

Recorded in Vietnam by Claude Johner  
Assisted by Janine Antoine

Folkways Records FD 5445

# Good Morning Vietnam





Description of the broadcast:

afvn radio — saigon bar "love in vietnam... is fucked up... Nixon" — lesson of calculation in veit school and jets phantom flying over — pagoda drum mixed with Johnson "peace in the world" and a prayer for peace by a monk — saigon bar "i love all people", street, siren and "i love you" — "good morning vietnam" (american radio all over vietnam every morning) birds and artillery — highland village peace and artillery and vietcong radio in french — tanks sonar, jets, helico strike, arty calculation "one four, one five etc..." — insect, night, arty in the mountains of Khe Sanh mixed with drugs "a water pipe i bought in Singapore", echo of arty mixed with brief voice of GIs smoking pot in a bar — inside an aircraftcarrier — from a transistor in Saigon vietcong broadcast, italian opera — "good morning vietnam" — var — vietcong radio — bar — vietcong radio — bar a little daughter of a prostitute "number ten thousand" — vietcong radio — bar "number one number two" — vietcong radio — bar street prostitute — vietcong radio — street prostitutes and the bed "now give me money" laugh — funeral mourner near a body — u.s. plane take off, pilot voice, for a psychological mission over vietcong territory (same mission sometimes over surrounded base) then in the sky with huge loudspeakers the plane play this record with soundeffect, it is supposed to be the voice of a dead vietcong, a ghost who says to the vietcongs on the ground. first it is the voice of child "daddy, daddy come back to me" the dead "who called me?" my child. i come back back my dear... but i am not alive... i am dead my dearchild... i am dead, i am dead i die without explanation ...when i understood it was too late, too late... my friends go back to your family before it is too late... or you'll die... go back, go bak — night in the jungle near laos, anxious voice of the recon, children laughing — arty mixed with children combat, electronics machine guns, insect, drug heroin at Khe Sanh "my bodie is just a shadow my bodie is not here" and music pop — "deflection four eight six" arty bird — a vietcong want to surrender with a white flag "i want another (dead) confirmed..look a white flag..bullshit..cut him down cut him down — cymbal for funeral and machine gun, machine gun and little girls singing over the body of their dead father, mourning, machine gun.

*"War is not something you forget like a car crash"*  
Claude Johner

RADIO INFORMS AND ENTERTAINS YOU 1:20  
WESTERN IN SAIGON 1:18  
THE ARITHMETIC LESSON 2:18  
PRAYERS FOR PEACE 4:00  
EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE COUNTRY 4:30  
THE WAR MACHINE IN OPERATION 4:50  
THE ABSTRACT-UNIVERSE OF WAR 8:35  
THE BARS, MONEY OR THE FORGETTING OF WAR 14:30  
THE COST OF WAR 6:30  
FIRE! 9:00

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE



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# Good Morning Vietnam

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There is a story behind these recordings. It was during the Tet offensive of 1968. In one of the quarters of Cholon, the battle raged, the gunships machine-gunned the market... dead... wounded... houses in flames. And in this world of destruction, from the first floor of a house that was untouched there came the sound of the scales of the piano, clear and laborious, as if the war did not exist at all. It was easy to imagine the child who was trying to do his best and whose scales resembled the last trace of life on a destroyed planet. Unfortunately, at that time the author was a photographer only and did not have a tape recorder with him. But he never forgot those scales coming from another world which at that moment conjured up that yet other world of war more powerfully than any visual image could have done.

"Good morning Vietnam" was made out of documents together adding up to 50 hours. Our chief effort has therefore been to eliminate, to reduce these 50 hours to 50 minutes, a task all the more difficult inasmuch as we had to cut all the time into the very meat of the unedited document. For these 50 hours resurrect the whole atmosphere of the war, the American war machine, robot controlled, cold, metallic, like a science fiction harvesting machine, crushing human life, a peaceful village in the High Plateaux, a school, the laughter of children symbolic of life itself. It is not a matter of a series on anecdotal reportages on the war in Vietnam but of a more generalised reportage on the war itself, with two actors - life and Death... the war machine and the Vietnamese.

