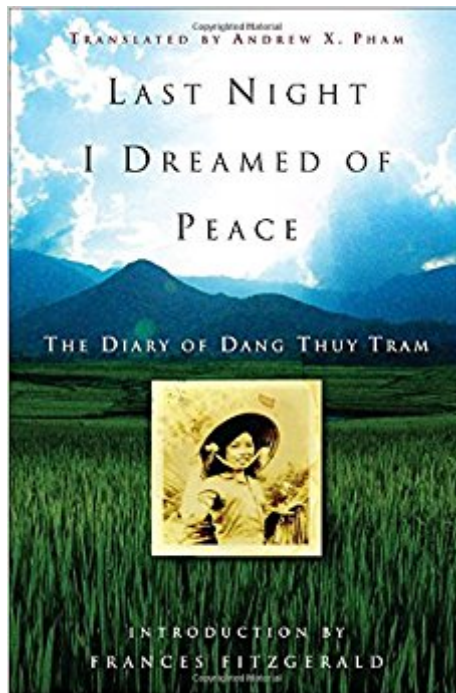




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Last Night I Dreamed Of Peace: The Diary Of Dang Thuy Tram



Synopsis

“Remarkable. . . . A gift from a heroine who was killed at twenty-seven but whose voice has survived to remind us of the humanity and decency that endure amid the horror and chaos of war.” —Francine Prose, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

Brutally honest and rich in detail, this posthumously published diary of a twenty-seven-year-old Vietcong woman doctor, saved from destruction by an American soldier, gives us fresh insight into the lives of those fighting on the other side of the Vietnam War. It is a story of the struggle for one’s ideals amid the despair and grief of war, but most of all, it is a story of hope in the most dire circumstances.

“As much a drama of feelings as a drama of war.” —Seth Mydans, *New York Times*

“A book to be read by and included in any course on the literature of the war. . . . A major contribution.” —Chicago Tribune

“An illuminating picture of what life was like among the enemy guerrillas, especially in the medical community.” —The VVA Veteran, official publication of Vietnam Veterans of America

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Customer Reviews

In 1970, while sifting through war documents in Vietnam, Fred Whitehurst, an American lawyer serving with a military intelligence dispatch, found a diary no bigger than a pack of cigarettes, its pages handsewn together. Written between 1968 and '70 by Tram, a young, passionate doctor who served on the front lines, it chronicled the strife she witnessed until the day she was shot by American soldiers earlier that year at age 27. Whitehurst, who was greatly moved by the diary and

smuggled it out of the country, returned it to Thuy's family in 2005; soon after, it was published as a book in Vietnam, selling nearly half a million copies within a year and a half. The diary is valuable for the perspective it offers on war. Thuy is not obsessed with military maneuvers but rather the damage, both physical and emotional, that the war is inflicting on her country. Thuy also speaks poignantly about her patients and the compassion she feels for them. Unfortunately, the writing, composed largely of breathless questions and exclamations, is monotonous at times, somewhat diminishing the book's power. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"Now available for the first time in English, faithfully translated by Pulitzer Prize-winning Vietnamese American journalist Pham, [LAST NIGHT I DREAMED OF PEACE] is witness to the unjust horrors and countless tragedies of war, a reminder made more pertinent every day. The Bloomsbury Review "Last Night I Dreamed of Peace is a book to be read by all and included in any course on the literature of war. Chicago Tribune "Remarkable. . . . A gift from a heroine who was killed at twenty-seven but whose voice has survived to remind us of the humanity and decency that endure amid and despite the horror and chaos of war. Francine Prose, O, The Oprah Magazine "As much a drama of feelings as a drama of war. Seth Mydans, New York Times "An illuminating picture of what life was like among the enemy guerrillas, especially in the medical community. The VVA Veteran, official publication of Vietnam Veterans of America "Idealistic young North Vietnamese doctor describes her labors in makeshift clinics and hidden hospitals during the escalation of the Vietnam War. Tram did not survive the war. On June 22, 1970, an American soldier shot her in the head while she was walking down a jungle pathway dressed in the conventional black pajamas of her compatriots. Judging by her diary, rescued from the flames by another American soldier and first published in Vietnam in 2005, she died with a firm commitment to the Communist Party, the reunion of Vietnam, her profession and her patients, many of whom she saved in surgeries conducted under the most primitive and dangerous conditions imaginable. In one of her first entries, on April 12, 1968, she characterizes herself as having 'the heart of a lonely girl filled with unanswered hopes and dreams.' This longing and yearning especially for the lover she rarely sees, a man she names only as 'M' fills these pages and gives them a poignancy that is at times almost unbearable. Early on, Tram records her concerns about being accepted into the Party. She

