

Talking Vietnam

Phil Ochs

Sailing over to Vietnam
Southeast Asian Birmingham
Well, training is the word we use
Nice word to have in case we lose
Training a million Vietnamese
To fight for the wrong government and the American way

Well, they put me in a barracks house
Just across the way from Laos
They said, "you're pretty safe when the troops deploy
But don't turn your back on your house boy
When they ring the gong, watch out for the Viet-Cong."

Well, the sergeant said it's time to train
So I climbed aboard my helicopter plane
We flew above the battle ground
A sniper tried to shoot us down
He must have forgotten, we're only trainees
Them Commies never fight fair

Friends, the very next day we trained some more
We burned some villages down to the floor
Yes, we burned out the jungles far and wide
Made sure those red apes had no place left to hide
Threw all the people in relocation camps
Under lock and key, made damn sure they're free

Well, I walked through the jungle and around the bend
Who should I meet but President Diem
Said, you're fighting to keep Vietnam free
For good old de-em-moc-ra-cy (Diem-ocracy)
That means rule by one family
And fifteen thousand American troops, give or take a few
Thousand
American
Troops

He said: "I was a fine old Christian man
Ruling this backward Buddhist land
Well, it ain't much but what the heck
It sure beats hell out of Chiang Kai-shek
I'm the power elite, me and the 7th fleet."

He said: "meet my sister, Madam Nhu
The sweetheart of Dien Bien Phu."
He said: "Meet my brothers, meet my aunts
With the government that doesn't take a chance
Families that slay together, stay together."

Said: "If you want to stay, you'll have to pay
Over a million dollars a day
But it's worth it all, don't you see?
If you lose the country you'll still have me
Me and Syngman Rhee, Chiang Kai-shek, Madam Nhu
Like I said on "Meet the Press"
'I regret that I have but one country to give for my life.'

Well, now old Diem is gone and dead
All the new leaders are anti-Red
Yes, they're pro-American, freedom sensations
Against Red China, the United Nations
Now all the news commentators and the CIA
Are saying, "Thank God for coincidence."