



Southeast Asia Resource Action Center

MEMORANDUM

To: SEARAC Board of Directors and Friends of SEARAC
From: Le Xuan Khoa
Date: 4/25/1996

Among the current allegations against me and SEARAC, there was one that criticized me for usurping the title of "professor" or "doctor of philosophy." I would like to make the following clarification:

I have been called "doctor" or "professor" by many persons, probably due to the fact that I taught at several universities in Vietnam for many years, and held the position of Vice Chancellor of the University of Saigon before April 1975. In fact, I have not yet received the doctoral degree, since after the outline of my doctoral thesis had been approved and duly registered at the University of Paris (Sorbonne) in April 1961, I returned to Vietnam. That year, I was recruited as lecturer at the Department of Oriental Philosophy, Faculty of Letters, University of Saigon. A few years later, I was promoted to professor, and in 1974 became First Vice Chancellor of that University, in charge of Research and Development.

For those who are familiar with the French higher education system, it is a well known fact that a doctoral candidate can come back to the university to present his/her thesis any time within the ten-year period from the registration date. However, I did not do so due to the political and military situation in Vietnam in the aftermath of the assassination of President Ngo Dinh Diem in November 1963. Eventually, I felt it no longer necessary to submit my thesis since I had already secured a promising academic career, and sponsored a number of students in their post-graduate degree dissertations.

Back in 1982 or 1983, when USCR and SEARAC were still sharing office space in the building on Sixteenth and P Streets, N.W., I had a conversation with Roger Winter about my educational background and work experience. Roger said "I am calling you 'doctor' anyway." I have long since given up correcting people every time I am given that title. However, I do not refer to myself as Dr. Khoa, and have never listed myself as a Ph.D. on my curriculum vitae. Honestly, I feel very pleased to be called "professor" by many members of the Vietnamese community, including some of my critics.

I apologize if I have ever caused any disappointment to you because of this confusion. It is obvious that my political foes have tried everything to discredit me and SEARAC.