

6. TRADE UNION

Translated by Nguyễn Hồng Vân

Meeting Memo—February 26, 2003

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

SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM
Independence – Freedom – Happiness

 MEETING MEMO

9:30 a.m. on February 26, 2003: In the conference room of the newspaper office

Participants:

- 1 – Chairperson of the Trade Union [Chủ tịch Công đoàn] (CTCĐ)
- 2 – Head of *Văn Nghệ Trẻ* (VNT)
- 3 – Head of the Ethnic Literature & Arts Division [*Văn Nghệ Dân Tộc*] (VNĐT)
- 4 – Mr. Lương Ngọc An (LNA)

The Trade Union chairperson stated the reason [for the meeting].

LNA: After the fight on April 14, 2000, I accepted disciplinary action, and in 2002 I was transferred to the VNĐT division by comrade Ng Khắc Trường.

I personally did not make the request; I just accepted the complaint. It was a personal issue, so I did not want to make a fuss. The conflict started with my assault against her. There were many sensitive reasons for it. I felt remorseful and embarrassed; I wanted it to go away. At the review meeting organized by the party cell, the secretary criticized me for not being honest and sincere. I reported the details truthfully.

Our relationship was illicit. I am married. I wanted to resolve the issue. Ms. Phương did not request compensation, but she pressured me so much

that I was frustrated. Therefore, I reacted somewhat negatively. I avoided contact, communication, and meeting her in person.

After the incident in 2000, Phương's family lodged a complaint against me because of the assault, but rumors persisted about my relationship with Phương. She sued me for sexual harassment, and she rejected my statement.

This issue involves both wrongful conduct and a romantic relationship. I have complied with all requests made by the office. If the issue cannot be brought to a close, I want to resolve it once and for all, so we do not need to revisit it in the future.

I want the Trade Union, the division, the party cell, and the editorial board [*Editors' note: the end of the sentence is missing in the transcript*].

CTCĐ: An, can you guarantee that his statement is accurate? An, you worked at VNT (late 1998–2000).

LNA: I wrote the statement after careful consideration. I did not hold back anything, including sensitive issues. I absolutely did not want to write everything, but what I wrote is the truth. Initially, the relationship started as sincere attraction. Neither of us was prepared for the confrontation that was to come.

If needed, I can provide information about witnesses.

I swear to the office and to the law: Previously, I concealed certain sensitive things about this romantic relationship. This was the last mistake, which forced me to say everything in the statement made on January 30, 2003.

I want to resolve the issue discreetly, but that does not mean I will accept slander.

CTCĐ: When did this relationship start?

LNA: About six months before the fight.

VNT: During the field trip to Nghĩa Hưng, the two of you already had a fight, it was in January 2000, before Tết [the Lunar New Year], but the special volume for Tết had already been completed.

LNA: Correct.

VNT: Assaulting a person who you used to have a romantic relationship with, you probably feel remorse, right An? But do you understand how T.P. [Dạ Thảo Phương] has lived during the past two years? Have you apologized to T.P.?

LNA: If I must apologize to T.P., I must apologize not only for the fight, but for many other things as well, from the moment I let this relationship start. Before the assault, I wanted to apologize, but we couldn't meet.

VNT: Previously, TP hit LNA and reported to Tuấn that LNA had called to flirt and harass T.P.'s family (late 1999). An is married; it is not known who T.P. is in love with; who is the suitor in that relationship?

LNA: There have been many fights, especially after T.P. had an abortion. I went with T.P. twice to get an abortion, once in Đê La Thành and once in Hàng Cót, but she did not go through with the abortion. When I traveled to Quảng Ninh to write about Móng Cái, T.P. called me from her home, and she went to get an abortion. It seems like she stayed at Ms. Giáng Vân's house afterward. It was December 1999.

VNT: If the two of you were in a voluntary relationship, why did T.P. react so strongly? Did you violate her first, An? Did T.P. fight back and use a door handle to scratch your face?

CTCĐ: An has been working at this newspaper for a long time; no one wants to complicate this issue further. We should try to resolve this peacefully, avoid escalation to higher leaders, which would negatively impact both of you.

A review of T.P.'s complaint indicates that the two individuals made completely different statements.

VNT: Why are the two statements different from each other?

LNA: The two statements are different, but they do not contradict each other. I can guarantee that. (Asked for permission to read T.P.'s complaint and then continued.) T.P.'s complaint misses one part. T.P.'s intention is to have me disciplined, without dealing conclusively with the relationship between the two of us.