Death is the abstract war machine, the reality of which is beyond the comprehension of those who direct it, like this GI in his bunker announcing the artillery coordinates - one five, one five, one four etc... figures... for him Vietnam is a General Staff map where the villages are



replaced by figures, where life is made into figures, his voice as neutral as a calculating machine. This war machine... it is also the innards of the aircraft carriers in the Gulf of Tonkin, the metal corridors of which conjure up a descent into hell and where, oddly enough one runs into the voices of a Cambodian play coming over the radio. The machine... it is the dollars spent in the bars of Saigon, for all is for sale, love, even the friendship of a child ; and there still more accounts to be rendered.

Involved in this machine there are two American social phenomena that the army drags in its wake - pop music and drugs, inseparable right up to Khe Sahn in the very midst of the shelling. Life... it is the Vietnamese, the children who shout in order to be heard above the screaming of the jets, the young girl prostitutes, the widows who weep, the children who chant above the corpses of their fathers.

"Good Morning Vietnam" should be listened to as an authentic document as a whole. Our sole effort has been directed to the montage ; the mixing is reduced to translations and to considerations of a purely technical order dictated by the montage itself, and in a very few places, to aesthetic reasons, for example, the Vietcong radio mixed with the environment of a Mekong village, or the voices of drugged GIs mixed with the echo of artillery fire, or the funeral cymbals overlaying the stutter of a machine-gun. In this way, the documents preserve all of their value.

## SIDE I

### RADIO INFORMS AND ENTERTAINS YOU

#### RADIO A.F.V.N.

"This is A.F.V.N. - A M and F M in Saigon, the key station

of the American Forces Vietnam network. This is a division of the Office of Information, Military Assistance Command Vietnam - A.F.V.N. operating on five hundred and forty kilowatts on A.M. Band with an authorised power of fifty thousand watts.

Looks wearing a white flag -  
(burst of fire) - him

"Studio and transmitter are located in Saigon and Camlo, Republic of Vietnam - authorized by the U.S. Department of Defense and the Government of Vietnam - A.F.V.N. A M and F M Saigon provided information and entertainment 24 hours of the day to American personnel in the Republic of Vietnam - and now another broadcasting day begins with the national anthem of the Republic of Vietnam and of the United States of America.

(American National Anthem)

### WESTERN IN SAIGON

western music (a Philippino orchestra in a Vietnamese nightclub near the Tan Son Nhut airport, reserved for GIs).

- "If you were in Vietnam, you can... take it ! But you cannot because the culture was taking off Vietnam which say... dont like !

- I hate Vietnam !

- The thing I remember most in Vietnam ?... a trip I made to Vinh Gai



- Love in Vietnam !

- Vietnam is fucked up

- Vietnam is fucked up

- Vietnam is fucked up

- but Nixon...

- ... Nixon...

#### THE ARITHMETIC LESSON

vietnamese children and "Phantom" jets

(a small village near Danang -  
the scholl)

#### PRAYERS FOR PEACE

the gong of the An Quang Pagoda

(Call to prayer - the gongs are made  
out of melted American artillery  
shells).

Lyndon B. Johnson

1968 speech... "Peace in the World"

The monk Thich Tri Quang

" ... Peace in the World  
" ... Peace in the World  
" ... Peace in the World

black GI in a bar

- What will they all do when they go back to the United  
States ? I do not know what I will do. I hope I'll be able  
to do something. I dont want to become a criminal. I want  
to do my two years and then get out of it. I am not a  
liar.

Beside, I love everybody. That's all.

the sterret

(motor cycles and sirens)

a prostitute

- "I love you."

Radio A.F.V.N.

"Good morning Vietnam..."

#### EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE COUNTRY

a village in the High Plateaux

(at Mytho, information from Radio  
Vietcong. The gongs resound day and  
night. They will only stop at the end  
of the war, following the vow of the  
"Monk of the Coconut Trees")

an island in the Mekong River



## THE WAR MACHINE IN OPERATION

tank caterpillars

sonar (radar)

jets

machine-gun fire from helicopters

air-to-ground pilot communication

artillery coordinates

"one five - one five - one four - one  
three - left one two - one three - one  
three - one three -"

artillery of 175

(night in the mountains of Khe Sahn)

(the GIs escape from the war in the  
dreams of drugs)

- I was in Singapore, I bought this  
water pipe there

- it was very fantastic

- movement - in order to smoke  
marijuana

- Marijuana ! they ought to make  
it legal.

