
Guide to the Ly Kien Truc Photographs of the Hi-Tek Demonstrations, 1999

Collection number: MS-SEA010

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Contact Information

- Special Collections and Archives
- The UCI Libraries
- P.O. Box 19557
- University of California
- Irvine, California 92623-9557
- Phone: (949) 824-7227
- Fax: (949) 824-2472
- Email: spcoll@uci.edu
- URL: <http://special.lib.uci.edu>

Processed by:

Anna Liza Posas

Date Completed:

2002

Encoded by:

Andre Ambrus

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Ly Kien Truc photographs of the Hi-Tek demonstrations,

Date (inclusive): 1999

Collection number: MS-SEA010

Creator: Ly Kien Truc, photographer

Extent: 0.2 linear feet(1 box)10 digitized images

Repository: University of California, Irvine. Library.Special Collections and Archives.
Irvine, California 92623-9557

Abstract: This collection consists of 98 color photographic prints taken by Ly Kien Truc, publisher of *Van Hoa*, a bi-weekly Vietnamese magazine. The photographs are of the 1999 demonstrations over the posting of a portrait of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese flag by Truong Van Tran, the owner of Hi-Tek TV and VCR, a store in Westminster, California. Although the demonstrations lasted from January 17-March 11 1999, these images highlight only certain events. The images depict protestor marches, activities, and arrests; Tran's and his wife's escorted return to Hi-Tek and the re-hanging of the display; media interviews with Tran and his wife; anti-Communist demonstrations during the Têt celebrations; and some political and organizational leaders.

Language: EnglishVietnamese

Selected digitized images from this collection.

Access

Collection is open for research.

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Preferred Citation

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Acquisition Information

Gift of Ly Kien Truc, 1999.

Processing History

Processed by Anna Liza Posas, 2002. Processing was supported by a Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant from the California State Library.

Background Information

Truong Van Tran, Hi-Tek store owner

Truong Van Tran, son of farmers and brother to six other siblings, was born in 1961 in Dong Thap, a village in southwest Vietnam. In 1980 he fled Thailand on a small boat with his cousin and sister. In June of that year he arrived in California and joined the Vo Vi meditation group. After four years of meditation study, Tran proclaimed himself a master and started lecturing across the nation. In 1989 he left the group due to conflicts with other members, and in the same year married Kim Khanh Thi Nguyen.

In order to contribute to the family income, Tran started salvaging and selling TV's and VCR's he found in neighborhood dumpsters. This experience, and the education he received through electronic courses, led him to open Hi-Tek TV and VCR in 1996 in Westminster, California.

His attitude about communism changed after numerous visits to Vietnam. There he witnessed social improvement and he began extolling the benefits of US-Vietnam relations. Tran expressed his views to his neighborhood community through fliers, newsletters, and organized debates. His decision to hang the poster of Ho Chi Minh and the communist flag during the Martin Luther King holiday was made in remembrance of King's fortitude as well as to exercise Tran's own 1st Amendment rights of free speech.

The exposure he received from the protests proved to be his financial downfall. The police assigned to escort Tran to his store also found evidence of video piracy, and Tran was found guilty of this crime by Superior Court Judge Cory Cramin, who sentenced him to both jail time and community service. Tran attempted an appeal, but it was later denied.

Vietnamese American Community in Orange County

The Vietnamese American community in Little Saigon was reported to be the "ultimate anti-communist stronghold" (*Los Angeles Times* Orange County Edition, 24 January 1999). Many Vietnamese American residents in Orange County have hard-felt and vivid memories of Vietnam's communist regime, human rights violations made by communist soldiers, and traumatic journeys of escape. Due to this community's strong anti-communist feelings it has been argued that displaying a poster of Ho Chi Minh in Little Saigon was the equivalent of displaying a picture of Hitler in a Jewish neighborhood.

Little Saigon has a history of anti-community protests. With crowds reaching over 15,000, the Hi-Tek demonstrations received national and international media coverage. This event was reported to be the biggest demonstration by Vietnamese émigrés since the fall of Saigon in 1975. The demonstrations are also a prime example of the strong anti-Communist feelings in the Vietnamese American Community, particularly among former South Vietnamese officials and re-education camp detainees. Similar demonstrations were held in San Jose, New Orleans, and Houston.

1999 January 17

Protests begin in front of Hi-Tek TV and VCR. Protestors say they will not stop demonstrating until display is taken down.

January 18

A reported demonstration of 400-600 people continues in front of Tran's shop. As he leaves for the day, Tran is physically assaulted and escorted out by police.

January 20

Landlord announces he will evict Tran and takes legal action that will force Tran to take down display. Security guards post eviction notice on store.

