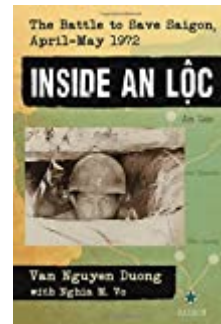


Van Nguyen Duong, Nghia M. Vo. *Inside An Lộc: The Battle to Save Saigon, April-May 1972.* Jefferson: McFarland, 2015. 268 pp. \$29.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-7864-9934-2.



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During the late spring and early summer of 1972, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) faced an invasion less than one hundred kilometers from Saigon. The battle during the *â*Mua He Do Lua, the Fiery Red Summer, *â*demonstrated the ability of the ARVN to stand against overwhelming enemy forces (p. 2). *Inside An Lc: The Battle to Save Saigon, April-May 1972*, written by Van Nguyen Duong with Nghia M. Vo, combines Duong’s recollections of the battle with an introduction of sources to help demonstrate the courage and valor of the men of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF). Lieutenant Colonel Duong served with the ARVN forces defending An Lc during the Fiery Red Summer. Vo has published several books on Vietnamese culture and works to document Vietnamese American culture through conferences and publications.

With the Vietnamization of the war, few US advisors were on the ground in South Vietnam and only a handful were present at the battle of An Lc. The facts of the battle were misrepresented and underreported by the press outlets in Vietnam at the time. The press did not have a presence until the battle was over and mainly relied on secondhand information to formulate the story of An Lc. The authors work to bring clarity to the strategic development of the situation during the 1972 North

Vietnamese offensive, while honoring the men who sacrificed so much to save a small town that held no strategic import. The import of the town only came as a political objective of the North Vietnamese Army.

Along with honoring the men who fought in An Lc, the authors highlight the misunderstanding of the cultural and social differences between the RVN and US military advisors. The significance of the differences played a role in helping to build the context for the battle and the war as a whole. The battle of An Lc was more than two enemies fighting for territory; it was also about internal struggles between the ARVN commander Le Van Hung and his US military advisor and their respective senior commanders. During the complex and confusing battle, tensions grew and had not been resolved. With this in mind, the authors engaged the sources and collected material to bring resolution to the sequence of events.

The authors use a combination of primary source documents, monographs, and journal articles, along with Duong’s recollections and records. Detailed troop dispositions throughout the battle are provided to portray the desperation of the situation. The authors also compare the situation at An Lc to other besieged towns and encampments of the longer conflict. In chapter 12, for

example, the sieges at Dien Bien Phu and Khe Sanh are compared to the events of An Lc in terms of establishing the importance of An Lc to the South Vietnamese government's war efforts.

The focal point is on the battle at An Lc, but the battle is only a piece of the history of the South Vietnamese struggle to remain free of Communist control. The North Vietnamese opened offensives in three places in South Vietnam at the time in an attempt to gain a foothold for a provisional Communist government that could lend legitimacy to the idea that the Saigon government was not representative of the mass population in South Vietnam. With the North eyeing An Lc as the seat of the opposition government and the fate of Saigon in the balance, General Hung vowed to die with An Lc (p. 4).

Throughout the 257 pages of the book, the authors work to show the larger trends of the struggle for the

small town of An Lc as an example of the larger war. This is done through fourteen chapters that tie the longer conflict to the immediate threat at An Lc in the early spring of 1972. The unique perspective of the South Vietnamese during that time helps fill a gap in the historiography of the Vietnam conflict. The authors bring into focus the Vietnamese perspective. Vietnamese voices need to be heard and explored to develop a more comprehensive view of the long conflict. Inclusion of the voices of the Vietnamese into the history of the Vietnam conflict serves as a way to see and understand the social and cultural differences that existed in Vietnam.

Inside An Lc helps to establish the Vietnamese perspective for Western readers. The book helps to open the way for more inclusion and understanding of the conflict, not just the battles that took place during the Fiery Red Summer of 1972. The authors provide the Vietnamese voice in events that have largely been Americanized.

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