

eyewitness account

Student Views Vietnam War

Editor's Note: The Phoenix, newspaper of New York City's Queens College, has sent two students to Vietnam to report on the war.

The Daily Collegian, in cooperation with the Phoenix, will carry columns written by the two reporters.

One student, Ralph Paladino, supports the presence of the United States in Vietnam. The other, Lee Dembart, holds the opposite view.

Today's column, by Dembart, is the first report of the series.

By LEE DEMBART

SAIGON, Feb. 4 — We had thought that we would see some action during our three months in Vietnam. We didn't expect we would see it so quickly.

The Viet Cong gave us a noisy if not altogether receptive welcome less than 15 hours after our arrival here, as they began an all-out offensive in Saigon that included an attack on the Presidential Palace 100 yards from our hotel window.

The sun was hot and the air was dry as we stepped out of the plane at Tan Son Nhut International Airport. Less than 24 hours later, the field would be under constant mortar, artillery, and small arms fire, and hundreds of soldiers would lose their lives in the battle for the airbase. But all was quiet as we walked to the terminal and stood in line to clear immigration and customs.

It was Tet, the Oriental New Year, and flags, signs and banners welcomed it. Firecrackers, sounding unnerveingly like rifles, exploded around us as we walked through the downtown area to the U.S. and Vietnamese press offices.

Full-scale battles had erupted throughout the country except in the capital. Every major city from north to south was under attack. Signs in military installations warned that Charley was infiltrating Saigon, and that all personnel should take extreme caution. But on the streets it was Tet, and no one seemed concerned about the imminent onslaught.

At precisely three o'clock in the morning the celebration of Tet ended in Saigon. There were still fireworks, but now they were coming from grenades, rockets, bazookas, automatic weapons, and high-powered rifles. A tremendous explosion rocked the courtyard outside the hotel. Two more blasts and accompanying flashes brought us quickly from sleep to full consciousness.

The sharp cracks of rifles were answered by machine guns. Another explosion, closer to the hotel, and then quiet. But only long enough for us to think the worst. They were surely coming into the hotel, coming to blast down the doors, coming to machinegun us all.

And then more shooting outside. Mortar explosions. More automatic fire. Another brief pause.

I tried sleeping. The firing continued outside. So did the explosions.

Daylight always has the advantage of making things seem more manageable. With the sun up, we had almost convinced ourselves that all the noise the night before had been nothing more than big firecrackers. We were still unaware of the extent of the fighting going on throughout the city. But the desk clerk warned us. "Be careful, sir," he said as we walked out. "There's shooting outside."

Only later in the day did we discover that the Viet Cong had attacked eight major areas in the city, including the American Embassy, and had taken over the Cholon section to the south. They were still firmly entrenched in the partially completed apartment building next to the hotel, having sought cover there when their

attempt to storm the Palace met resistance during the night.

Four Viet Cong bodies lay in the street and were to remain there 36 hours until they began to rot in the heat. The apartment building was surrounded by Korean and ARVN troops who periodically exchanged machine gun fire with the Viet Cong fortress.

Reporters and amateur photographers swarmed over the area, taking cover behind walls and parked cars whenever the shooting resumed. Less courageous spectators took up positions on the roof and balconies of the hotel, occasionally peering over the barriers to see what was going on. Everyone took a periodic time-out to sit in the hotel bar, eat lunch, sip a beer, and discuss the progress outside.

At nightfall, fighting continued heavy throughout the city, and martial law and a 24-hour curfew had been imposed. The streets were completely deserted. The Viet Cong still held the building, though the mortar and bazooka pounding it had sustained throughout the day.

Returning to our room with a view, we drew the curtains and prepared for a long night. Fortunately the heavy activity did not begin in earnest until six o'clock the following morning when the shelling and mortar attacks resumed. One fellow occupant of the hotel reported two bullets ricocheted into his room, but we escaped with two shattered windows.

Reports from around the country said that the Viet Cong attack was being beaten back in all but a few northern cities. Enemy casualties were first held at 5,000 killed, later updated to 7,000, and finally put at near 13,000, "subject to adjustment when administrative reports are received."