CTCĐ: If A's [LNA] submission is correct, why is it different from T.P.'s complaint? Why did T.P. reject it?

VNT: I think A must understand that he is married, therefore he has more responsibilities.

LNA: I have never shirked my responsibilities.

VNT: Around noon on April 14, 2000, it is not clear whether A was drunk or not, but according to T.P.'s statement, A came to her room, stroked her hair and fondled her breast, pressed on T.P.'s body, and choked her. What is the direct cause?

LNA: T.P. did not tell anyone about the fact that I and T.P. had a relationship with each other. She just blamed me for sexual harassment. This was consensual: in a hotel, in the house of T.P.'s family.

VNT: If it was consensual, why did T.P. react so fiercely? Why were you in a consensual relationship with T.P. but also close to Ms. X of newspaper Z at the same time?

CTCĐ: T.P. called those people, but she did not mean to continue the relationship with A, did she?

VNT: I did ask X, when T.P. called X, was she jealous? X answered, “No.”

LNA: T.P. did mention feeling jealous on telephone calls with my mother and father (or it seems so).

VNT: I confirm that T.P. wanted to end the relationship with A in T.P.’s telephone conversations.

LNA: That’s right. I also felt fed up with the relationship, but I couldn’t meet with T.P. to discuss.

VNT: Have you ever threatened T.P. that you would tell everyone that she “sleeps with you?”

LNA: No.

VNT: After the assault, everyone knew about what happened between the two of you. T.P. did not disclose it. Who did?

LNA: I did not. If I needed to address T.P.’s emotional issues, I would not have needed to make a statement. I wrote a statement as a basis for the employer to resolve the complaint about sexual harassment. I did not mean to slander anyone. I have never wanted to help T.P. resolve her emotional issues while I have to live with the disgrace of committing a sexual assault.

[The following two lines are crossed out in the original document:]

VNT: *Before the choking, was there a sexual assault?*

LNA: *If so, it’s hard to determine. Proof is needed.*

VNT: In fact, T.P. waits for an announcement of disciplinary action and A’s apology. But nothing has happened. T.P. is a woman, a complaint is her last resort.

After that, the employer announced that A is disciplined starting in June 2000...

VNDT: T.P. rejects your statement. What are your thoughts?

LNA: T.P. rejects it, but I still assert that the statement is correct.

CTCØ: A’s wish and solution is to save face for both parties.

VNT: Before the assault, there was a telephone call that lasted for two hours. It was recorded because T.P. took precautions.

LNA: T.P. recorded the calls to me and to X. The person who records can use that recording for whatever purpose. The conversations are too long for me to remember.

VNDT: I suggest that you try to come up with practical solutions to placate T.P. The Trade Union and the two divisions will work with both of you and strive to stage a formal mediation.

LNA: I regret that my mistakes have brought many troubles to the leadership and the entire office. I hope that the next meeting will not be too confrontational (it will be embarrassing for both of us) and will resolve this conflict.

VNT: During this meeting, LNA has clearly demonstrated that he wants mediation and is willing to accept responsibility (without discussing the accuracy of the statement).

The meeting ends at 11:30 a.m.

Secretary

Đặng Bảy (signed)

Đỗ Bạch Mai (signed)

Lương Ngọc An (signed)

Tạ Kim Liên (signed)

7. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE VIETNAM WRITERS' ASSOCIATION

Translated by Trần Hạnh

Letter from the Executive Committee of the Vietnam Writers' Association to Ms. Dạ Thảo Phương (Phan Thị Thanh Thúy)

This letter was sent via email to Dạ Thảo Phương on April 10, 2022, and was not signed by any individual. The online newspaper *InfoNet* published it on April 12, 2022, <https://infonet.vietnamnet.vn/gioi-tre/nong-tren-mang/hoi-nha-van-viet-nam-gui-thu-cho-nha-tho-da-thao-phuong-sau-khi-nhan-don-chi-phuong-to-cao-ptbt-luong-ngoc-an-cuong-dam-hon-20-nam-truoc-408637.html>.

Hà Nội, April 10, 2022

Dear Ms. Dạ Thảo Phương (Phan Thị Thanh Thúy),

On the 6th of April 2022, the executive committee of the Vietnam Writers' Association received your open letter sent via email, that “denounced an act of rape” by Mr. Lương Ngọc An, currently a standing member of the executive committee of the Vietnam Writers' Association, and the deputy editor in chief of *Văn Nghệ* newspaper.