

4. EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE TRADE UNION

Translated by Trần Thảo Uyên

Meeting Memo—February 24, 2003

Originally posted on Facebook by Dạ Thảo Phương on April 10, 2022,
<https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/117032397617240>.

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM

Independence – Freedom – Happiness

MEETING MEMO

RECORDED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE TRADE UNION

February 24, 2003

3:30 p.m.

In regard to the settlement of complaints and denunciations of Dạ Thảo Phương against Lương Ngọc An.

Meeting attendees:

- Tạ Kim Liên, Trade Union Secretary
- Đỗ Thị Bạch Mai, Executive Board Member, Head of Văn Nghệ Trẻ Department
- Dạ Thảo Phương, complainant and denunciator

At the beginning of the meeting, Ms. Tạ Kim Liên stated the purpose of the meeting: Under the direction of the leadership board of Văn Nghệ newspaper, the executive board of the Trade Union held a meeting to resolve long-standing problems regarding what had happened between Dạ Thảo Phương

and Lương Ngọc An since April 2000. The executive board of the Trade Union would like to listen to all the reports and aspirations of DTP [Đạ Thảo Phương].

Đạ Thảo Phương: I am ready to present the matter honestly.

Tạ Kim Liên: Why did the scuffle happen? What made Lương Ngọc An (LNA) assault you? DTP, do you know?

Đạ Thảo Phương (DTP): I stated it clearly in the complaint. LNA was like what I had heard before coming back to VN [*Văn Nghệ*] newspaper. Many people talked about his personality and his relationships with women, and about money . . .

Once, when I was sitting at the library with Ms. Năm, LNA saw Mr. Nguyễn Khắc Trường passing by. LNA asked me, “If you saw a person doing something under the table, what would you do?” I didn’t have time to answer, but LNA said, “If I were the witness and you or Điệp were the person with under-the-table business, I would come in and look, say nothing, and silently leave and save it for later. If the person with under-the-table business were Trường, Thịnh, or Tuấn, I would jump in to join them.”

That behavior of Lương Ngọc An disgusted me. I understood that LNA’s lifestyle was not my cup of tea, and I always kept my distance from him.

When returning to *Văn Nghệ Trẻ*, LNA always found an opportunity to tease the female staff in obscene ways. I always expressed my disdain for LNA’s uncultured behavior. LNA saw that and was very angry with me, so he sometimes made fun of me. During the days that LNA stayed at VNT [*Văn Nghệ Trẻ* newspaper], through the stories about LNA told by himself and other people, I despised him. In journalism, I admit that LNA had a certain ability. All relations between LNA and me were purely professional. LNA thought I was arrogant and haughty. He thought that I was a person who had had so much luck in life, was well educated, and had a favorable job. He was jealous of me and everyone.

He often made obscene jokes. Everyone knew how he teased Liên in the Mo-rát [proofreading] Room. At VNT, he also often groped and teased me and sexually harassed me. In the complaint, I have presented specific dates and times.

When he sexually harassed me, I always protested and resisted fiercely. Once, in a small room at VNT, he broke in, hugged me, and behaved rudely when I resisted. I hit LNA's head with a doorknob and there was a scratch on LNA's head. LNA lied to everyone about falling on the stairs.

When he sexually harassed me, I resisted but he didn't stop. I was forced to find other ways to resist him. I called LNA's mother and told Ms. [redacted] who was working for [redacted] newspaper. Everyone knows Ms. [redacted] working for [redacted] newspaper is LNA's mistress. I asked Liên to help me, and Ms. [redacted] was also very polite to me and said, "Don't worry; I will solve it for you." Conversations between me and her were not because of jealousy.

The first time he sexually harassed me, I told him, "You have to stop, you and I are just colleagues. If you don't stop, you are insulting your lover." I could not understand a person who was married and having an affair but still wanted to take advantage of another girl sexually...He didn't stop but continued with those behaviors. And I declared that I would report him to the office if he didn't stop. He responded with a very mocking and defiant attitude.

Before the trip to Nam Định to watch a show there, I told LNA categorically about what he did, and I went to report to Mr. Tuấn about LNA harassing me all day and bothering my family by calling them. I reacted, but LNA refused to stop. Mr. Tuấn said, "Let me see him."

As a young unmarried woman, I told Mr. Tuấn, "Don't rush to report it to the office just yet. If anything happens, later on, I'll report back to you and ask for help."

At noon on April 14, 2002, I took a nap at the office. I lay on a chair to read a book and kept the door closed. Seeing LNA open the door, I quickly sat up. LNA came behind me, stroked my hair, and touched my chest. I struggled to resist with my hands, but he choked me. I was so scared that I cried. He pushed me down on a chair, lay on top of me, and strangled me. At that time, I was so frightened, and I feared that death might come. I suddenly remembered that Tâm was in the computer room, and I cried out very loudly for help. And then everyone ran in to witness it. Many times before, LNA kept calling and flirting with me but I didn't answer and hung up the phone.

I had never been alone at night with LNA. When the relationship was still normal (at work) there were always other people around.

Note: Tạ Kim Liên and Đỗ Bạch Mai discussed the situation with each other and decided to show LNA's statement to DTP. DTP was agitated and indignant. At that time, DTP was in shock.

Dạ Thảo Phương (after she calms down): I would like to request that the office protect me because LNA is very dangerous. I propose to confront LNA publicly. I would like to request that the office settle my complaints within its authority. Please ask the office to give me a written response to my complaint about who was in the wrong or the right. How should the guilty person be disciplined? The perpetrator must publicly apologize.

When I told LNA that if he didn't stop, I would report it to the office, LNA threatened me: "Do you want me to tell everyone I slept with you?" He threatened to lie like that. His statement [to the office] carries through with this threat.

I still believe that there are good people and justice in this world. It is better to die for faith than to live without faith. Bad actors like LNA must be condemned by the public. LNA's crimes against me must be stopped, condemned, and paid for.

I believe that the law has scientific methods to investigate and prove [LNA's] crimes and to protect me, a victim and a completely innocent person.

With extreme reluctance, I have decided to bring this matter before the law. Reading LNA's statement makes me even more determined to take LNA to court because he does not have any remorse or regret. It is very blatant. Up to this moment, LNA has not shown any sign of repentance. His completely untrue statement was blatantly fabricated. So, once again, he committed an unforgivable crime.

The reason I wrote a complaint on January 14, 2003, was because I never knew that the office had issued a disciplinary document to LNA and because LNA's presence at the office at the end of the year enraged me. Back then, I was still waiting for a clear announcement from the office so that everything would be transparent.

Afterward, in the office meeting, Mr. Tuấn, on behalf of the leadership board, announced the disciplinary action for LNA starting in June 2002. I was very grateful to the leadership board for taking care of this matter for me.

But this matter cannot stop here, after I read the completely slanderous, defamatory statement written by LNA. I feel that it is even more necessary to clarify in black and white. With two statements, there will be a true statement and a made-up one.

I hope the leadership board will help me to clarify the black-and-white truth clearly and decisively.

I strongly believe in the integrity of the office's leaders.

I also believe that in necessary cases the law will support me.

6:10 p.m.

February 24, 2003

Đỗ Bạch Mai (signed)

Tạ Kim Liên (signed)

Dạ Thảo Phương (signed)

5. DẠ THẢO PHƯƠNG

Translated by Trần Thảo Uyên

My First Child

Originally posted on Facebook by Dạ Thảo Phương on April 11, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/dathaophuongvn/posts/117364987583981>.

*** If you are under 16, please ask your parents for permission before reading this post.

* Painfully ending motherhood

* Continuing to be stalked