By afternoon the last of the Viet Cong holding the neighboring apartment building had been killed, and civilians strolled casually through the area, taking pictures of the mangled corpses, inspecting the destroyed vehicles, and commenting among themselves about the daring or stupidity of soldiers willing to go into the place and try to hold it, knowing that they could not possibly get out.

Occasionally conversation focused on the Embassy attack. The Viet Cong had held the building for six hours before being killed, but had caused little significant damage. How important was it that they got in? Why weren't there more guards? Who was responsible? Are more troops needed? In the absence of facts, the answers were almost invariably based on what one already believed. If the attack on Saigon had any purpose other than propaganda, it failed. If the Viet Cong hoped or expected a massive civilian uprising on their behalf, they were sorely disappointed. The fact that they flagrantly violated their own declared Tet cease fire to launch the campaign has hardened sentiment against them. Several acts of sheer terrorism were reported in the city.

If these last few days were in fact the Big Effort by the Viet Cong, where they were willing to gamble everything in the hopes of another Dien Bien Phu, and there has been some talk that this was the case, then they have been defeated.

Military people here are predicting that the biggest blow is yet to come, and that it will come in the DMZ area in the near future.

The U.S. command says it was taken by surprise by the intensity of this Viet Cong effort. But it responded quickly to the attack, and has been able thus far to push back the offensive. Militarily, the U.S. is not about to lose the war. From the looks of things, though, it seems that they're not about to win it either.



TEACHING MACHINES supplement regular classroom instruction for students in hotel administration. The machines are used to point out non-academic, but extremely important employee functions that are vital in the hospitality industry. Utilizing a teaching machine is Delmont K. Bittle, right, (5th-housing and food service-Northbrook) and James Keiser, associate professor of hotel and institution management.

Hotel Students Use Teaching Machine

Hotel administration students have discovered that meat grinders, steam pressure cookers and posting machines are not the only important machines in their profession.

A new machine—the visual teaching machine—has become a significant device to 75 associate degree students who are pursuing a two-year hotel and food service course in the College of Human Development.

The teaching machines, which are supplements to regular classroom instruction, are used to point out a number of non-academic, but extremely important employee functions that are vital in the hospitality industry.

In one course, the students were exposed to a series of lessons detailing the duties and responsibilities of a waiter. In another, students were taught, through the use of the teaching machines, how to train a maid in housekeeping chores.

James Keiser, associate professor of hotel and institution administration, used the machines in his food service course and found them valuable in familiarizing students with material not included in the regular classroom program. His students used the waiter's training tape which is designed to provide information on proper dining room service.

"The machines were an effective supplement," Keiser said, "as well as being useful for the students who will later be required to provide on-the-job training for their future employers."

The machines were supplied to the Department of Hotel and Institution Administration by the Visual Programming Company of New York, N.Y. Plans are being made to continue and expand their use in other hotel administration courses.

Students using the machine, which asks a question and offers several incorrect and one correct answer, must select the correct answer. If the student answers correctly a loud buzzer will sound and he is permitted to move on to the next question. Should an incorrect answer be selected the machine gives no response, indicating that the question should be re-read and attempted again.

Keiser said the machines have been used in the hospitality industry as part of on-the-job training programs for employees. Such machines are needed, he said, because the "education and the training of employees in the industry has been neglected... employers or supervisors don't have the time to instruct new workers."

Frosh Choose Advisor

James Keiser, assistant professor of hotel and institution administration in the College of Human Development, has been selected as advisor for the Class of 1971.

Keiser, a graduate of William Penn Charter School at Philadelphia, earned his undergraduate degree at the University of California and at Cornell University. He received his masters degree in business administration from the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania.

An honorary member of Sigma Pi Eta, the hotel administration professional fraternity, Keiser is the faculty representative for the College of Human Development Student Council and a member of the Student-Faculty Council of the College of Human Development. He is also an advisor to the "Greeters" and to Zeta Psi fraternity.

Scott Miller, freshman class

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