a comrade, but he was in turn killed by a trigger-edgy outpost guard. ~~Once~~ One Communist fighter twice tried to escape his comrades while he bathed in the river, but was recaptured and given re-indoctrination classes. The third time he succeeded in switching to the Open Arms program.

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Open Arms officials are ~~ambitious~~ optimistic about the program, for they view it as a shortcut to victory. First, the program saps the political and military strength of the Communists. Second, the pinpoint ~~intelligent~~ intelligence information and valuable backgrounds of the returnees adds to the capability of the Vietnamese government to fight the Communists more effectively.

"With a really dynamic Open Arms program, we can shatter the Viet Cong because they are tired of war and crave peace," one official explained. Or as another explained, "If we can talk enough Viet Cong into voluntarily coming in to the government side, we can win the war faster."

The reasons for switching from the Communist zone are varied, but the over-riding condition was summarized by Col. Pham Anh, head of the program. He said: "The high rate of Viet Cong defectors has been attained precisely because of unrelenting military pressure, which has increasingly convinced the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces that they are losing the war. If the Viet Cong thought they were winning the war, the number of returnees would have been much less."

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Persons eligible for the Open Arms program are those who  
"voluntarily return to the Government of Vietnam control x after having  
actively supported the Viet Cong in some form of military or political activity.  
Officials say the bulk of the returnees are Viet Cong village guerrillas and  
their political rice-roots infrastructure--"the eyes, ears, hands and feet"--which gives  
give s the Communists their precise control over the Vietnamese peasantry.  
peasantry. A few are high-ranking political com commissars, members of the  
North or South Vietnamese Communist Party for as much as 14 years; some  
are long-time military commanders who began with the Communists to drive  
the French colonialists from Vietnam more than a decade ago. ~~That~~ More and  
more of these higher-ranking cadre are now coming into the ~~the~~ Open Arms program.  
American statisticians analyzing the program say said.

However, this broad, vague definition of eligibility often blurs over  
into refugees from Viet Cong ~~to~~ controlled areas on one side to prisoners  
of war on the other. Some of the ~~the~~ returnees did not voluntarily come over to  
the government side. One Vietnamese division commander maintains an  
"instant Open Arms program"--prisoners of war captured on the battlefield are  
placed in Open Arms camps rather than given life-term sentences if they  
cooperate with the government. Last fall, several hundred Communist troopers  
ran to their tunnels to fight approaching elements of the U. S. Army First  
Air Cavalry Division. But their tunnels had been filled by a flash flood.  
The Communists surrendered and were considered Open Arms returnees rather than  
prisoners of war.

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On Operation Cedar Falls, in D-Zone north of Saigon, earlier this year, more than 6000 Viet Cong families and unarmed political agents were forcibly ~~xxxxxx~~ removed from the Communist stronghold area. Some 300 were arbitrarily designated as Open Arms returnees rather than ~~ing~~ refugees, although virtually all had served with the Communists in one form or another ~~two~~ for years. In one freak incident, <sup>four</sup> a North Vietnamese trooper <sup>S/</sup> walking over unfamiliar terrain in the ~~jungle~~ jungled highlands north of Saigon, saw a bus and were homesick to ride one. They hopped on it, thinking it ran ~~operated~~ only in the Communist zone. <sup>WAS</sup> Instead the foursome were nabbed by government soldiers at a checkpoint and urged to join the Open Arms program.

In other cases, common criminals, draft-~~dodge~~ dodgers, deserters from government units and non-Communist <sup>USUALLY</sup> ~~and~~ dissidents, especially religious minorities, are all lumped into the Open Arms program, and often are generally, but somewhat mistakenly labelled as Communist defectors.

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The steady increase in Open Arms returnees--the chief index of the success of the program--is creating multitudes of ~~hundreds~~ headaches for the ~~the~~ already weak Vietnamese administration, which, in ~~a~~ isolated instances, is <sup>also</sup> none too honest. At the regional level in the northern provinces, for example, the leading Vietnamese Open Arms official is considered so corrupt that American advisors and ~~Vietnamese~~ his Vietnamese superiors in Saigon have attempted to have him removed, appealing ~~to~~ almost to the level of the Prime Minister's Office. They cite cases in which he has conspired with civilian contractors to hike up the price of Open Arms buildings--sometimes as much as five hundred per cent. Returnees working on construction projects are <sup>NOT</sup> ~~not~~ paid their promised wages and if they complain about it, they are fired from their already meagre-paid jobs and ~~are~~ transferred to remote centers. In this region, where more than 2000 American Marines have been killed in action and 15,000 wounded, the Open Arms ~~statistics~~ figures are consistently the <sup>LOWEST</sup> ~~lowest~~ and the program the most mismanaged. Yet, American and Vietnamese officials are unable to fire him. The reason: He is related to and protected by the Vietnamese general commanding the region.