January 21	County Superior Judge Tam Nomoto Schumann issues preliminary injunction ordering Tran to take down display due to the landlord's argument that Tran broke lease agreement by creating a public nuisance. Tran's wife, Kim Nguyen, takes down display. Demonstrations cease.
February 4	The American Civil Liberties Union joins Tran's defense.
February 10	Judge Schumann revokes her order and says display is protected under the First Amendment. Tran is met with a crowd of 100 people and is struck in the head when trying to re-hang display. Tran is taken to the hospital.
February 13	Celebrations for Têt begins.
February 15	On the eve of Têt, protestors expect Tran to return to Hi-Tek due to Judge Schumann's recent revocation. These two elements heighten attendance. 200 police officers in riot gear are also in attendance. Tran is a no-show.
February 16	On the first day of Têt, attendees show up in front of store to celebrate the lunar new year as well as demonstrate against Vietnamese communism.
February 16	Tran is delivered a 3-day eviction notice.
February 18-21	Annual Têt Festival in Little Saigon.
February 20	Tran and his wife return to store to re-hang display. A demonstration of 10,000 protest. Demonstrators try to block Bushard and Bolsa avenues and thirty-one people are arrested when attempting to break police barricade. Tran and wife arrive and leave with police escort.
February 20	Annual Little Saigon Têt parade
February 22	Pro-freedom rally in Little Saigon
February 26	Peaceful demonstrations during which an estimated 15,000 protestors attend a nighttime rally organized by youth groups. Despite the peaceful protests, 10 arrests are made.
March 3	Panel discussion held by church leaders and community members in order to voice experiences under communism and criticize Hanoi's human rights violations.
March 5	Police raid Hi-Tek and seize videocassettes and recorders. Allegations are made accusing Tran of video piracy, which he denies.
March 5	During the seizure, a burglar steals Tran's poster of Ho Chi Minh and the communist flag.
March 11	Demonstrations end, marked by the dismantling of the Hi-Tek sign.
August 10	Tran is found guilty of video piracy by Superior Court Judge Cory Cramin and sentenced to 90 days in jail. Tran's attorney, Ronald Talmo, appeals.

Collection Scope and Content Summary

This collection consists of 98 color photographic prints taken by Ly Kien Truc, publisher of *Van Hoa*, a bi-weekly Vietnamese magazine. The photographs are of the 1999 demonstrations over the posting of a portrait of Ho Chi Minh and the Vietnamese flag by Truong Van Tran, the owner of Hi-Tek TV and VCR, a store in Westminster, California. Although the demonstrations lasted from January 17-March 11 1999, these images highlight only certain events. The images depict protestor marches, activities, and arrests; Tran's and his wife's escorted return to Hi-Tek and the re-hanging of the display; media interviews with Tran and his wife; anti-Communist demonstrations during the Têt celebrations; and some political and organizational leaders.

The photographs are arranged by date. The original subdivision of the photos taken on February 20 was maintained during processing. Dates of photographs were determined by comparison with dated photographs printed in various publications such as the *Van Hoa*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *Orange County Register*. The sequence of events was established, when possible, by serial numbers on some photographs.

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library's online public access catalog.

Subjects

Tran, Troung Van.
Hô Chí Minh, 1890-1969.
Hi Tek TV and VCR (Westminster, Calif.)--Photographs.
Political refugees--Vietnam--Photographs.
Anti-communist movements--California--Westminster--Photographs.
Freedom of speech--California--Westminster--Photographs.
Vietnamese Americans--California--Orange County--Archival resources.

Genres and Forms of Material

Photographic prints.

Index Terms Related to this Collection

Online Archive of California.
Southeast Asian Archive.

Related Collections

This collection is supplemented by materials in the SEA Archive's newspaper clippings file.

- Box 1 : 1-9 **Color photographs of demonstrations and related events, 1999**
Box 1 : 1 **February 10, protestors awaiting Judge Schumann's decision at the Santa Ana courthouse**
Box 1 : 2 **February 13, demonstrators**
Box 1 : 3 **February 15, demonstration held on the eve of Tết**
Box 1 : 4 **February 16, first day of Tết, celebration and anti-communist demonstration held outside of the Hi-Tek store**
Box 1 : 5 **February 16-20, demonstrators**
Box 1 : 6-7 **February 20, rally and arrests the day of Tran's return to Hi-Tek, including Tran and his wife reinstalling display under police escort and giving interviews to news media.**
- Physical Description:** 2 folders.
- Box 1 : 8 **February 22, nighttime demonstration**
Box 1 : 9 **Circa February 13-22, demonstrators and community leaders**
- Box 1 : 10 **Cover from original photo album inscribed and signed by Truc, 1999**