WERE IT NOT SO:  
THE VIETNAM WAR IN VERSE

BY
EDWIN H. FEDDER

PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS

In Spring, 1945, Arhimedess Patti like a bird in a 
breeze floated through South China seas seeking 
out Viet Minhese few ideas of how to seize the 
land from the Vichy sleez allies of the Japanese. 
he’s OSS not CIA, eager to deal, eager to please.

Bands of guerrillas moving with ease the Rising 
Sun’s oppression a disease what ho, it’s Ho could 
bring them to their knees; for it’s Ho Chi Minh 
who’ll lead us to a win end the war! end the war! 
but nooo Ho is a native a savage his head’s full of 
cabbage.

Ho’s a Commie-Jefferssonian, upper-class 
proletarian foe of foreign, imperial man who did 
rebel and gave them hell and shook the cockles of 
their shell letting loose a Marxist yell he knew 
how to ring their bell the future does tell of a 
market-Marxist plan, oh well.

So new man Truman turned to his friendly Brit 
man who said the Japs should yield to the French 
who thereupon sought to defeat Ho who became 
who, who knew? after Dienbienphu dividing 
north from south with the free election of Ho to 
be president of Vietnam in 1956.

Ike the grin to French chagrin wouldn’t let the 
Commie win so before elections could begin he 
said voting would be a sin and South Vietnam 
became fixed in and freedom lovers raised a small 
din penetrating not his craggy skin nor unsettling 
his chinny-chin-chin.

Eisenhower feared that massive military power 
tempted prexies’ muscles flower leaders not from 
the corps were to prone to open the door 
Truman leapt into the fray to the Yalu Mac did
say rue we did hat dreadful day Ike demilitarized our way but left others to play.

JFK, the sages say saved us from Ike’s passive way: “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask rather what you can do for your country” so we heil! heil! right in the Fuehrer’s face; not to heil the Fuehrer is a great disgrace so we fawn democracy’s deface.

Kennedy like Karl the Deutschman, “alles ist Transactionating” ve can build a new nation South Vietnam’s salvation Maxwell Taylor’s peroration Special Forces what creation material spirit exhilaration Phoenix rising final sanction bayous’ mist elimination.

Karl the Great said a nation is a community of communication a formulation of such suasion the concept’s shallow penetration yielded sighs of exhaltation scientific gibberration such elation now we can build a wholly new nation of South Vietnamese speaking Englation.

Counter insurrection darling will make the Commies mean and snarling boot them to some distant starling costing us a pretty farthing but what a laboratory this will be there are no Cong we’ll set hem free all hail these sons of liberty this will suit us to a tee.

What? Ho and Ngo negotiate take Vietnam off Jack’s plate that’s a fate that we can dodge send in Henry Cabot Lodge set a date communicate assassinate facilitate confusion’s reign it’s such a pain o navigate in this terrain peacemaking legerdemain.

Blockading Cuba in ’61 couldn’t be done that’s no fun we must fight wars more than one let’s bet our dime on two at a time our military threat will be the greatest yet we’ll go anywhere stand toe to toe from Zanzibar to Timbuktu we know how to hoe our row.

Jack the good aped MacTeddie keep those gunboats at the ready Castro’s goose will be cooked Giancanna and Giankennedy Exnerrate communicate fornicate negotiate assassinate fill
the plate feelings callous fog descends on
downtown Dallas horror flogs us.

LBJ and JFK differ night from day imperialism’s
not your way domestic policy civil rights help
reverse ancient blights you reset domestic plans
Vietnam will cook your goose fit you like a
hangman’s noose Kennedy’s claque will make
you sore calling it Johnson’s war.

All remain to escalate prevaricate bomb them
back to cro-magnate cheer the Gulfof Tonkin
such a ruse lights the fuse can’t you smell the
dung on your shoes hay hay LBJ how many
gooks have you killed today escalation of
escalation, all is escalation.

Bombing will yield a tete-a-tete leading to a
glorious Tet oh woe can’t they read a script that’s
set crumbling into our engulfing net strategic
bombing sets such cost that makes it clear that all
is lost Westmoreland says 200,000 or more will
win the war; sure. . .

In 1968 you fulminate no more shall we escalate
no more troops no more war Ah shall not seek
nor accept reelection as president the Holy Grail
of my life cannot survive such strife the
badgering of kids and wife mea culpa rarely,
never heard vultures your heraldic bird.

Martin Luther King Jr. was ripped from our
presence depriving us of his essence the very
evanescence of divine inspiration yielding to
assassination fostering privation mocking
deliberation; oh no, Bobby Kennedy? say it can’t
be so.

Negotiations interruptus yields frustration only
bupkus Nixon’s secret plan for peace guaranteed
Hubert’s decease bombing furor did increase all
those lies Cambodia dies Kent State kids all the
killing all the lies, oh Cambodia; Cambodia dies.

Protect the village devastate it was it love that
made you hate it My Lai laid waste to motives
chaste and left a taste for more of that endless
war gangrenous sore that drained us to the core
how much more could we endure peace is still beyond the door.

McGovern’s no contest let your plumbers have some rest FBI and CIA have no role in this play your dirty tricks will bedevil you and ruin your day negotiations will hold sway since ’68 more delay strum it on a lyre final retreat under fire.

Five presidents fought this war Truman never know what for Eisenhower shut the door to Ho’s election for sure Kennedy sought imperialism’s lure manifest destiny and much much more LBJ threw himself upon his own skewer Nixon dragged us through a noxious sewer.

Three decades long fought we this war stripped our souls no honor more our psyches sore for purposes ne’er pure Gian Kennedy took us through imperialism’s door purposelessly destroying a generation agent orange inhalation soulless devastation.

We carved ourselves a bitter ration all to build a phony nation slobbered in self-adulation counter-insurrection elation moralizing subordination we only came so we might leave no magic hidden in our sleeve millions forced to grieve a tragedy to perceive.

Edwub G, Fedder

Copyright, 1999, Edwin H. Fedder