

# Huynh Kim Khanh

*April 20, 1936 — March 27, 1990*

Professor Huynh Kim Khanh of Cornell's Department of Government and Southeast Asia Program died in Ithaca on March 27, 1990 of heart failure at the age of 53. One of the foremost scholars of modern Vietnam, he is best known for his classic *Vietnamese Communism, 1925-45*, published by Cornell University Press in 1982. Appointed associate professor in Cornell's Department of Government in July 1989, he taught courses on the Governments and Politics of Southeast Asia and on the Vietnam War, as well as a seminar on Issues in Contemporary Vietnamese Politics.

Huynh Kim Khanh was born April 20, 1936, in Quang Nam, Vietnam, where his father was a Presbyterian minister. Following the conclusion of the French-Vietnamese war in 1954, Khanh worked for nearly two years as interpreter and assistant to the director of the Mennonite's Church World Service in the settlement of refugees. For this work he was rewarded with a year's scholarship in the United States which was followed by a two-year U.S. government A.I.D. scholarship that saw him through a B.A. degree at Johns Hopkins and the beginning of graduate study at Lehigh University, where he received his M.A. degree. Then followed modest scholarships at the University of California at Berkeley, which together with earnings from various jobs enabled him to commence his study towards a Ph.D. degree in political science. But then in 1965 came the United States' deepening involvement in the Vietnam War. Khanh, who viewed this American involvement as morally abhorrent and politically wrong, went to the more congenial political climate of Canada, where he became a Canadian citizen and taught at the Universities of Dalhousie and Western Ontario. Two years after completing his doctorate at Berkeley in 1972, he spent eight years as senior research fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies in Singapore, for two of these years editing its journal, *Southeast Asian Affairs*. Then, following a year as visiting professor at the Institute National des Langues et Civilizations Orientales at the Université de Paris III (Sorbonne Nouvelle), in 1986 he accepted a position as research fellow and director of the Indochina Project in the Toronto-York Universities' Joint Center for Asia-Pacific Studies. A year after being appointed associate professor at York University's French-speaking Glendon College in 1988 he was invited to come to Cornell.

During the past two years Professor Khanh made two substantial visits to Vietnam in connection with his own research. He was also active in consulting on Indochina with the Canadian Ministry of External Affairs and in working towards normalization of relations between the United States and Vietnam. When he died he was well

advanced in work on what would have been three important books: *Communism in Vietnam, 1945-54*; *Contemporary Vietnamese Foreign Relations*; and *The Vietnamese Revolutionary Experience*.

Huynh Kim Khanh is survived by his 90 year-old father, Luyen Kim Huynh; and two brothers, Binh Thai Huynh and Tinh Trang Huynh, all of Washington, D.C.; two sisters resident in Toronto, Mrs. Xuan My Nguyen and Mrs. Ngoc Dung Hoang, and another sister, Miss Ngoc Tran Huynh of Paris.

Khanh was here with us in Ithaca only very briefly, less than eight months. He was happy at Cornell as was indicated by his having bought a house just before he died. Members of the Department of Government and the Southeast Asia Program and our students will miss him not only for his teaching and scholarship, but also for his personal warmth and his ebullient and infectious enthusiasm that tended to give a lift to all who interacted with him.

*John H. Badgley, Keith W. Taylor, George McT. Kahin*