eventually and gleefully is, but one of her last entries reveals the results of an evaluation by her political mentors, who say she must battle her 'bourgeois' tendencies. It's a laughable adjective to apply to a young woman dedicating her life to the communists' political and military cause. Tram blasts the despised Americans over and over, calling them 'imperialist,' 'invaders,' 'bloodthirsty.' She notes with outrage the devastation wrought by bombs, artillery and defoliation. Describing her efforts to treat a young man burned by a phosphorous bomb, she writes, 'He looks as if he has been roasted in an oven.' Urgent, simple prose that pierces the heart." Kirkus Reviews From the Hardcover edition.

Last Night I dreamed of Peace is an extraordinarily moving diary of a young doctor from North Vietnam, Dang Thuy Tram, who volunteered to use her medical training at hidden locations in Quang Ngai Province, South Vietnam to treat wounded North Vietnamese, National Liberation Front (Viet Cong) soldiers and local villagers. In constant danger from American and South Vietnamese government forces and longing for her family, her mother's touch, and her boyfriend, from her point of view she was helping in the effort to reunify Vietnam. Her surgical skills and treatments saved lives and she provided comfort to those she could not save. The diary brings the reader intimate knowledge of Thuy's life, emotions, and experiences and the multiple horrors and tragedies of war. Her diary, not much bigger than a pack of cigarettes, was found after she was shot and killed by soldiers of the Americal Division close to her forest hospital on June 22, 1970. After a translator explained the contents of the little handwritten book, a U.S. soldier kept it for some 35 years and then sought out and returned it to Thuy's family in Vietnam.

Through her diary, you get to know a personal side of Dr Thuy Tram. Her idealism, hopes, fears, passion for her profession, loneliness, and anger towards the American enemy for the violence inflicted at her country and patients. She was a very intelligent, courageous young woman who made a tremendous difference for her comrades during the short time she served as a battlefield doctor. Her life is a reminder of the senseless and tragic human suffering forced upon oftentimes innocent people when America decides to invade a sovereign nation for very weak reasons.

The writing style is sometimes hard to follow and the author was obviously not trying to make an accurate day by day account of the war. It was more a personal project of hers, just to record her thoughts and feelings. I found it very touching and enlightening, to be able to have the thoughts of

one from the "other side". It really humanizes the people who suffered in the war, those in Vietnam who were caught in a situation they could not escape. Having traveled in Vietnam recently, with ordinary people from all walks of life there, some who fought for the Hanoi government, you begin to realize what a tragedy the entire conflict was. Not only for the 54,000 Americans killed, but for the soldiers from both sides, all 3 sides really, in Vietnam who just wanted a peaceful and normal life. A lack of cultural understanding, and fear of a people we had no reason to fear was the root cause of the conflict. Books such as this will help bridge that gap, and bring about a more peaceful and tolerant world. Dang Thuy Tram, in my mind, did not die in vain. We owe it to her to read her thoughts..

Excellent!

This remarkable book gives Americans a stark and poignant view of how the Vietnamese people viewed America. Thank the man who brought it back from Vietnam, Fred Whitehurst, American hero. William C. Head Atlanta, GA

An excellent read from the other side of the Vietnam War. This book truly captures the confusion and heartbreak of a Doctor's struggle to fight for what she believes in.

This is the most moving book I have ever read

Very touching story. One speculates about the parallel between Ms Dang's unrequited love object and the Z.G. Li character in Lisa See's novels.

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