## THE ABSTRACT UNIVERSE OF WAR

the aircraft carrier "Enterprise"

(In the Gulf of Tonkin : the interiors  
of aircraft carriers)

- Aircraft carriers -

hydraulic machine chambers

catapults

arresting gear

corridor

atmospheric noises

interference

Radio Hanoi

"The liberation forces attacked a tank  
unit of the 1st Infantry Division  
14 km north-west of Laikhe..."

(Italian opera : "O celestial Aida"  
- Soviet anthem)

Radio A.F.V.N.

Good Morning Vietnam ...

## SIDE II

### THE BARS, MONEY OR THE FORGETTING OF WAR

GIs and girls

"get off now"

(and the reminder of reality :  
Radio Hanoi)

Radio Hanoi

"American imperialism, overlord of the  
imperialists"

GI

(in a bar with a child, the daughter  
of a prostitute)



- another boy friend
- you will be my friend now ?
- ...
- may be ?
- may be... number ten thousand  
dirty swine

(laughter)

- number 10.000 - dirty swine ! -
- He wants to screw my mother

Radio Hanoi

"This is revolutionary war, a war of liberation, the biggest and cruellest local war in the history of American imperialism, which has escalated to its greatest point, with more than half a million American and puppet and satellite troops and costing so far hundreds of billions of dollars and involving modern weapons of all kinds with the sole exception of nuclear arms."

GI and child (in the bar)

- you are number 2
- here, I'm giving you 10 piastre,  
what am I now ?
- give money, give money...  
my two packets of cashew nuts,  
O my God !...
- 160 170 180

Radio Hanoi

"... obliging the enemy to adopt a defensive strategy on all the battle fields

the bar

laughter

the street of the prostitutes

- "suck you"

Radio Hanoi

"... in this resistance the military line of our Party has reached a new development... the chapter of forty years of struggle and of victories by our party..."

the street of the prostitutes

- Hey ! Come here, come here !  
Sir, one girl ! You want girl !
- Give me money now
- How much
- Two thousand

(stifled laughter)

#### THE COST OF THE WAR

Bien Hoa cemetery (mass burials)

amplifiers in the open sky

"altitude 500 metres - psychological warfare - records broadcast by the Americans over encircled bases"



(original record, produced by the  
American Army Psychological Services).

- Papa, papa, come back with me, take  
me along, papa, papa, papa...

- Who is that who calls me ? who calls  
me ? It is my child...

It is my wife - it is they who call  
me - I will come back, my dear ones  
- but I am no longer alive - I am  
dead, my dear ones, my dear friends  
- I am dead - I am dead - I am dead  
- I am dead - in hell - for no  
reason...

But when I realised it, it was too  
late - it is already too late - my  
dear friends, you who are in the  
world of the living, one day you  
will see your families again - listen  
to me - go back quickly - go back  
quickly - before it is too late - leave  
everything - give up everything -  
otherwise you will die, like me - go  
back quickly or it will be too late -  
it will be too late - it will be  
too late - go back, I entreat you -  
go back quickly - go back - go back  
quickly - I beg you...

commando

(on the Ho Chi Minh trail - the anguish  
of the jungle.)

This is zero hotel  
This is niver Charlie

Over... (laughter of children)  
Nine Zero Charlie - six-eight - six-  
eight  
This is echo four zero over  
OK Tonny nickel-nickel

F I R E !

Howitzer battery of 155

automatic weapons  
quadruple machine-guns  
electronic (recreation court)  
mortar

Anagadavida

(Pop music of the Iron Butterflies  
and ravings of the heroine in the  
middle of the shelling)

"Your body...  
your body is just a shadow  
how much did you take ?  
your body is just there  
your body is only a shadow"

"number two - one round  
use gunner squadron  
deffection (?) eight-six  
squadron three-four-zero"

a captain

"I fired into the heap  
I wanted another to notch up



Did I mess him up or did I kill him ?  
No, he is quite dead... Good, good  
work

Hey, look there ! The guy with the  
white flag !  
snofabitch of a liar !  
shoot him down !

funeral cymbals

(a burial on the Hight Plateaux)

F I N

#### CLAUDE JOHNER

born on the 19th August 1939  
at Chalons sur Marne  
gave up law studies  
in 1966 to go to Vietnam  
became an freelance  
photographer for A.P.  
of New York times and Gamma Agency  
has been recording since 1970 on nagra  
IVL with a view to making a sound play on  
the war in Vietnam

#### JANINE ANTOINE

higher studies in literature  
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