Lost in Vietnam

INTRODUCTION BY LE LY HAYSLOP

We Vietnamese call our country “dâ’t mẹ,” “Mẹ” is mother and “dâ’t” is land, or “motherland Vietnam.” She appears as a tall, elegant woman and is adorned with outer and inner beauty. Mẹ Vietnam is part of the universal romantic attraction of a green planet Earth. She makes all landscapes more productive and gives birth to many wonderful lives, embracing all people of the world and all species of life. She is loyal to her incurably friendly children and reliable to her men. She always stands up strong and tall to the world. Her broad beaches, deep seas, and tall mountains welcome everyone with open arms. She helps our earth to send forth many kinds of beautiful flowers, rice, green vegetables, sweet and delicious fruits.

She is a richly verdant region that nourishes us all. Mẹ Vietnam possesses breathtaking and stunning beauty reflecting the patience and equanimity that the landscape inspires in her people. She provides hidden caves and forested mountains for our adventure and endless seashores for our relaxation. She offers gemstones and crystals that provide healing. She yields minerals, coal, gold, lead, oils, and other goods for everyday life. High in the mountains, in the lowland plains, along the seashore, she nourishes us.

Because of her extraordinary beauty, people come from China, from Japan, from Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, even from across the seas to participate in that beauty and bounty. As a result, many governments and corporations from other countries have wanted her for themselves.

Before the Americans arrived, she was occupied by the French for nearly a hundred years. And before the French she was dominated by the Chinese for more than a thousand years. The Japanese coveted her in World War II. When other peoples set foot on our motherland, they had no idea how sacred our land was to us.

Now, despite her beauty and allure, Mẹ Vietnam carries open wounds in the suffering of her children from the deadly remaining land mines and unexploded ordinance and the environmental and genetic devastation of Agent Orange. All are legacies of the American War.

That war certainly was not the first that Vietnam has suffered and probably will not be the last. But after every war and incursion, the Vietnamese people learned from their invaders, borrowed from their occupiers, and even came to love the people who had become a part of their land and their culture. Motherland Vietnam has overcome all this suffering.
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