

Truong van cam essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Truong Van Cam, later known as Nam Cam, grew up in a poor family in the former Saigon. When Truong was fifteen years old, he was arrested for stabbing a man to death in a fight and spent more than two years in jail. He enlisted in the Army of the Republic of Vietnam after his stint in prison to fight against North Vietnam during the war. Truong was a devout anti-communist, but was captured by Viet Cong agents and the Vietnamese Government forced him to go through a communist re-education camp for three years.

Upon his release, he reverted back to his criminal roots in Ho Chi Minh City. He was considered a dishonorably discharged soldier in Qui Nhon before 1975 with a history of law breaking. After 1975, he moved back to Saigon and while working in the area, he got acquainted with more people who had good connections with Communist officials and Public Security officers in the area who later became his close associates. In the late 1980s, local authorities appreciated him as a good citizen having faithfully supported the Communist regime.

He started his Nam Cam Gang, and became extremely wealthy. His gang gained power quickly and he became the “ godfather” of a mafia-type syndicate. Truong used his money to bribe many higher ups, and to get himself out of trouble. He also opened a few restaurants. In 1994, he was arrested for murder, assault, gambling, organizing gambling, organizing bribery, abetting criminals, and organizing illegal emigration. Due to the intervention from a senior official, Tran Mai Hanh (the director of the national radio Voice of Vietnam), he was released early.

Hanh's job was a major part in the propaganda system, and was only given to the most trusted members of the Party. In 2002, Hanh and another senior official, Bui Quoc Huy (head of police), were expelled from the Central Committee for "having direct connections during a long period with some bad elements," as reported by BBC News. They turned a blind eye to his actions due to his bribery, and were also charged with negligence. While he was in jail, his underlings still managed his illegal businesses. No matter what the government tried to do, Nam Cam's influence was still there.

Many citizens wondered how he gained power so quickly. Some rumors run that the scandal is a battle between different factions in the party. Foreign journalists even say that the scandal is created by Phan Van Khai's supporters in a move to retain him in the prime minister's seat some more years to improve national order and stability. Other observers think that the crack down on Nam Cam Gang and his accomplices is a scheme of Nong Duc Manh, the current general secretary and those siding with him to consolidate his throne.

People even say that the scandal is a blow directed at Vu Van Kiet and his ardent supporters who advocate more active economic reform. One of Truong's better known cases was the assassination of his rival mafia boss, Dung Ha. Dung Ha was a reported lesbian gangster from Haiphong, North Vietnam, and Truong wanted to join forces with her to expand his casino business into North Vietnam. However, Dung had plans to form her own gang, and this angered Truong. Hoping to embarrass her rival, Dung sent a gift box filled with rats to one of Truong's restaurants.

In retaliation, Truong ordered her assassination in 2000. He bribed officials to cover up his criminal dealings, so the murder was not reported until three years later. When he was arrested, over one hundred and fifty other people were on trial with him. Many of them were high-ranking officials of the Communist Party and members of the police force. His connections with the local police force were so strong that when they decided to arrest him, they hired police from other provinces to do the job.

According to BBC, the trial was held in the 19th Century People's Court in Ho Chi Minh City. It was one of the largest to ever reach the Vietnam courts. There were three judges on the case, a jury of three, eighty lawyers, and thirty witnesses. It took about an hour to read all the charges held against Nam Cam and his associates. "The Nam Cam trial involved institutional corruption of a very serious nature," said Carl Thayer, a Vietnamese expert at the Australian Defense Force Academy.

He said the trial was a positive indication that the Communist Party was serious about cracking down on corruption. The case attracted huge interest in Vietnam, and a crowd of about five hundred people waited outside the People's Court on that morning for their chance to see the infamous mafia boss. They wanted to see the man who undermined the government to such a degree without notice for such a large amount of time. Truong Van Cam was announced guilty, and he and four other gang members, two of them being the ones who killed Dung Ha, were sentenced to death.

On June 3, 2004, they were executed in Ho Chi Minh City by a firing squad. In the history of Vietnam, there have been eras when corruption erupted sky-

high. South Vietnam government under the late President Nguyen Van Thieu was harshly blamed for uncontrollable corruption. But no criminal gangs had ever been able to enroll South Vietnam's officials or military officers at echelons higher than district police department, into a powerful criminal syndicate with such large sphere of influence as the Nam Cam Gang.